Liberty University School of Divinity

LOVING THE UNLOVABLE: A BIBLICAL APPROACH FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH TO HOMOSEXUALITY IN A MORALLY DECLINING SOCIETY

A Thesis Project Submitted to
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by
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ABSTRACT

LOVING THE UNLOVABLE: A BIBLICAL APPROACH FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH TO HOMOSEXUALITY IN A MORALLY DECLINING SOCIETY.

Robert J. Archer (81806)

Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020

This thesis will strive to prove that local churches worldwide have been highly ineffective at providing true recovery for parishioners that struggle with homosexuality often ostracizing them as a diseased product rather than a creation of the Father. The goal is to help the church discover, assess, and address the sin, healing, and recovery for homosexuals in their ministry in a healthy biblical manner that promotes freedom in Christ and true recovery. This will allow the local church to partake in the healing process of broken parishioners promoting evangelism and discipleship that will in turn extend into the communities of those parishioners. The data will be collected via surveys and personal interviews with parishioners in the age range of 18 and above, missionaries, ministry department heads, and pastors. There will also be data compilation through literary research of previously done works on this particular topic.

Abstract length: 143 words.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Importance and Purpose of Research

Human sexuality has been an issue since the beginning of civilization. In the beginning there was an establishment of healthy sexuality as a part of the creative order through the creation of male and female and the command to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and have dominion over it as is found in Genesis 1:27-28.¹ The initial Adamic covenant was simple, Adam was to obey the instruction of God to avoid eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and by obeying God, Adam would live eternally. The Westminster Dictionary of Theological terms explains this as a covenant established between God and Adam conditional upon obedience.² Adam’s rejection of this covenant through direct disobedience instituted the original sin also referenced as “The Fall for all of humanity,” leaving all humanity stained and impacted by such action. Since “The Fall” brokenness has ensued creating a multitude of deviations regarding human sexual behavior. This can be traced through the Bible, historic documents surveying Roman and Greek culture in early church history, history in general, and even through many issues of personal experience recently.³ According to Romans 1 these deviations began simply as failure to fulfill the sexual lifestyle God ordained at creation and replacing this with unbiblical and heinous behavior including but not limited to homosexuality, sadomasochism,

pedophilia, and bestiality.\footnote{The Holy Bible, \textit{English Standard Version} (2001).} However in the mix of these great variances, lies the incredibly controversial issue of homosexuality.

The issue of homosexuality in contemporary culture has created a firestorm of warlike behavior amongst various people groups throughout North America especially. To explain this volatility further, the battle literally came to the point of dictating which restaurant one could purchase their chicken sandwich at during the battle of 2012.\footnote{Mark Yarhouse PhD, \textit{Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry}, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (2013) location 294, Kindle.} One New York Times article from July 25, 2012 stated, “A Southern-Fried chicken sandwich on a soft white bun with a couple of pickles slices is fast becoming the culinary symbol of one of the country’s major social issues.”\footnote{Kim Severson, Chick-Fil-A Thrust Back into Spotlight on Gay Rights, New York Times, July 25, 2012.} The article goes on to describe the different moves made by various supporters and opponents of Chick-Fil-A during this battle. The absurdity of thinking and processing concerning the issue of homosexuality had literally overtaken the media outlets and now had begun the process of overtaking commercialization of the chicken sandwich.

It is to this very point that one needs to understand the purpose of this work. The focused interest of this research is to process homosexuality within the life of a professing believer who is desiring to live a pure lifestyle yet is still actively struggling with the addictive nature of homosexual attraction. The church can only help in this area when it realizes the greatness of its own forgiveness. Peter Hubbard in his book \textit{Love into Light} says, “A church characterized by a small experience of forgiveness will be characterized by a small expression of love.”\footnote{Peter Hubbard, \textit{Love into Light: The Gospel, The Homosexual, and The Church}, Greenville, SC: Ambassador International (2013) location 261, Kindle.} That being said the research will take into account the clear definition of homosexuality and the subsets
included such as same sex attraction, orientation, and sexual identity. The issues of discrepancy, volatility, and hypocrisy amongst the gay community at large will also be discussed as there is a great deal of judgment, prejudice, and animosity that exists even amongst themselves. This is often hidden out of fear discrediting the unity that is portrayed within the homosexual community. Jessica Newman, a mental health counselor with the Violence Recovery Program in Boston was quoted by The Atlantic in November of 2013 as saying, “There can be a fear of making the community look bad…” In this same article Tre’Andre Valentine, the Community Programs Coordinator at The Network/ La Red, a domestic violence support group specifically for LGBTQ people, was quoted as saying, “There’s the idea that we’ll be airing dirty laundry. It sort of discredits the community to say that abuse is happening, after all the work we’ve been doing [to enter the mainstream media]” Both of these individuals agree according to the article that there is a prevailing darkness that is hiding the reality and severity of domestic violence that exists in the homosexual community. It is essential to value the dissention that exists in this community that prefices itself as a safe environment full of unity.

Upon having a working definition completed, the issue of cultural views will be discussed and defined. This will deal with the societal norms and responses to the gay community, because the responses, unhealthy as they may be, often still have some fraction of connective tissue to the regional community at large. This work will also take into consideration the view of the church and its response to the gay community whether good, bad, or even simply just flexible. The final observation in this project will be an intentional look at the potentially

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9 Ibid.
healthy responses the church needs to consider in order to effectively reach the hurting and recapturing the weary.

**Statement of the Problem**

“If you were to draw a circle that represents all the people on the planet, and then inside it, draw another small circle to represent the people who live according to “God’s plan,” then, well, very few people on the planet fit in that circle…not included in the circle are divorced people who have sex before marriage, people who masturbate, asexual people, gay people, bisexuals, people who are not Christian… If that’s ‘God’s Plan,’ then God planned poorly.”

There exists an immense division in how the church should interact with the homosexual community in this currently morally declining society. As can be seen in the previous quote by Nadia Bolz-Weber, one’s approach to this subject is completely defined by one's view of both the Bible and God Himself. The problem this project will address is the relationship and view of the Local Church toward homosexuality in a divided world that is morally in decline.

Currently the Local Church can is largely divided into one of two categories, though there are several smaller movements with beliefs that are incredibly varied. The first group, known as the affirming community, generally believes that homosexuality is God ordained therefore there is no sin or need for repentance or healing. This group teaches that the general congregant ought to affirm homosexuality while also fighting for the veracity of this position. Ultimately their base of belief is founded more on the individual who is suffering to the extent that the universal truth of scripture is sacrificed or re-interpreted. Bolz-Weber states, “We should not be more loyal to an idea, a doctrine, or an interpretation of a Bible verse that we are to people. If the teachings of the church are harming the bodies and spirits of people, we should

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rethink those teachings.”

Granted, the bible is not intended to be weaponized at the core, yet it is the only guide point of inerrant truth that exists continually regardless of the era. Therefore, to argue that the truth it teaches should be avoided because it hurts others, in turn does exactly what the removal of that truth is trying to avoid, it hurts people, only now it can be longer lasting.

The second group positions itself as one who is standing firm on unchanging biblical morals which condemn homosexuality. This group, whether admittedly or not, generally views homosexuality as a sin that is greater than other sins and is therefore treated as such. There are different extremes that exist even in this group identified as those who believe that Gods Word is clear concerning homosexuality and are willing to process through the inundation of nuances that can exist particularly concerning the different areas of homosexuality such as Same Sex Attraction, Sexual Orientation, Sexual Identity, and more. This part of the group values specific word usage and accurate definitions which can only precipitate from healthy dialogue and research. To the other extreme in this group, one will find those who desire to simply rest in the simplicity of their minds ignoring any nuance and simply labeling everything that touches homosexuality as sin including Same Sex Attraction even if it is never acted upon. Jay Adams, father of nouthetic counseling, addresses an issue that was brought up in a book entitled, The Returns of Love, a collection of letters between two homosexual men that have an attraction to one another yet decide to remain physically unfulfilled in their relationship. In Adams response he says, “…they are able to do this [refrain from physical fulfillment of attraction] by distinguishing between the homosexual act and homosexual desire and calling only the former sin.”

First Adams quickly rewords their conversation by replacing the word attraction with the

11 Ibid., location 109.

word desire. It is much easier to confront desire than attraction as the former is more ambiguous than the latter. This therefore allows him to say, “The desire as well as the act is condemned as sin in the Scriptures, which fail to distinguish the one from the other as acceptable and unacceptable. Paul described the sin of homosexuality as including both the desire and the act (Romans 1:27).”\textsuperscript{13} In this convenient translation of terms, Adams is able to stand firm on his own beliefs, which are biblical, while avoiding dealing with deeper issues that exist. Ironically this is a well-known fault in Nouthetic Counseling.\textsuperscript{14}

In the midst of this conversation, it is the homosexual himself that suffers through the battle, often being wounded on both sides. The error in both of these groups is the lack of adequate agreed upon definition and the failure to see the homosexual as a person rather than an atrocity. This particular sin has dehumanized the individual to the point of creating debates over which stores should be used and which chicken sandwich should be eaten. It is therefore imperative that the church deals with this issue in a biblical manner. This approach must be absolutely biblically based, biblically driven, and Holy Spirit Guided. At the same time, it would behoove the church to value the compassion in which Jesus ministered and to appropriately consider what might be the most effective, loving, and biblical response. This project will argue that it would be most effective through a disciple-making relationship and small group participation that community, victory, freedom, and healing can be achieved.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 405.

\textsuperscript{14} Dr. Scott Hawkins, Licensed Professional Counselor and Professor of Counseling at Liberty University has adequately described Nouthetic Counseling as a thought that works quite well for the Walking Wounded or the Worried Well. This description references the fact that one who is already well enough to simply apply a memorized verse of scripture and repenting of some identified sin is sufficient. Though this is accurate at the core there are often other factors involved in people’s lives that need to be explored and dealt with rather than avoided and covered with weaponized scripture. Recently Nouthetic Counseling has hijacked the title “Biblical Counseling” in arguing that there is no other form of counseling that is biblical. Integrated Biblical Counseling is considered to be heretical and sinful to this camp. Scott Hawkins, PhD. Brief Marital Therapy: Integrated Counseling Versus Biblical Counseling, Lecture, Liberty Mountain Conference Center, Lynchburg, VA. November 4, 2014.
One complication that will present itself in this project is the use of the Bible in support of one’s own viewpoint. Both groups mentioned above have sought to use the bible to confirm their already chosen biases often reading scripture from a perspective of eisegesis, in essence this is the act of “using one’s central motif to determine one’s interpretation of a passage”. Often these camps will find a truth statement that supports their belief but must reject other truths of scripture in order to maintain their position. In order to develop a healthy and biblical approach to homosexuality and its community, the church must be willing to value both the truth and the love that is presented in God’s Word. One cannot simply only speak truth without practicing love toward the recipient nor can one simply love the individual without being willing to speak truth.

As a result of these major divisions, there are often few if any helpful resources offered for healing and spiritual growth for an individual that faces homosexuality. This project will not be able to address all arenas of homosexuality rather the relationship of the church towards this issue at large in order to create a healthy ministry context in which someone who is faced with homosexuality or one of its derivatives can find healthy community, biblical discipleship, and safety for communication. Without an honest reflection of both biblical truth and practical application in love and humility, the church will not be able to biblically respond to the ever-growing reality of homosexuality in our present age.

**Special Terminology**

In order to have accurate and clear communication of the subject matter at hand it is necessary to identify particular terms that will be included. The use of these terms throughout the project will correspond to the definitions located in this section though others might prefer to define the terms differently. This will give both the researcher and the reader the same

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understanding and same base from which the project can be understood. Some of this will also be given more precision through the view of different experts and professionals in this field of study as the project develops, particularly through the review of literature.

Though homosexuality seems to be fairly clear in definition there are still variable levels of involvement and variable definitions depending upon who is utilizing the verbiage. According to dictionary.com it is defined as, “Sexual desire or behavior directed toward a person or persons of one’s own sex.”\(^{16}\) However, The Oxford Learners Dictionary defines homosexuality as, “The state of being sexually attracted to people of the same sex.”\(^{17}\) As it pertains to the average person in the cultural United States, the term homosexual conjures images of deviant sexual behavior including lewd acts of sexual promiscuity with someone of the same sex. According to Glenn Stanton, homosexuality is simply a sexual attraction to another individual of the same sex.\(^{18}\) There is no indication through this definition that any activity, orientation, or even identification is included rather simple attraction is the fault line. This explanation from Stanton can fit within the Oxford Dictionary definition as they both self-direct to attraction. However, the American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology defines homosexuality as, “A sexual attraction or activity between members of the same sex.”\(^{19}\) It seems logical therefore to embrace the dictionary definitions of both attraction and activity.


The definition Stanton uses would likely fit more appropriately within the following definition of Same-Sex Attraction. Unfortunately, this term is used often yet there is not a clear definition or entry of it in academic dictionaries. Therefore, it will be broken down for a clear definition. First attraction is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary as, “a feeling of liking someone, especially sexually.”20 If one simply adds to this the definition of same-sex as, “involving people of the same sex.”21 The combination of these two definitions then becomes clear as a feeling or liking of someone, especially sexually, of the same sex. It may seem a bit superfluous to be this precise, however in this context definitions are essential.

Next is the term Sexual Identity which is described as, “an individual’s sexual orientation.”22 Sexual orientation is, “one’s enduring sexual attraction to male partners, female partners, or both. Sexual orientation may be heterosexual, same sex (gay or lesbian), or bisexual.”23 Contrariwise, Laura Reiter, M. Ed., C.I.S.W (Certified Independent Social Worker) argued on June 1, 1989 in an article she wrote for the Clinical Social Worker Journal, “Sexual orientation, determined early in life, may or may not match sexual identity, which can change over time…Identity changes; orientation endures.”24 Reiter further argues that orientation may be viewed more as “an organization of desire” or an inborn predisposition toward a particular sexual

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21 Ibid., loc. 500317.
22 APA, loc. 77287.
23 Ibid., loc. 77347.
behavior whereas identity is better understood as the validation in oneself of those understood predispositions.\(^\text{25}\) Orientation is therefore who I am while Identity is who I believe myself to be.

The final two technical terms to be addressed are Homo-negativity and Sexual Minority. Homo-Negativity is characterized by Antebi-Gruszka and Schrimshaw as, “encompassing prejudice, stereotypes, differential and unfair treatment, and violence toward lesbian/gay and bisexual individuals, respectively. These societal beliefs and attitudes are internalized by individuals who self-identify as non-heterosexual and/or engage in same-sex sexual behavior.”\(^\text{26}\) Often the external beliefs held by individuals or societies toward homosexuals affect and impact the way a homosexual then views himself. The term sexual minority fits into this discussion well as it is used expressly as a term of number not as a political position. Math and Seshadri specify this term as, “a group whose sexual identity, orientation, or practices differ from the majority of the surrounding society.”\(^\text{27}\) Though most often this is used in respect to ideologies such as homosexuality, it can also include monogamy in a polygamous society as well as other forms of minority identification.

**Basis for Topic Choice**

Several factors were involved in determining the direction of this particular project. The initial determining factor was the lack of information available at the commencement of this project concerning the particular relationship between the local church and the gay community at

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 140.


large. The primary research completed in this particular field is connected highly to academic psychology in the arena of homosexuality which does not necessarily consider homosexuality to be a disorder in need of healing or reparation. Therefore, the vast majority of current secular resources available for this particular subject matter reside in the realms of affirmation, unless one is desiring a change.

Secondly, came research into current, recent, and ancient dissertations, publications, and theological works. Though there is a greater amount of information that discusses homosexuality, declination of morality, and the church; the connectivity between the three still possessed massive gaps in the academic world. The issue at hand in this project is not the discussion of right or wrong as it pertains to homosexuality, though that is still necessary to discuss, rather it is the discussion of the local church involvement in the homosexual community for an individual seeking help in resisting what he biblically believes to be sin. As a result, there needs to be clarifying markers, guide points, and healthy discussion for the furtherance of the local church into this particular domain of ministry.

Several complications arose in realizing that there is often an overlap of similar vocabulary which is frequently being defined in different manners, particularly within the broader perspective of the evangelical church. The theological positions of homosexuality in the initial creative act varies widely which in turn creates a large division within the modern local church as to the view of God toward homosexuality. If a church is to be effective and biblical in ministering to and within the homosexual community at large, it is necessary to understand the different theological frameworks while still valuing the authority of God’s Word in ministry creation. Though it might be impossible to comprehend all the theological views of
homosexuality within the confines of the local church, the views do impact the thought process and direction in which a church will decide to minister within the homosexual community.

Finally, there was a literary review involving recent publications, books, and journal articles that reviewed the current status of the church toward this particular situation. Most theological works created which speak to this difficulty reside within a daily living or devotional work. Though these works are often written by world renowned theologians and Christian workers, they often address the more personal aspect of how the individual should walk with his neighbor, how the parent should help his child, or even how the church should take a particular position in regard to the issue of homosexuality. Unfortunately, there is little available in the perspective of the church helping a parishioner battling homosexuality or even how to make new connections into the homosexual community in its neighborhood.

There needs to be a stronger instruction or plan for bridging this gap without compromising biblical morals. This is the problem historically, far too often when strategically focused ministries are started, people are either hurt deeply or the church becomes more tolerant of a particular sin. The point of this project is to avoid those errors by aiding in the process of liberating individuals from sin, specifically within the context of homosexuality, while strengthening the relationship between the church and the community in which it resides.

**Statement of Limitations**

Due to the volatility of this topic, the likelihood of civil conversation is a bit limited, not to mention that the issue of homosexuality and its relationship with the local church has become increasingly politically charged more recently. That being said it is impossible to capture and submit every individual's position in this research. Since this writer spent 10 years working in a para-church urban ministry while concurrently serving for 16 years in the local church, the vast
majority of the research was done with this population in context. In other words, an online survey that is available via social media globally will be given but any personal interviews will be guided through personal contacts.

The limitation then may be realized in that the writer’s geographic location is limited primarily to the eastern United States. It is entirely possible that the context of the research results produces an instrument or tool for the local church that will need adaptation for success in other localities depending on culture. It therefore behooves the reader to ask if the issue of Homosexuality or its derivatives, as will be listed, are a current reality in the context of said local church. If so, how can the research be applied and adapted for utilization. The goal of this work is not to solve all the problems of homosexuality in the local church rather it is to generate ideas for developing biblical healing in the context of the local church from a theoretical framework taking this issue into account rather than continuing to ignore it.

Due to the fact that personal interviews have been involved it must also be realized that this research is pragmatic in nature and deals in the arena of qualitative research rather than quantitative. In personal interview it is always a reality that subjective material will be introduced. There were specific questions asked which can be found in the appendices however the answers were not objective in nature and allowed personal interaction. Going a step further there will also be a measure of subjectivity by the writer in reviewing the interview responses as the results are reported and evaluated in accordance with the research. However, the subjective measures will guide the research to objective steps and realities that can be understood and implemented in part or whole for a better understanding and healthier relationship between the church and the homosexual community.
As for objectivity in specific research, the survey produces a necessary understanding of the framework from a broad spectrum that allows the reader to get a glimpse of the beliefs, dichotomies, and relationships that are involved. These questions are asked in an anonymous survey and allows for true objectivity and variety. There will be classifying indicators that allow the research to be guided from an early theoretical framework bringing into light bias, position, and foundational viewpoints. This objectivity combined with the subjective matter of the interviews gives a broader description and understanding but still does not cover all beliefs available nor does it cover all possible categories surrounding homosexuality or local church affiliation.

Finally, since this research is proposing a biblical vantage point for healing through homosexuality, it should be noted that the research will be from a biblical viewpoint as well. This project is not intended to satisfy all hurts associated with the issues at hand rather it is designed to understand how the current society understands homosexuality, how the local church views homosexuality, how the bible speaks of homosexuality, and develop a biblical approach to provide healing for the one struggling with homosexuality within the context of the local church. It is therefore imperative for the reader to understand that the writer does believe that homosexuality is sin, that God created man to be in naturally born congenital heterosexual relationships for romance, marriage, and sexual interaction. The solutions and proposed tools will be built from a biblical framework with disciple making and accountability at the forefront as is described in the bible. The goal is biblical healthy living via community in the local church.

**Major Assumptions**

In the arena of research every researcher has the desire to eliminate as much bias as is possible. This is quite impossible as the very purpose of one’s research is biased from the onset
therefore it becomes necessary to be cognizant of these assumptions while clearly stating them to the reader so that the project is clearly understood. This process also helps the researcher to take the necessary steps to avoid simply researching the material that would provide confirmation bias throughout his work.

For this particular project the author has at least four major assumptions that are important to articulate for a fair understanding of the material presented. The first of these assumptions is that God did create humanity, particularly Adam and Eve, with intentional heterosexuality.\(^{28}\) Adam and Eve were not simply an allegorical type for all humanity rather they were literal beings created by God with intent design and purpose.\(^{29}\) This is in contrast to the liberal view that considers “Adam” and “Eve” to not being literal individuals rather they are merely representatives of humanity.\(^{30}\) This means that they were also created with specified gender which was intended to fulfill the command God gave them to be fruitful and multiply.

In addition, the author assumes that as a result of God’s initial creative act and the institution of heterosexual relationship from the moment of creation that living out a homosexual relationship is therefore a sin. This does not however make this sin any more severe than another sin. The author also believes that homosexuality is a choice though there may be a possibility of

\(^{28}\) In His creation of mankind God commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. For mankind to be able to fulfill this command it was necessary to have heterosexuality from the very beginning within the context of the sexual relationship between the two originally created beings one man and one woman. K. A. Matthews, *New American Commentary: Genesis 1-11:26* vol 1A, Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers (1996), 173-175.

\(^{29}\) One issue with this view according to Erickson is the reference from Paul regarding sin entering humanity through one man, Adam. If Paul understood Adam to be literal man and yet all the pre-adamic beings from which Adam evolved were also fully human yet, then from where did sin come. Furthermore, if this were the case and Eve was not a literal being then there was no significance to the mention of man and woman as being separate sex specific beings. This therefore allows for more liberal translation in regard to other scriptural references as both Adam and Eve could be either male or female. If both were male, homosexuality is now part of the creative possibility. Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd ed.*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic (2013) 451.

legitimate propensity in regard to this lifestyle whereby one individual might be more inclined to a homosexual lifestyle than another individual. The author would argue that this is a result of the fall and not the intention of God.

Next it is important to realize that the author also views the bible as being fully inspired, completely sufficient, and entirely true. This presupposition therefore dictates that the final authority of all views must ultimately come from the Bible.

Finally, the author presumes and has observed that the local church in North America, particularly in southwest Virginia, is largely failing to adequately address the issue of homosexuality within the context of biblical healing and recovery. It is therefore deduced that the Local Church is either fully embracing homosexuality as a biblical lifestyle or it is condemning the homosexual with no hope of future freedom. These positions have therefore distorted the relationship between the local church and the homosexual community leaving her incapable of ministering to a demographic largely in need of clear biblical redemption and biblical hope.

Statement of Methodology

The author began his research with a review of available literature surveying questions developed through other research projects in the DMIN process of Liberty University and current ecclesiastical concerns. In order to have a base understanding of the issue at hand it was necessary to understand the personal difficulties associated with Christianity and homosexuality. This research was conducted through conference attendance, personal conversation, and testimonies. A search for theses related to this topic was conducted for further information. In addition, related topics were also researched such as, Homosexuality and the Christian, Homosexuality in my Family, Sexual Deviancy and the Local Church, Neurotheology and
Homosexuality, etc… All of these fields are seen to be interrelated in the core fabric of their construction.

Once a thorough rendering of this topic was researched, the author researched written works by various authors coming from multiple backgrounds and theological premises. Knowing that the views would be quite variable it became necessary to establish a working definition and position which indicates the framework from which the author will build. In order to do so a variety of resources were reviewed with theological positions that were adamantly opposed to one another. These resources were then addressed in a discerning manner so as to not allow the major assumptions to simply overlook potentially helpful observations.

Finally, the researcher conducted a survey which was ran at two different times with two different audiences. The first was aimed at full time clergy while the second was open to the public through the means of social media. Personal interviews with people who were directly connected to the issue at hand were also held with the intent purpose of hearing first-hand accounts of interaction between the church and the homosexual community at large. In final preparation for reporting the findings of this project the author reviewed the listed literature, evaluated the survey results, and compiled the data in order to propose potential key elements that are necessary for further development in this domain so that the local church can evaluate their abilities and shortcomings in addressing the homosexual and the homosexual community in a biblical manner even when the society as a whole continues to morally decline.

Review of Literature

Current Works

As recent as 10 years ago there was very little conversation taking place between the local church and the homosexual community. There were few books available, though some of
the resources were written quite well, and most of the conversation was heavily biased and not engaging to say the least. It was during that time however that several authors were beginning to address the issues that few even recognized were in the local church. As a result, many are writing on this issue today however it is hard to distinguish at times who is an authority and who has the experience to credit their own research and information. That being said there are now more resources available today that can give guidance to this conversation. It would be a little presumptuous and foolish to attempt to tackle an issue of this magnitude without interacting with those who have a great deal more experience and wisdom in this field. Therefore, one will find presented a sampling of the information and how it might guide the thinking through this research.

Definitions are of utmost importance. Throughout this work there will be a continual referencing of the differences between Same-Sex Attraction, Sexual Identity, Sexual Orientation, Homosexuality in particular. For the purposes of understanding the foundation of this project it is helpful to start with a simple definition of Homosexuality as it is defined by Drs Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins. They define homosexuality as, “…an orientation and a behavior. The homosexual orientation is a condition in which a person is sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Homosexual behavior refers to any sexual activity between members of the same gender.”

Clinton and Hawkins are not addressing all the definitions here, but they are beginning to lay the groundwork for understanding the great dichotomies that exist in this world.

To go further it is necessary to have a working foundation for the topic at hand. The introduction started to guide some thought, but it still did not give much information in the sense of defining the topic. For instance, Dr. Mark Yarhouse in his book, *Understanding Sexual*

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Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry, refers to the homosexual community as being a sexual minority. He says, “My use of the phrase ‘sexual minority’ is really about numbers- the idea that it is not that common…”

Yarhouse is not using this term politically as many of the local church will charge him with, rather he is using it in terms of research literally drawing attention to the fact that the homosexual community is not nearly as large as many think it is.

In realizing that homosexuality is a minority in terms of numbers then one can also begin to grasp the thinking of how to address issues of a minority that act like a majority. In their book, Sociology Through the Eyes of Faith, David Fraser and Tony Campolo argue that one’s community, “…is not a completely uniform social world. No Society is. There were disaffected people and people who held ideas very different from the dominant religious worldview. Minority groups …coexisted in uneasy tension with the majority. Their differences with dominant views acted as potential seeds of change.”

The point being made is that a minority always has a different viewpoint and is therefore usually seen as a threat to be dealt with leaving the church with a desire to live defensively rather than in an understanding way.

In many respects the local church and the parishioners connected to it often believe that they have a healthy understanding of people who struggle with homosexuality. In most cases the church would argue that all sin is sin and ought to be dealt with equally, but the economics of this position rarely agree with the ontological positions. In his book, Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends, Yarhouse shares about a situation where a husband reveals to his wife that he had explored homosexuality in an affair and had contracted HIV. At the same time the wife discovers she has cancer and is deathly ill. In this situation the

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32 Yarhouse, location 234.

wife had a great support system at the church where she was free to reveal her struggles and the
curch came to her aid especially in prayer, love, and care. Her husband on the other hand did
not experience this same support. He was not able to share his struggle or failures with as many
people or in the same manner due to the negativity connected to his struggle. He had committed
a much larger offense, a cardinal sin. As a result, even though he was not currently living in this
lifestyle, he could not receive the same care, compassion, and support as his wife even though he
also had HIV. Regardless of the beliefs, particular sins still carry certain societal stigmas among
the church.³⁴ This dichotomy ought to incite this simple conditional hypothesis, would the local
church and her parishioners rather one struggle with SSA or homosexuality and be honest about
this battle while seeking help, healing, and freedom through Christ and accountability, or would
she rather that his individual keep silent while molding into dishonest and pharisaical
expectations created by the church rather than God. This conflict often causes doubt in God’s
existence, forgiveness, love and ultimately in His sanctification in their life. The life of Jesus
clearly demonstrates that God was never slack on truth, yet He did seek mankind in
unquestionable love in order to redeem him. According to Rob Parsons, founder of Care for the
Family Ministries in England, far too often mankind does not arrive to the point of experiencing
the love, justice, and forgiveness of the Father because he usually meets the older brother, the
church, at the front door rather than the waiting Father.³⁵

One piece of information that will go a long way in creating a healthier environment in
the local church is simply understanding definitions. As it pertains to the world of homosexuality
there are many different qualifiers that create a healthier view of the issue at hand. Stanton Jones


and Mark Yarhouse in their work, *Ex-Gays: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* share some of the differentiation in the spectrum of homosexuality. They begin by defining Same Sex Attraction as simply being an inclination of attraction to someone of the same sex without acting out upon that attraction. Juxtaposed to that is the definition of sexual orientation which, “…typically refers to the directionality of a person’s experiences of sexual attraction.”36 So often the church can only view one picture of the homosexual life and are unable to differentiate between orientation and actual identity. Could the same be said of a man freed from the addiction of pornography or alcoholism? The authors further state, “Sexual orientation refers to a person’s sexual predispositions, and these may come from a variety of sources: Nature (biological antecedents) or nurture (environmental or psychological factors) or, most likely, some combination of both.”37 In other words orientation has another step that attraction does not possess.

It is important not to lose sight however that the acting out of a homosexual relationship is still sin. Author Joe Dallas, a recovering homosexual, attempts to bridge the chasm that exists between the church and their misunderstanding of homosexuality. Though small in number, there is a powerful movement among the homosexual community to push for legitimizing their behavior. It can be argued that anyone ought to have the freedom to live out their life in private without interference from the public. In other words, it is hard to argue for legalizing morality. However, Dallas argues in his book, *The Gay Gospel*, that the, “…pro-gay theology takes it a step further by redefining homosexuality as being God-ordained and morally permissible.”38 This


37 Ibid., location 297.

is a far cry from freedom of privacy, this is an expectation of acceptance and support from the Christian community in a manner that is anti-biblical. These are not the same arguments.

On the other side of the argument in relation to privacy and consent we find Sean McDowell and John Stonestreet. In their book, *Same Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God’s Design for Marriage*, it is argued that a fence has been removed without understanding why it was there to begin with and as a result society has declined. They discuss that there was an intentional process by the American general public to normalize homoerotic behavior in an effort to numb society to its ills. They state, “It’s been quite a journey from The Cosby Show to Seinfeld to Will and Grace to Modern Family. Older Americans reminisce about Leave It to Beaver and I Love Lucy, but clearly it’s not the ‘50s anymore. It’s not even the ‘80s (or the ‘90s) anymore. As it is on television, so is life for the larger culture.”

To McDowell and Stonestreet media has been the driving force that literally guided American society including the church to a more ambivalent position allowing the issue of homosexuality to become mainstream and accepted across the board.

Looking into the matter from a different perspective, Joshua Harris deals with the issue from a perspective of obedience rather than design. Harris argues that the issue involved is not the issue of sex but rather the issue of lust and one’s response to lust. In his book, *Sex is Not The Problem (Lust Is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World*, Harris deals with the issue of lust being embraced fully and creating a normative behavior of something that God calls detestable. In a very clear manner he states, “Lust is an idolatrous and ultimately insatiable desire that rejects God's rule and seeks satisfaction apart from Him. God says, ‘You shall not covet’ (Exodus 20:17). But lust tells us that what we don't have is exactly what we need. Lust covets the

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forbidden.”40 Ironically the issue of lust whether in the context of a heterosexual relationship or a homosexual relationship still craves the forbidden and ultimately is realized in embracing that which was forbidden. This has become the testimony of the American culture at large today and the church is close behind.

Glenn Stanton deals with the issue of homosexuality first by bringing to light healthy definitions and understanding the difference between attraction and behavior. He quotes Tim Keller saying, “Homosexuality doesn’t send you to hell, any more than heterosexuality sends you to heaven.”41 The idea is to tame the vitriol associated with the “Super Sin” of homosexuality. Stanton says, “Being attracted to the same sex is certainly not a sin, just as a man being attracted to a woman, he is not married to is not a sin. But it’s what one does with that attraction that matters, just as with any other desire.”42 Unfortunately the local church cannot differentiate between the two very well and therefore ends up pushing someone who is Same-Sex Attracted into full homosexual behavior because it is easier for that individual to be accepted in the gay community than to live with the scars of his past in the Local Church. The question then becomes, how can one love in grace and truth their neighbor without embracing their behavior.

In learning to understand one’s culture better David Platt wrote a book entitled, *A Compassionate Call to Counterculture*. In this work Platt discusses the merciful limitless love shown in the life of Christ in deference to the hatred of religious leaders who frequent the local church. Too often the parishioner is quick to decide how one ought to be punished for their decisions whereas Christ expressed this love by turning their hatred for sinners toward Himself.


41 Stanton, 63.

42 Ibid., 64.
Platt shares about encountering a family member who reveals his homosexuality to him and the responses he didn’t offer. He says, “Looking back at that moment, I wish I had said so many different things. I wish I had thanked him for his honesty, transparency, and vulnerability in sharing this with me. I wish I had assured him that his revelation would not change my affection for him. I wish I had asked him sincere questions to understand him better…” What a powerful insight into how the church could interact differently with the homosexual community. What if there were a process whereby one could offer to walk in a manner of disciple making toward biblical healing and restoration. What if the parishioner lovingly disagreed but offered abundant and patient grace in an effort to understand the outcast while journeying with them together toward Christ? The church might then be much more sought out by those who are struggling with homosexuality becoming more of a hospital and less of a courtroom.

On the other hand, it becomes difficult not to stand firmly against homosexuality as if it is a “Super Sin” when one takes into consideration how often errant local churches begin to accept and embrace homosexual behavior as acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. It is not uncommon today to experience a redefining of theology as it pertains to modern culture. In his book, Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology, Patrick Cheng develops an idea that the bible needs to be rediscovered in a way that understands queer as being normal and pleasing to God. Is a hinge point where man begins to celebrate that which God calls detestable or is it simply a misunderstanding of the scriptural mandates used to confront homosexuality? He states, “…queer theology can be understood as a way of doing theology that is rooted in queer theory and that critiques the binary categories of sexuality and gender identity as socially

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constructed.” 44 In other words, the bible needs to be understood from a queer perspective redefining how theology is understood. The bible did not create the social construct of hetero-monogamous marriages, society developed that culture, and it needs to be redefined in accordance with a queer theology of the bible.

The purpose of this work is not only to discover the dichotomies that exist between the local church and the homosexual community but rather to develop a strategy for biblical healing. There have been some incredible breakthroughs with neurobiology that are informing the research today about how one thinks and how the body even develops neurological pathways. There is currently no substantive data that proves definitively that one is wired with a predisposition for homosexuality or heterosexuality however a great deal of discovery is occurring in the study of how the prefrontal cortex develops and understands relationships and how these neurological pathways are both formed and reformed. Licensed Professional Counselor Charles Rife shared that Dr. Alan Weissenbacher argues that the best time for reframing these pathways is immediately after a traumatic experience. 45 He does however also encourage great caution in how one interprets brain activity as it pertains to personal experience as it is easy to make causative statements that are simple correlation at best. 46 If this assessment is true, it could simply mean that after one reveals their homosexuality, their brain is most ready at this point to


45 Charles Alan Rife, interview by Jonathan Archer, Total Life Counseling, INC., Roanoke, VA (06/15/2018).

46 A. C. Weissenbacher, Ten Principles for Interpreting Neuroscientific Pronouncements Regarding Human Nature, Dialog: A Journal of Theology 54, no. 1, (Spring 2015): 46-47. Accessed March 2, 2016, https://outlook.office.com/owa/service.svc/s/GetFileAttachment?id=AAMkAGEzZmNhODJhbMNkZwNzc1MDcxOS04NG15LTAzNzU0NDBhNzgsZGV2BGAAAAAAA0DsI2Z8EhSkVdI1BlfHfBwAA%25F6c1c.Value%25FQp0TR1CG%25BxAAC3sSkAAuGbQTp5E15IPzGxZQ1HAJZo0S5AABEGwQAFeWQ0tKXXAdliPF36NkVNE%3D&X-OWA-CANARY=wX_pi857zEiXQopEHLq3tgDNjtDWQtMYpvW7wvyPb-nbY-PvyXDBC0T3e0-AzW-auczFQnF-HeIf.
be rewired. It is therefore important for the church to be ready at confession to handle this issue wisely, lovingly, and graciously or they could unintentionally do irreparable damage.

If the church is to be on the correct side of healing, then it must be able to recognize the homonegativity that exists throughout her body. Timothy Marsh and Jac Brown in their work, *Homonegativity and its Relationship to Religiosity, Nationalism, and Attachment Style*, argue that, “While many minority prejudices are currently tolerated, negative attitudes towards homosexuals, referred to as homonegativity, continues to evoke prejudice in contemporary western cultures…”47 this is clearly present in the church. Just as there was during the reign of Israel, the church today has a pride of nationalism and commitment to a politically charged homosexual stance that often does not understand how one might have become homosexual. Ironically the way a church treats a homosexual individual is also defining their understanding of the Lord and their attachment to Him. If the body of Christ is not caring, then what does that say about the Christ that body worships. Homonegativity often creates undue and irreparable damage.

That being said, it then is important for the church to understand that, “A church characterized by a small experience of forgiveness will be characterized by a small expression of love.”48 This is the idea championed by Peter Hubbard in his work, *Love Into Light: The Gospel, The Homosexual, and the Church*. If the church is not able to extend a radical forgiveness, followed by an unwavering commitment to healthy living, while fulfilling the teaching to love others as one loves themselves, it will also never be able to partake in the blessing of victory into


48 Hubbard, location 261.
a healthy life with Jesus. The process of admission and restoration can take years and therefore the process can be painstakingly brutal. It is vital though for the church to embrace commitment and offer biblical healing with love.

Ultimately the goal is to achieve biblical healing. In his book, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*, Wesley Hill addresses the issue of community, relationships, disciple making, and the process of healing. He says, “When I moved away after two years, I knew my wrestling wasn’t over. But I knew also that something good, something decisive, had happened to me. No longer was I simply struggling; I was learning to struggle well, with others, in the presence of God.”\(^4^9\) It is impossible to heal in isolation because all mankind was created to be in relationship. It therefore is imperative that the church understand the homosexual community and find a way to create safety for someone who wants to come clean to live in a healthy way learning to struggle well with others in the presence of God. This only happens if the individual comes home running and finds the Father standing at the door rather than the older brother.

**Scriptural Basis**

The framework of wisdom from experts in the field of homosexuality and the local church have been consulted in the previous section reviewing available literature. There is a sense of boundaries and thought that gives credence to how the discussion can be guided for this project. However, the source of all authority lies first and foremost within the words left to us by God Himself found only in Scripture. In order to establish a biblical grid to process this discussion, it is imperative to view some of the ways that Scripture deals with the issues of creation, marriage, rebellion, sin, sexual perversion, consequence, grace, care and ultimately

healing. This is a natural progression that will guide the discussion allowing the reader to see the
flow from creative order, to the fall, to restoration all while providing grace and compassion. It
must be stated that the writer makes the assumption that God's Word is authoritative, sufficient,
inerrant, plenary, and verbally inspired by God Himself.

First it is necessary to recognize that Genesis 1:26-27 begin by laying the foundation of
God's creative order. There is no doubt that God created man in His image, but this definition
often becomes challenged by opponents of literal understanding arguing that Adam and Eve
represented mankind, but that God did not intend for the scripture to be understood as literal. In
other words, Adam and Eve could have been heterosexual or homosexual, it is irrelevant. This
becomes a problem because in the very beginning this view imposes subjectivity to an objective
statement. God said, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.”

God went to length to make it clear that man and woman were created as male and
female with relationship in mind. Genesis 2:20-25 takes that a step further by describing in detail
how this occurred in taking a rib from man’s side to create woman out of him. He did this
because it was evident that all other created beings had a mate, but man did not, therefore a
sexual mate was made for man of the opposite sex in order to fill the earth. This is not possible in
homosexuality. Furthermore how could man have naturally fulfilled the command to, “Be
fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth…” according to Genesis 1:28 if he was to ignore
the actual created design of male and female anatomy. This logically would have been a failure

51 Gen. 2:20-25.
52 Gen. 1:28.
of God. Either God failed in creating homosexuality while giving the first created beings a command they could never fulfill, or He gave them complete freedom and authorization to reject this order rendering it null and void. If man was to obey this command, heterosexual creation and sexuality is undeniable.

In Mark 10:6-9 Jesus makes an explicit statement claiming that, “…at the beginning of creation God made them male and female…” Jesus further states that the purpose behind this creative act was to join them together in natural unity. It is clear that God also wanted mankind to see that the two shall become one flesh represented in congenital heterosexual sexual intercourse. Furthermore, Jesus made it clear that if this was God’s plan and if God joined two together in this manner then man should not attempt to change it.

However, it did not take man long to begin the decent into brokenness. It seems that regardless of what is offered or created by the Lord, man continually becomes dissatisfied creating previously unknown voids by involving himself in sinful behavior. In fact, Paul says, “Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” Ephesians 4:19. Mankind is never satisfied with his sinful ways. Jeremiah 2:13 says, “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.” From the beginning Adam rejected God’s provision and man has continually followed this example. Jeremiah argues that mankind has not only forsaken God but has filled that void with idolatry. Often idolatry and adultery are used simultaneously to explain

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54 Eph. 4:19.
55 Jer. 2:13.
mankind’s depart from God as is the case in Ezekiel 16 where the prophet explains Israel’s Idolatry as being adulterous prostitution yet without pay, an absolute lewd departure from God. This adultery from God has created immense brokenness in which God can be no part even though mankind continues to fill his own desires with godlike features believing to be righteous. The only true life is found by abandoning the man-made broken cisterns and returning to the spring of life-giving water and truth only found in Jesus.

As man continued to walk away from God, God continued to pursue him even though man persists in rejecting God. As a result, God has allowed man to experience the consequences of the lifestyles he chooses. In Romans 1:24-28 Paul argues that God has given man over to his selfish desires and wicked ways. He says, “Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.”\(^56\) He later describes that this includes men committing indecent acts with other men and such like. God at this point does not make man obey, that is still a choice for man to submit to, however God will also allow mankind to become as wicked as man desires while also receiving the fullness of the consequences associated with that wickedness.

Ironically the greatest attack on God that Satan attempts is to destroy the image that man bears of God. Since mankind was created in God’s image, which is a completely different topic altogether, man is known as an image bearer. Therefore, mankind lives out a testimony of God to his neighbor by the way he chooses to obey God. Marriage is one of the most sacred of all of God’s institutions in that it is the only picture of the Trinity that man has on earth. The picture of plurality in singleness that is manifested ultimately through the byproduct of sexual intercourse in childbearing is one example. What better way to attack the image of God than to destroy the

\(^{56}\) Rom. 1:24-28.
most natural of all of His created order by destroying marriage and sexual unity. In Hebrews 13:4 the author states, “marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”57 This does not speak singularly to homosexuality, however homosexuality is most certainly included in the sexually immoral who are referenced in this passage if one takes a literal reading of scripture.

When one considers that God had intentionality in the created order of human sexuality and marriage which are representative of His express image, then it is only natural to begin the asking what the intentions were behind this creative act. Did God speak against particular behavior? Are there consequences to these behaviors? How serious is God about bearing His image honorably? Well according to 1 Corinthians 6:17-20 Paul makes a clear case for the extreme degradation involved in defiling oneself through sexual perversion. He argues that no other sin is done unto the body other than sexual sin. Paul further teaches that this “body” is representative of the temple in the Old Testament which in turn was the dwelling place of the Lord. Paul says, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.”58 To live in sexual immorality is to defile your body which belongs to the Lord. It is the very place that God desires to dwell, in you.

God does make it very clear that mankind is to avoid perversion. He says in Leviticus 18:22, “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.”59 God is not confusing in this statement. In the eyes of the creator this is rebellion and direct disobedience to

58 1 Cor. 6:19.
59 Leviticus 18:22.
the Lord. Notice that God does not argue here about created propensity, He simply makes a statement of obedience. Regardless of your evil desires, avoid this behavior because it is detestable. It is quite likely that one day science will find evidences that supports it’s theory of genetic determination in homosexuality. If the church simply rests in her defense of a heterosexual creation as her sole resource, it will begin to weaken. The passage above addresses this in establishing that God called this evil regardless of genetic markers. He forbade this relationship and an individual who rejects this is therefore living in disobedience.

Sometimes it can become confusing as people begin to realize that this is part of the Old Testament in which Leviticus is to be understood as the foundation for the “Law.” It is then argued that the law is not in effect anymore, which is true, however that will be addressed in a moment. First it is important to understand the purpose of the law. Timothy says, “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for the lawbreakers and rebels…”60 1 Timothy 1:8-9. The argument here is that God established the law to put limits on those who will refuse to live honorably before Him. It is not possible to legislate morality to the extent of changing one’s heart, however there must be limits to the exercise of the evil that exists within man and his desire to continually rebel against the Lord.

Realizing that there is a law and that the law is for the lawbreaker it then becomes necessary to see the cost of rebellion. Ironically most people will recognize these chastisements as God simply being vindictive when in reality God does not desire for anyone to suffer these consequences. Unfortunately, when rebellion occurs there will always be a cost. Leviticus 20:13 teaches, “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.”61 Marriage and

60 1 Tim. 1:8-9a.
Image Bearing was serious to God and the cost of defiling His image was deathly.

Jude 5-8 teaches that God is gracious and abundantly merciful. He begins by sharing how God rescued the children of Israel out of Egypt to worship Him fully. These people regularly ignored the provision of God and lived continually in contempt of Him. Yet God still exercised grace and love to these people. Though they did also experience grief and consequence for sin. He then teaches about the wrath of God as well by highlighting Sodom and Gomorrah who lived in complete evil, their actions were detestable before the Lord. Jude 7 says, “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.”

There was only one righteous man in all of Sodom, named Lot. Abraham begged God for grace, ironically no one in Sodom begged for God’s grace because they had abandoned Him long before with no desire of repentance. Why did God spare Lot when it was Abraham that asked for this grace, not Lot. Rebellion has a great cost even when it is enacted toward an incredibly benevolent and gracious God.

In the depth of perversion and brokenness however, God had a plan of redemption and sent His son Jesus to fulfill the law by taking upon Himself the sins of all of humanity and facing the wrath of God fully in order to offer forgiveness. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” In other words Jesus was not coming to make the law exempt rather to satisfy the law offering grace to those who would choose to turn to Him. However, those who continued to

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61 Lev. 20:13
62 Jude 7.
63 Matt. 5:17.
refuse Him were still held accountable to the Law. The law is given to show mankind that without Jesus, forgiveness is impossible. Mankind needed Jesus. There is now hope for the sinner including the homosexual, idolater, adulterer, etc… that chooses to seek Jesus.

Romans 6:14 says, “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

This seems to indicate that man can choose to turn from the law and live fully in grace. While this is true it is also not a license to sin. Too often man looks to grace as something to be obtained and highlighted in the sense that the more one sins the more grace will be displayed. Paul says in Romans 6:15, “…by no means.” In no way is the offer of grace to be understood as an approval to live in sin. This is an abuse of grace.

Paul even instructs further in Galatians 5:13 that grace is a piece of forgiveness that offers true freedom in Christ. This assumes then that any sin including homosexuality is enslaving and that only by leaving the lifestyle of these rebellions can man truly find freedom. He says, “You, my brothers, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature…” Do not use freedom to live in sin, reside in freedom by submitting to Christ rather than the desires of the flesh. Just because there may be an emotional assent and positive feeling to a sinful behavior, it does not mean that freedom is involved. Satan regularly offers a false freedom, steeped in false hope, only to entrap mankind further.

As the church continues to cheer for the vitriolic condemnation of homosexuality, she plants her feet in pride arguing for her right to judge the homosexual community while forgetting to express grace and compassion alongside her condemnation. She has moved from condemning

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64 Rom. 6:14.
65 Rom. 6:15.
66 Gal. 5:13.
a sin to condemning an individual. The church has forgotten that her call is not to be the judge without first removing her own sin according to Matthew 7:1-6.\textsuperscript{67} As James addresses the crowd in James 4:12, he explains what Jesus taught them, “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you- who are you to judge your neighbor.”\textsuperscript{68} God has not called the church to be the judge rather he has called the church to be a light of His grace exposing enslavement to sin while offering freedom through the cross alone, Matthew 5:16.\textsuperscript{69} Ironically humanity cannot occupy both seats, he is either an advocate of grace in truth or he tries to replace the Lord by being a judge.

The best picture of this truth is in the life of Jesus. The one who had every right to be the judge was brought a woman caught in the act of adultery. Jesus had every right to judge her and have her stoned, instead he showed a picture of the cross. Jesus bent down and began to write in the sand. Many argue about what He wrote in the sand which seems to be probably irrelevant, yet they fail to notice that by stooping down Jesus drew all the vitriol of the crowd, which was aimed at the woman, to Himself. He then follows this action with a simple phrase in John 8:7 “If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”\textsuperscript{70} Jesus, the lawgiver and judge, offered unfair grace to all who stood with Him that day. Jesus left this example to follow, as one interacts with those around him, much in the same way he would want others to treat his sin.

The beginning of the healing process from the life of homosexuality begins with living in

\textsuperscript{67} Matt. 7:1-6.
\textsuperscript{68} James 4:12.
\textsuperscript{69} Matt. 5:16.
\textsuperscript{70} John 8:7.
grace, realizing as Paul did, that Jesus gave us a summation of all the law in one simple statement. In Galatians 5:14 Paul says, “The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself.” Mankind has such difficulty with this challenge. If one is to truly love man as one loves himself then an abundance of grace will be provided. Even though man struggles with personal forgiveness he still longs for the forgiveness of others which offers healthy relationships. What would it look like if man was treated for his sin the same way he treated others for their sin, especially concerning homosexuality? Love communicates grace deeply.

This extension of love cannot be given without truth. Ephesians 4:15 teaches, “Instead, speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Love is valueless if it is not based in truth and the inverse is true as well. One can see here the existence of perfect love and perfect truth that come only from the source of pure divinity. Too often the church has either fully embraced homosexuality in an effort to live in love or it has chastised the homosexual in an effort to establish truth. Neither are healthy when exercised independent of the other. Gods call is to speak the truth in love meaning to live fully in the truth of scripture all the while living in a way that is caring and compassionate to one’s neighbor.

Finally, it is important for the church to realize that the only way to fully care for the community surrounding it requires living as the men of Issachar who are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 12:32. They were men who, “understood the times and knew what Israel was to

71 Gal. 5:14.
72 Eph. 4:15.
This passage is used frequently and broadly but the truth of the matter is that the church is supposed to live in an understanding way with the community it serves. The church is to love and understand the struggles that the community faces, especially in relation to homosexuality, while still being able to stand in truth. Much in the same manner 1 Peter 3:7 instructs men to, “…be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner…” This does not mean women are weak, nor does it infer that they are inferior to men. Rather it is a challenge to men to be understanding and caring while protecting their family. This context is not speaking of homosexuality, but a simple application is evident here by deduction and inference. As a believer I need to care for the unbeliever with respect and consideration knowing that without Jesus, he is a weaker vessel. The church is to journey with the homosexual that is desiring true healing, understanding his struggle, and being willing to care and walk with him as he continues faithfully on the path of forgiveness. This is the same manner in which she already helps the one who is a liar, glutton, or drunkard.

These passages are not conclusive, but they build the initial framework of care and compassion for the homosexual within the church and local community. If the church has any desire to truly see God work deeply within this declining morality, she must realize her need to speak the truth in love while living in an understanding way and she must be willing to walk with the weaker brother in a disciple making fashion. This alone will lead to true recovery, forgiveness, and healing that is eternal. When this true healing occurs, the testimony shines deeply into a dark community that cannot repel the light even when they resist the light. Let this be the new foundation for healthy recovery in the Local Church.

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73 1 Chron. 12:32.

74 1 Pet. 3:7.
Thesis Construction

In order to clearly understand the value of this project it will be helpful to also understand the process of presentation used by the researcher. After having read the introduction which clearly states the purpose of this project while also developing a trail of research from a variety of sources it will be necessary to discover the tools used and the results acquired during the research as well as viewing a summation of current ideologies that exist in both the ecclesiastical and therapeutic worlds. A review of these ideologies and resulting methods will therefore help the reader to see the different potentials available for a church who is longing to be more effective in this particular domain of ministry.

The second Chapter of this thesis will reflect the research that was utilized. In regard to the applied research tools, this project used an anonymous survey of more than 100 participants from different backgrounds including both parishioners and clergy. In order to differentiate between the two different categories, the survey was ran at different times with different controls. The first posting was made available only to those in full time ministry through a restricted group via social media. The second posting was made available to anyone who was interested in participating within the context of conventional unrestricted social media outlets. The survey was intended to capture the current state of the relationship between the church and the homosexual community at large while also valuing the ideological premises and biases that may be present due to generation, church background, theological influence, and finally personal experience. It simply is not enough to ask the question as to how the church or her members ought to respond to the homosexual community rather it was of utmost importance to ask the participants to clarify how they view scripture in order to understand how it should therefore inform one’s life and lifestyle. The researcher also utilized personal interview with minimal
participants known to be directly affected or involved in the current communication of this particular ecclesiastical and social relationship. This chapter will conclude with the results and minor observations.

Chapter three of this thesis will focus on the observational findings resulting from the research. Issues such as categorical markers, ideological beliefs and their effects, theological conflicts and lessons learned will be addressed in this section. All of these topics will therefore inform the reader as to how the researcher came to his conclusions on the role of the church within this particular domain. Not all of these views will be agreed upon but there will be logically drawn conclusions that are informed by the results of both the testing and research that was completed.

Another major domain presented in Chapter 3 is that of the therapeutic approach working in conjunction with the local church. Once it has been determined that the individual who is identifying as a homosexual is desiring of living out a biblical lifestyle of obedience the next step is to decide upon a course of action. Currently there are several issues to address in this arena. First is the current human position and dismissal of the identification of homosexuality as being a disorder in behavioral health. Second is observing therapies that are currently at play such as reparative therapy and conversion/reorientation therapy and their impacts in transition whether healthy or not. The American Psychological Association, known heretofore as the APA, defines Conversion Therapy as, “…an attempt to eliminate individuals’ sexual desires for members of their own sex.” Naturally the APA considers Reparative Therapy and Conversion Therapy to

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75 Clinton, 142-147.

be one and the same. However, the creator of Reparative Therapy (RT), Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, defines it as such, “…the establishment of the therapeutic alliance wherein the client is seeking assistance to reduce something that is distressing him, at which point the RT psychotherapist agrees to share his professional experience and education to help the client meet his goal having investigated all the options.”

He differentiates this from common psychotherapy wherein the counselors often encourage the adoption of gay identity without fully exploring all the options. Other common therapeutic approach is that of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and its attempt to affect the heart through regular corrective behaviors. One specific adaptation of CBT and the use of Robert Ellis ABC Technique of Irrational Beliefs. The ABT model is adapted from the acronym describing Activating Events, Beliefs, and Consequences. This section will not be all inclusive but will at least lay a bit of groundwork for the belief that an understanding of the Attachment Theory is best suited for approaching the homosexual lifestyle especially for an individual who hopes to remain celibate.

Chapter four will have the intent of summarizing findings the relationship between the reviewed literature and the test results in a manner that offers future potential for healthy ministry outcomes. There will be personal reflections from previous and current experience and their relationship to the project at hand. This will be followed by an observation of trust in regard to which community an individual might turn for support in a time of revealing his identity and lifestyle. The issue of barriers for healthiness will also be addressed specifically focusing on how

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one approaches recovery and healing within the context of the local church. This section will conclude with observations for Healthy Recovery and keys to consider for developing a recovery ministry in this modern, cancel culture, morally declining era.

Throughout this project one should consider how Attachment Theory connects with deviant sexual behavior and how it can both negatively and positively affect homosexuality. In some respects, a healthy attachment will allow the individual to explore his own sphere of influence and come back to a reasonable conclusion. This exploration is known as the circle of security and from an early age allows the individual to process their environment to see if it is safe. The illustration below summarizes the information found in an illustration submitted to the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood by Kaye Colmer (figure 1.1) which, “describes a child’s needs in terms of attachment and exploration and explains the adult’s role in meeting those needs. Secure base behaviour, represented by the hands, refers to the balance between attachment (proximity) and exploration.”

As an adult dealing with homosexuality this becomes very important in the aspect of community especially as it regards safety.

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79 This figure is a summarization of an illustration found in the Australasian Journal of Early Childhood which clarifies the idea of a secure attachment. Kaye Colmer, Lynne Rutherford, Pam Murphy, Attachment Theory and Primary Caregiving, Australasian Journal of Early Childhood 36, no. 4 (2011).

Often the thought process begins with testing the community of involvement, receiving the generated response, and then evaluating whether that response is safe as it pertains to oneself and how much can be shared about the homosexuality. It is then necessary to explain the circle of security and how that impacts exploratory living and can inform the individual as to corrective behavior and safety to grow in change. Lastly, it will be noted that the value of having a secure and healthy attachment to God will impact the outcome of one’s journey through life.\textsuperscript{81}

There is a conflict in regard to how one can attach to God especially while struggling through homosexuality. The church needs to value that it can be incredibly difficult to trust an all-knowing supreme being in an intimate manner while processing a materialized belief that is clearly contrary to the intentional design of said diving being. Every being faces this same conflict with fear and trepidation, whether known or not, but it is clearly more pronounced when there is such a significant variance in one’s life that is clearly conflictual with the holy words of a creator being, namely God. In reality God is the only agent of change. He is the only being who can always value absolute truth while reaching into the dark. When the attachment to God is unhealthy and the individual begins to explore other safe environments the likelihood of true change is greatly reduced. Ironically the only place that an individual is able to truly test this attachment to God is through other believers, specifically the local community of believers otherwise known as a church. Therefore, if the church is unhealthy in its response to the homosexual individual, then often his understanding of a secure attachment to God is also greatly affected in a negative fashion. This behooves the church to evaluate the best methods of interaction that can extend beyond the physical walls of her establishments.

\textsuperscript{81} Dr. Tim Clinton, Dr. Joshua Straub, \textit{God Attachment: Why you believe, act, and feel the way you do about God}, Howard Books, New York, NY: 2010, (87).
In closing the researcher will present his conclusions and findings that ought to lead the church to a point of discovery if and only if she is willing to be adjustable yet without sacrificing theological foundations that are inherently non-negotiable such as the veracity, authority, and sufficiency of scripture. In order to do this the church must evaluate if and where it went wrong in her approach to this relationship while looking for opportunities to grow. It will also be necessary to address potential future debates that can stem from this root issue so that the church may be prepared to continually process her relevancy and influence in this modern world. Ultimately the focus of this thesis is not to produce and provide “THE” answer for homosexuality or other derivatives of human sexuality rather it is to enhance the conversation, provide relevant data and observations, and finally to create opportunity for movement and connection to an often ignored or maligned sector of social culture.
CHAPTER II

RESEARCH

Research Design

The research design for this particular subject matter will follow the Phenomenology approach. When attempting to study the relational interaction between different groups and thereby identifying subsets and tendencies or phenomenon, it is necessary to value not only data which is derived from a quantitative tool but to further evaluate that data by also applying personal interview that guides, validates, and even clarifies the quantitative data. Creswell explains that this approach is actually qualitative and focuses on a commonality of specific personal experiences within a defined sector or group. In this research the goal is to find a description of the variables being studied and the actual phenomenon that is perceived to exist between them. In the case of this research project the defined variables are the local church and the homosexual community. The phenomenon, whether perceived or experienced, is the particular relationship between the two, namely the reaction the local church has toward this community. However, this simplistic view does not include the plethora of variables that can exist as a result of human intervention and personal views that are contrasted against the whole of each group.

In order to validate the actual relationship between these two communities, the research must also value subsets and variables that exist within different factions of each community. For example, it would not be sufficient to argue that all evangelical Christians believe that homosexuality is sin. Other variables to be considered would be the individuals’ belief on the authority and inerrancy of scripture. Does the past history of teaching and current theological

positions of the individuals' denomination have any bearing on their beliefs? Are there more options than homosexuality simply being sin or not sin? For example, was man created as neither male or female in design and therefore free to choose how his identity will be lived? Does mankind have a genetic marker predisposing him to particular gender attraction? Even if mankind was created as heterosexual beings was this the ultimate desire for God? If one has negligible attraction to a person of the opposite sex yet burns with desire for an individual of the same sex, did God make a mistake in their being? All these variables are informed decisions and even in those informed decisions there is real variation as to how one values their original source of information. In order to truly value the extent of these communities and the relationships that exist between them, it is beyond necessary to validate hard data with nuanced personal experiences within the communities particularly with individuals of differing bias.

The research design of phenomenology is deeply rooted in the domains of social science, psychology, philosophy, and as it pertains to this research religion. The goal in this design is to extract the most basic, cleanest, or purest form of result that can offer insight into future responses.\textsuperscript{83} It could be argued that the addition of interview, and as a result personal bias, the outcome will likely also be tainted; however, it is the very intent of this style of research to find the bias. In doing this one often finds more questions, more opportunity for research, and more opportunity to dialogue about the particular issue at hand. This project does not seek to answer every question between the two communities presented, rather it has as a foundation the desire to demonstrate that there is a lack of relationship and that it is possible to create or repair a relationship with the intention of healing. Not every individual or subset within these

communities will agree with the proposed assessments however, they will not be able to deny that there was at the very least an attempt to research, listen, learn, and grow toward a healthier response. For the purposes of this project the researcher would also add that the response must be biblically rooted without compromising the core of what God’s Word teaches. Even in this desire there will be a differentiation as to what this description means.

Research Participants

As will be demonstrated the participants for the survey were a conglomeration of clergy and the general public. Clergy was chosen initially because they are the front line of the local church and they are also responsible for guiding the local church through her interaction with the community at large. Mel Lawrenz, in his book *Spiritual Influence*, states that “When leadership works well, it is a marvelous thing. And when it doesn’t, people are damaged.”84 If this assessment is true, it would behoove any researcher to evaluate how the individuals of influence perceive a given topic. This includes how they perceive and evaluate the responses of the entity or body with which they have been charged toward any given community but specifically the homosexual community as it relates to this project. The essential truth in this matter is that the congregation most often hears, adapts to, and follows the leadership that is guiding her. Therefore, as the leadership thinks, believes and acts, so thinks, believes and acts the congregation. One of the most valuable quotes regarding this thought comes from the movie *Remember the Titans* in which Julius Campbell responds to his team captain Gerry Bertier concerning an accusation of being selfish by saying, “Attitude reflects leadership, captain.”85

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Because attitude does reflect leadership it was also deemed valuable to evaluate how the general public also viewed the relationship of their church with the homosexual community. How do they perceive that the gay community would respond to them given a subject that is often diametrically opposed to what they may believe? Often both the leadership and the congregation can be adequately viewed as having a tendentious view of themselves to be correct with few errors of grave proportions. Ironically these partisan views cause her to always see herself in a positive light thinking that her leadership will always choose the right decisions. It is to this end that the survey was ran to the general public for the crossover of agreement between the congregation and the leadership becomes incredibly informative.

Next, for the survey, a caveat was allowed in that one could self-identify as being Non-Religious. This was done so that their voice could shed light on how the individual who is not connected to a church might also perceive the reaction toward the given topic. Though there were not nearly as many subjects in this demographic, the results were no less valuable in regard to public perception of both the church, the homosexual community and lastly their relationship to each other.

Lastly, for the purposes of clarity three individuals were chosen to take part in a personal interview in which they were able to add clarity to false perceptions, assumed responses, and untested interactions. By that the researcher is implying that often what the church congregants believe their church would do in terms of self-disclosure of homosexual identity is not at all what the church actually would do. Just because an entity believes that they will respond in a given manner does not mean that when they are actually faced with that issue they will actually respond accordingly. As will be seen, few churches have a planned approach that has been thought out beforehand, rather she almost always is reactionary at best and therefore damaging in
her response to the individual who is currently facing the realities of homosexuality in their life. This will demonstrate the value of listening to personal narrative such as these participants in order to do an actual evaluation of the church so that meaningful, healthy, biblical ministries can be developed establishing relationships with the homosexual community and her adherents.

**Research Approach**

The intention of this research is to gather, record, and analyze information regarding the relationship between the local church and the gay community in order to find healthier biblical possibilities for reaching into an unreached demographic for the local North American church. In order to evaluate this relationship an online survey was designed which evaluated perceptions of the church toward the gay community, perceptions of the bible from both the gay community and the local church, expected positions for the church toward the gay community and more. The survey was anonymous therefore protecting both the subjects and the researcher from identifying markers and potential coercion.

The survey was the base of the research and was ran three different times. The first survey was offered in a community of pastors through a mutual social media group with approximately 89 participants, though 29 skipped several questions. The second time the survey was ran publicly through social media in which 40 additional subjects chose to participate. Finally, the survey was offered through another community of pastors who participate in a different mutual social media group in which 40 more subjects agreed to participate. That brought the total participation level to 169 subjects of which 31 opted out of various questions. The actual questions of the survey can be found in appendix 1 and the data will be presented in figures 2.1-2.25

Due to the vast limitations created by a survey that exists in a strictly objective domain it
became clear that subjectivity and clarification needed to be added. It was therefore necessary to add personal interviews with subjects who were either homosexual, Same Sex Attracted, or Ex-Gay. Each of the individuals involved are either currently involved in a local church or have been in the local church community previously. As a result, there was an availability of necessary insight as to personal experience, recommendations, and observations as a result of their personal stories. These subjects will remain protected therefore pseudonyms have been utilized in order to protect their identity. A sample of the interview questions can be viewed in appendix 2 though any information that is deemed as possibly identifying has been removed.

As it pertains to analysis, the results of the survey were paired with the information from the interviews to both value and understand particular responses. Though the responses found in the survey look to be objective; bias and interpretive expectations ought to be assumed and will be discussed later in the chapter. Unfortunately, through the research it was discovered that more research is necessary for deeper clarification and some of the questions did not offer all the options that might be needed. Upon further review more questions became apparent and necessary. However, for the purposes of this project the current design will be the data used for further discussion, observations, and recommendations as it pertains to local church ministry within the homosexual community.

**Research Tools**

Survey

The tools that have already been mentioned above include a survey and personal interview in addition to the collective reading regarding various views of the subject matter. Each of these tools had a specific purpose in their implementation. It is important to understand that the ideas for the proposed survey questions derived from 16 years of ministry experience in
the local church while concurrently spending 10 years working with marginalized adolescents in an urban non-profit organization. With this broad variance of different population demographics one truth seemed to be glaringly clear. The church and the homosexual community at large had a very little and mostly unconventional relationship. Particularly from the local church to the homosexual community. It should not be assumed that a community which does not naturally seek to live within a particular biblical framework to therefore be expected to fulfill teachings that flow out of that framework. The church however does have a responsibility to not marginalize any group regardless of belief. This is easily seen however in issues of economic stature, racial demographics, and even particular religious variants, i.e., an evangelical church will respond differently to the construction of a mosque by a faithful Islamic community than it would to a temple being constructed by a faithful Buddhist community. This diametric stance naturally overflows into how one views and engages with communities of belief that are opposed to their own. Often what the church determines is more heinous is also that which is opposed with greater vitriol and emotion. It was out of the variances that were experienced by the researcher that the questions for the survey were developed.

The survey could be viewed as having three major divisions with multiple subdivisions. The first primary division would be the identification piece of the survey. This section seeks to clarify personal characteristics that may influence a given response to certain questions. These questions seek to find markers like age, religious involvement, church affiliation, and even frequency of church attendance. Going deeper into personal identification this section also explores the value that one believes the bible should hold in shaping decisions in their lives. This section also asks if they have a specific style of translation that is preferred, how often do they read the bible, how does one view the authority of the bible, does the Bible instruct mankind as
to how God acted in creation and finally does the participant believe that the bible takes a position on homosexuality. All of these markers are simply pieces of self-identification that could propose trends that are connected to a particular genre of participants, beliefs, or age. Later into the project the researcher saw that it would have been valuable to add more of these particular markers such as region, religion of family of origin, and even broader variance for church affiliation.

The second major division deals in the realms of personal experience within the homosexual lifestyle. Though this section has a significantly smaller number of adherents, it still provides markers that connect to how one believes the bible is to be incorporated into their lives or even how the church ought to respond to this particular subject matter. Ultimately this section was designed to provide insight as to how the church has or should be involved with the homosexual community. This section also values what level of relationship currently exists between the individuals and the homosexual community. For example, one question asks, “What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community? The possible responses are as follows, “I am not close to anyone who is homosexual, I know someone who is homosexual, I have a close friend who is homosexual, I have a close family member that is homosexual, my significant other is homosexual, or finally I am homosexual.”

As can be seen from these proposed questions there are several options that one might be able to choose from and more than one may apply but the metric seeks to value the response which the subject deems most appropriate personally. As it relates to each individual, this question helps evaluate if there is a personal relationship of the individual who is actively religious and their perspective on what the bible has to say about homosexuality. This question

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also becomes key later when the expected response of the church toward another congregant who self identifies as homosexual, how does this individual believe the church should approach this other congregant and is there a difference in their stated approach that is informed by their current level of personal relationship with the homosexual community. It would only seem natural that if one has a close family member that is homosexual it would impact their view on how their church ought to interact with that given community. This is of course a presupposition hence the reason for the question and the survey as a whole.

The last major division could be identified as Personal Church Experience. These questions are seeking to identify if the individual believes that there should be a relationship between the church and the gay community and if so, to what extent should that relationship progress. Other questions in this section look for what the individual believes the church stance should be, how important is this stance in choosing a church, what does one look for in a church as it pertains to homosexuality, what is the likelihood that this individual would self-disclose to their church community in contrast to a gay community and how should an individual respond to a child who discloses their homosexuality. One interesting contrast that is presented is the value of safety in self disclosing to the two different communities.

The assumption made before research was that these two positions would be diametrically opposed and fairly clear. Ironically nothing could have been further from the truth as both positions have more questions that needed to be asked in order to eradicate confirmation bias and protection to what one holds as having great value. Would one truly state that their church would be loving and biblical in their approach to self-disclosure when they have never actually faced the arrows that their church may be firing toward a given moral failure. Is it truly possible to be objective in this domain if one has never actually personally engaged in the
homosexual community from a church perspective when an individual, particularly another believer, is hurting and struggling with homosexuality? The question of relationship levels from the previous section helps to qualify the response one might have toward another individual that has self-disclosed. All of these questions are important and clarifying.

As can be observed through the given description of the survey, all of the sections, though capable of existing independent of one another, are also incredibly interdependent in identifying group tendencies, traits, and characteristics. The analysis that will flow out of these questions will provide a deeper view into areas of concern that may need to be addressed in order to move toward a healthier, biblical approach to homosexuality in a world that is currently in moral decline. Through the research there was also a desire to demonstrate the continual effect of the moral decline on the perception and value of the Bible and Church. Equitably, there was a desire to demonstrate that the further removed from the actual homosexual community that the church finds itself, she will be proportionately opposed to said community on what she will deem biblical standards which are often less biblical and more personal. The goal is to find a balanced, healthy, biblical approach that sees this subject matter through the eyes of God while concurrently taking appropriate stances in love and truth. Hopefully the findings of the survey will be an encouraging base for building toward a healthier future.

Interview

As it pertains to the personal interviews the goal was to establish a criterium for understanding how to process the data accumulated through the survey. All of the interview questions were based upon an individuals' personal experience, positions, and suggestions for the church community. In a Phenomenological Research the goal is to clarify and attempt to validate a perceived phenomenon that exists within a community or within a relationship between
communities. Without using a process of interview this would be incredibly difficult. Therefore, the interview itself validated what was already assumed and discovered through the survey. Furthermore, the interview shed light upon the reality that many times parishioners, clergy, and church attenders believe that their church would act in one way yet, when confronted with the issue of homosexuality, bi-sexuality, or same sex attraction, they actually act differently. This is manifested by the actual experiences that self-professing Christians actually have experienced. Sadly, as hopes to be demonstrated, the church rarely has ears to hear in addressing issues of lifestyle sin such as homosexuality.

As for the design of the interview, the researcher began with questions of self-identification in asking about the participants church attendance, their own personal experience with homosexuality, their own personal definition of homosexuality and even a clarification of terms between homosexuality, same sex attraction, and ex-gay. After having a baseline for understanding for personal identification and baseline processing another level of questions was posed to the individuals involved. These questions dealt more with personal experience within the context of the local church. These questions addressed ideas like personal confrontation from the church, personal experiences in how the church addressed the homosexual community at large in congregated settings, and the impact of particular church styles or denominations on their choice of local participation.

The next section of questions was designed to offer insight into the positions the individual being interviewed might hold as it pertains to local church communities. For example, one questions asked, “If you were to be a consultant for a local church dealing with issues surrounding same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay, what
would you recommend the church do for healthy connectivity?" This question provided contingencies for the interviewed to offer deeper insight without feeling the need to be guarded by how they would respond. Rather than feeling like an attack of the church it was an opportunity to be an aid to the church and therefore their personal experience and insight was validated, and deeper insights revealed. Furthermore, questions in the section sought to understand how one believes the church should respond to the mentioned lifestyles, how is their current church approaching this subject matter, do they believe someone in these lifestyles would be welcomed at their church and under what conditions, what level of church involvement should be afforded to an individual who identifies as homosexual, same sex attracted or ex-gay, and what ministry policies should be installed, if any, in order for an individual facing one of these lifestyles to participate in church ministries. Going deeper still, one of the most informative questions in this section addresses how to guide a family whose child has recently self-disclosed through this new revelation.

These questions offered further insight into matters of avoidance, self-protection, and even the willingness for an individual who is gay to be willing to self-disclose in a church setting. The personal interviews did exactly what they were intended to do in revealing the hubris that exists in the different communities providing self-protection yet alienating themselves at the same time. It also clearly demonstrated the false narrative in which each community tends to operate by neglecting healthy conversation bound by the love of God yet without compromise of ones' beliefs. At the end of the interview the participants were even asked if they had any personal questions for the researcher that they would find valuable to add to the research for future studies. A second was like unto the first in that the researcher asked if there were

\[87\] Appendix 2.
additional comments to add to the interview for further clarification. This part of the research was by far the most revealing and clarifying; however, it also demonstrated that there is an immeasurable amount of work that still needs to occur and that some of the work which seems to have already taken place, in reality is better described as a façade used to hide the true soul of the church community. There is a sense of growth yet under the smoke and mirrors lies the same positions soaked in perceived love and patience and a fear to truly state what one believes.

**Research Results**

To truly evaluate the totality of all the data one would have to truly cross tabulate every aspect for complete comprehension. Because that would be virtually impossible and because this project is focused primarily on the relationship between the church community and the homosexual community it is necessary to focus this presentation of data to the areas that pertain most specifically to the subject matter at hand. As has already been stated there were 169 individuals from different arenas of life that participated in one way or another with the survey. However, there was also a segment of 29-31 individuals who chose not to participate in every question. Ironically a choice not to answer can also be interpreted as a response in itself. Often a non-response indicates either a disagreement or a discomfort in the options available. In his work titled, *Nonresponse Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Household Surveys*, Robert Groves says, “Nonresponse, but need not, induce nonresponse bias in survey estimates.” This indicates that one can also take a non-response too far in attributing it to actual bias or data that is not actually present. Therefore, it is important to value the nonresponse without using it to strengthen the bias present in one’s research. In this case one is simply acknowledging that there is a nonresponse

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and therefore that indicates that more precision may have been necessary or that there was a stronger level of discomfort present than can be indicated otherwise. All data and graphs will be presented in their truest form indicating the percentage of those who answered each individual question while also indicating how many chose to forego answering that specific question.

To begin with each individual was asked to read and agree to a provided consent form. They were also offered a printable copy of the Institutional Review Board approved form. However, the first quantifiable question of relevance pertained to what was labeled as religious affiliation. This was not an indication as to the type of religion or church in which an individual was involved rather it was simply to indicate if one considered themselves to be actively religious, anti-religious, non-religious, or indifferent. (figure 2.1) According to the data acquired 139 individuals answered this question. 97.84% of participants self-identified as actively religious in juxtaposition to the 2.16% or 3 individuals who said they were non-religious. Out of those same responses 76.98% or 107 individuals considered themselves to be evangelical, 10.07% or 14 self-identified as fundamental and .72% or 1 individual chose catholic. There were also 12.23% or 17 individuals who indicated that this question was not applicable (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1 Q4 What is your religious affiliation?
This data helps indicate how one might perceive the issues of homosexuality as will be demonstrated. According to 103 or 73.57% of the 140 individuals who responded said that a church's stance on the issue of homosexuality was very important in their choice of determining membership in that body. Contrariwise, 21.43% or 30 responded in saying it was somewhat important and 5% or 7 said that they were indifferent. (Figure 2.3) This indicates that a church's position has some level of importance in at least 95% of all participants surveyed.
Q7 How important is a church’s stance on homosexuality to your choice of membership in that body?

In response to the stance that one desires from their church, the numbers are much more varied. The majority of individuals, 46.76% or 65, believed that the church should be understanding in their level of involvement toward the homosexual community while 25.90% or 36 indicated that the church should embrace the homosexual community. Within this response one can also see that 13.67% or 19 said the church should be opposed, 10.07% or 14 chose for the church to be accepting, and 3.6% or 5 said the church should be indifferent toward the homosexual community. (Figure 2.4). The complication with this question comes in not having a clearly defined meaning for each of the indicated words which after further review leaves a great deal of subjectivity. For example, does one who is fundamental define the words understanding or accepting in the same manner as someone who is more liberal in their faith stance in terms of the response of a faith community toward homosexuality.
Regarding definitions, this concern manifests itself in a crosstabulation of data. For example, when one observes how only the fundamentalists responded they will find that even though 21.43% or 3 believed the church should be opposed to homosexuality; 50% or 7 argued for a position of being understanding, 14.29% or 2 argued for embracing the homosexual community and the same number indicated that the church should be accepting. (Figure 2.5)

According to all the reading and literary research undertaken before creating this survey, these results do not coincide with the actual position of the fundamentalists at large. This therefore indicates that either the positions taken by authorities who are writing in this camp are either not accepted by the majority or there needs to be more clarity in the definitions. In comparison to these positions taken by the fundamentalists, the evangelical community had similar results with 50.94% or 54 individuals indicating a stance of understanding, 21.7% or 23 participants choosing to be embracing, 14.15% or 15 being opposed, 8.49% or 9 as accepting and 4.72% or 5 self-

![Crosstabulation of data](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embracing</td>
<td>25.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>10.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>3.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>46.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>13.57%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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identifying as indifferent in their stance toward the homosexual community. (Figure 2.6) The actual breakdowns are more similar than was expected indicating the value of personal interview for clarification.

Figure 2.5 Q6 How do you believe a church should be involved in the homosexual community? - Fundamentalist Response

Figure 2.6 How do you believe a church should be involved in the homosexual community? – Evangelical Response

The following series of questions were in relation to the position that one believed the church should take towards homosexuality, the importance of this position in choice of church participation, and a caveat of self-disclosure which could have influence upon the processing of the other two questions concerned. As it pertains to self-identification 107 individuals chose to
skip this question. Again, this non-response indicates a significant error, misunderstanding, or discomfort with the material at hand. The breakdown of those who responded is as indicated: 83.87% or 52 responded that this is not applicable to their lives while 8.06% or 5 have been bisexual, 3.23% or 2 self-identified as being Same Sex Attracted, another 3.23% or 2 claimed to be homosexual, and 1.61% or 1 identified as Same Sex Oriented. (Figure 2.7) These numbers do not mean that the participants continually identify as such rather they have at some point in their life.

![Figure 2.7 Q8 Have you ever identified as one of the following categories?](image)

In conjunction with the aforementioned data one can adequately value the responses to the questions concerning what they might be looking for in a church stance toward homosexuality and the importance of that stance. In regard to the value of the stance 73.57% or 103 of the participants who responded indicated that this stance is very important in their choosing of a body of faith. Contrastingly only 21.43% or 30 said that the stance is somewhat important and only 5% or 7 individuals claimed that it was indifferent in their choosing. (Figure
As for the position that the church takes, there was a much greater variation of responses. Those who argued that the church should, “Stand against homosexuality and would expect regular confrontation from the church in dealing with homosexuality,” comprised 9.35% or 13 of the participants. More toward the median range of responses 33.81% or 47 individuals wanted that the church, “stands against homosexuality but attempts to understand the lifestyle by encouraging the individual to regularly attend without judgment” and in the same vein another 33.81% or 13 respondents desired a church that “does not set aside homosexuality as different from other sin and embraces homosexual individuals as part of the church body without membership.” To round out the other extreme end of the spectrum 10.07% or 14 individuals indicated that they wanted a church who “embraces homosexual individuals as they are and includes the individual as a church member” while the final 12.95% or 18 participants argued that the church should “embrace homosexuality and fully encourage the individual to live out their created design” (Figure 2.9).
For the sake of adding biblical value to the actual survey, 5 basic questions concerning the bible and its efficacity or worth in guiding ones' life were also posed. These questions will demonstrate that often an individual’s regard toward the bible superintends their beliefs on other issues in life; therefore, it was necessary to evaluate if there was a correlational or even causative relationship between ones view of scripture and their stance on homosexuality. To begin with the participants were asked how they would describe the Bible to which 75.18% or 103 responded choosing that it “is God’s Word without error, fully preserved through all generations, sufficient in its completion, and mankind’s guide for all things pertaining to life.” Another 14.6% or 20 individuals indicted that the bible simply “contains truth that God wants us to know and live by.” A smaller percentage of simply 9.49% or 13 individuals said that it “is a collection of historic narratives written by men generations ago that needs to be understood differently in today’s society.” Finally, a small .73% or 1 respondent chose the response that the bible “is irrelevant to
our society and needs to be ignored” (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10 Q12 Please complete this statement, “I believe the Bible…”

In correspondence to this question the participants were also asked what they believed the bible taught about homosexuality. To this question 76.26% or 106 responded that homosexuality is sin, 15.11% or 21 indicated that homosexuality is acceptable, while the remaining 8.63% or 12 stated that they did not know what the bible taught in regard to homosexuality. (Figure 2.11) Furthermore, after being queried as to the importance of the bible in shaping one’s life, the results indicated that 91.43% or 128 persons valued the bible as very important, 5.71% or 8 chose the response of the bible being somewhat important, 1.43% or 2 individuals said that they viewed the bible as being indifferent for their lives and the last 1.43% or 2 participants were split with one choosing that the bible was somewhat unimportant and the other indicated that the bible was very unimportant in shaping their lifestyle. (Figure 2.12).
In order to further clarify the importance of the bible is for guiding one’s life, two further questions were asked in this section. First, the participants were asked how often they read their bible to which 63.57% or 89 individuals said daily, 29.29% or 41 persons responded to a couple times a week, another 6.43% or 9 said sporadically and the final .71% or 1 individual said never.
There were also 29 individuals that did not respond to this question. One issue of concern in this response is the validity of each person’s response. Even though the question and survey are anonymous these numbers do not correspond the national average which has been researched multiple times over for the last several decades.

Figure 2.13 Q17 Which best describes how often you read the Bible?

For the final question in this section the participants were asked which style of bible they read. This was asked in order to evaluate if there was a particular nuance between the Bible style and ones rendering of how the bible impacts their decision-making regarding homosexuality. In other words, is an individual that reads a literal translation more apt to be opposed to homosexuality than one who reads a paraphrase or a freer translation. The responses to this question breakdown as follows: 64.96% or 89 individuals preferred a literal translation, 26.28% or 36 participants read a dynamic translation, 6.57% or 9 people used a free translation such as the New Living Translation or the Modern English Version while the remaining 2.19% or 3 respondents use a paraphrase. (Figure 2.14)
It is only natural to assume that one’s view of the bible and its level of importance in decision-making will also influence one’s view of the value of the church in their life and decision-making. For example, the survey asked how each person viewed church attendance to which 85.71% or 120 responded with very important, 10% or 14 indicated somewhat important, 1.43% or 2 said they were indifferent towards church attendance, .71% or 1 individual chose that church attendance is somewhat unimportant for himself and lastly 2.14% or 3 valued church attendance in their lives as being very unimportant. (Figure 2.15). Pursuing these values deeper 94.24% or 131 of the participants said that they attend church at least one time a week, 2.16% or 3 said they attend semi-frequently or 1-2 times a month, 1.44% or 2 described their attendance as semi-infrequent or no more than nine times a year, another 1.44% or 2 said they attend only for religious holidays and 1 individual or .72% said they never attend. (Figure 2.16) Ironically there are 10% more individuals that attend church frequently than those who believe church attendance is important. This response poses an interesting question, why would one attend
church weekly if it wasn’t very important to them?

Figure 2.15 Q14 How important is church attendance to you?

Figure 2.16 Q15 How often do you attend church?

For the next section of questioning the subjects were asked how they viewed the creation
of man, how they would respond to their child self-revealing his homosexuality, lastly, they were asked to make a simple indication as to their current level of involvement with the homosexual community. The responses as it pertains to the creation narrative were more varied than expected particularly in regard to how many took a strong approach to the veracity and sufficiency of scripture. According to the data 40.6% or 54 individuals believed that all mankind was created heterosexual and that homosexuality is a chosen sin while 30.8% or 40 individuals believed that all mankind was created heterosexual and there is no genetic marker for homosexuality. These initial two responses would be considered more conservative approaches. For the more flexible responses 13.53% or 18 participants said that mankind is created with a genetic marker that makes him either homosexual or heterosexual. However, in what would be considered a more liberal interpretation 6.77% or 9 individuals said that mankind was created neither heterosexual nor homosexual and was therefore free to choose while 9.02% or 12 participants believed that God created mankind to be homosexual and therefore supports homosexuality. (Figure 2.17) Again these numbers do not correspond logically to the data collected which indicated one’s belief as to whether homosexuality is a sin or not. The numbers are quite different.
As to how the respondents might process the revelation of their child as professing to be homosexual 0% argued that they would confront the sin expecting a change and breaking off communication until the child agreed with their position. However, is this true? 41.3% or 57 participants said they would share the truth of God’s Word while continuing to love the child in voicing disagreement, 42.03% or 58 said they would also share the truth of God’s Word while attempting to understand the child’s challenge and choosing to walk with the child through the difficulty. Ultimately 3.62% or 5 said they would share the truth of God’s Word, embracing their newfound truth, and encourage them on their path. Lastly, 13.04% or 18 individuals simply indicated that they would celebrate their life and revelation of their new identity. (Figure 2.18)

For clarification the researcher intentionally did not describe the word truth in this question. For example, does the parent believe all of God’s word is true or not. This connects to one’s belief toward the veracity of scripture. Is it all true or only partly true? He also intentionally used the phrase “new identity” in order to evaluate if this is how one valued self-revelation. In other
words, is this truly a new identity or has one always been gay?

Figure 2.18 Q13 Please complete this statement, “If my adult child professed to be homosexual…”

For the final portion of this section of the survey the respondents were asked about their current personal level of relational involvement in the homosexual community. According to the individuals surveyed, 12.14% or 17 individuals indicated that they were not close to anyone who is homosexual; 47.14% or 66 participants said they knew someone who is homosexual. For those who were more closely connected to the homosexual community, 18.57% or 26 persons revealed that they have a close friend who is homosexual while 20% or 28 respondents said they have a close family member that is homosexual. There was only 3 people or 2.14% who again identified as being personally homosexual. (Figure 2.19) These numbers will be valuable in interpreting how one actually evaluates different domains connected to the relationship between the church and the homosexual community.
Figure 2.19 Q20 What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community?

The next section was quite small but asked three similar questions which were as follows, what is your experience with homosexuality and the local church to which 1.43% or 2 individuals said I am homosexual and have not been confronted by my church, .73% or 1 said I am homosexual and my identity is not an issue at my church, and 97.86% said this does not apply to them (Figure 2.20). Next the participants were asked what their experience with bisexuality and the local church was to which .71% or 1 said they were bi-sexual and had not been confronted by their church whereas 99.29% said this question does not apply. (Figure 2.21) Lastly, they were posed with the question of experience with Same Sex Attraction and the local church. To this question .71% or 1 indicated that they were attracted to the same sex and have not been confronted by my church, another .71% or 1 individual said that they were attracted to the same sex and their identity is not an issue at their church. The remaining 98.57% or 138 participants said that this question does not apply to them. (Figure 2.22)
Figure 2.20 Q21 What is your experience with homosexuality and the local church?

Figure 2.21 Q22 What is your experience with bi-sexuality and the local church?
Figure 2.22 Q23 What is your experiences with Same Sex Attraction (SSA)?

For the last section two very significant questions were asked that focused upon the perception of where one felt most at ease if they were to self-reveal as a homosexual, the church or the homosexual community followed by a postulation as to how one felt the church should respond to a parishioner who identifies as homosexual. In regard to the likelihood of one self-revealing to their local church community 15.89% or 17 individuals said highly likely, 16.82% or 18 indicated they were somewhat likely to reveal here, 14.02% or 15 said somewhat unlikely, 25.23% or 27 chose highly unlikely and the largest amount of 28.04% or 30 indicated that there was no way they would self-reveal as homosexual to their church community. An important side barre is that 62 participants or 36.68% did not respond and chose to skip this question. (Figure 2.23). As for how likely one would be to self-reveal to the gay community, 17 or 15.89 % said highly likely, 14.02% or 15 said somewhat likely, and 18.69% or 20 chose somewhat unlikely. The remaining 51% were split as follows: 25.23% or 27 indicated they were very unlikely to
reveal to the gay community and 26.17% or 28 people would in no way self-reveal to the gay community. Again 62 respondents skipped this question. (Figure 2.24) The large number of abstentions in regard to these two questions is astonishing.

Figure 2.23 Q24 If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your church or religious community?

Figure 2.24 Q25 If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your public community?
The last question posed for this survey was intended to value how one thought that the church ought to respond to a parishioner that announced he or she was attracted to the same sex, bisexual, or homosexual. This question can also be cross tabulated with several of the other stances in order to see if there are any influencing markers attributed to the position chosen here. These cross tabulations will be discussed later in the evaluation section of this project. For the purposes of raw data, the results from the survey indicated that, 2.9% or 4 participants believed the church should share their belief that the Bible teaches SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality as being sins and they would remove those whom self-disclose from membership while asking them to leave the sin or leave the church. In another approach 18.12% or 25 persons said that they would share their belief that the bible teaches that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins and that they would give the individual a period of time to repent while requiring counseling before removing them from the church. Taking a position that is more moderate, 47.83% or 66 respondents said that they would share their belief that the Bible teaches that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins but that all sin is the same and that they would then walk with the individual through the healing process of leaving such life of sin in an understanding way. The second moderate position indicated that 13.77% or 19 individuals would share their beliefs of the Bible teaching that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sin, but it is not their place to judge the individual therefore no action would be required though help is available if it is desired. Lastly, the more liberal stances will be observed of which the first group of 5.07% or 7 persons indicated that they do not believe SSA, bisexuality, or homosexuality are sin and therefore no action would be taken. Whereas the second group of 12.32% or 17 individuals also did not believe that SSA, bisexuality, or homosexuality was a sin and therefore they would celebrate their identity (Figure 2.25).
Figure 2.25 Q26 How do you believe your church would respond to a parishioner announcing he or she is attracted to the same sex, bisexual, or homosexual?

In a final note it is worthwhile to be aware that there was also a large range of age in those who participated in this survey. While one’s value of the bible, church involvement, style of church or even personal relationship with the gay community can have an impact into how they might respond to the questions of relationship between the church and the gay community, age can be a significant factor as well. Therefore, it was the desire of the researcher to see if different era specific influence had any impact upon how one might respond to the questions asked. The breakdown of the ages was determined by matrices that are typical in research and are represented in the following. Within the group of 140 participants who answered this specific question .71% or 1 considered themselves to be from the Greatest or Traditional Generation with a minimum age of 73 years old. 12.14% or 17 participants self-identified as being from the Baby
Boomer generation aging between 54-72 years old, 41.43% or 58 participants were from Generation X which is aged between 37-53 years old, 42.14 % or 59 individuals are defined as the millennial generation comprising the ages of 22-36 years old and the youngest participants having no more than 21 years of age make up part of the iGen generation also known as the Centennials. (Figure 2.26)

![Figure 2.26 Q19 What category best describes your age?](image)

**Chapter Summary**

All of the aforementioned data structures afford valuable insight into the relationship between the church and the homosexual community at large. Though none of the data is conclusive it does provide the opportunity for discovery and the ability to ask even more questions in the future which could have greater profitability. As for its effectiveness in regard to this type of research, a phenomenological design, one can begin to see where the assumptions and the data begin to intersect hopefully allowing reflection into how one might be able to create a ministry or resource for churches to better address this relationship in a biblical and
compassionate manner. If data is ignored and nothing is valued through this survey, there will also be no change for the future of the church’s relational influence within the homosexual community.

In the next chapter there will be several observations made which will include the data from the research through cross tabulations as well as revealing information that can be a defining factor which will come from the personal interviews. The question no longer concerns the value or lack of a relationship between the two communities involved rather what can be done both now and, in the future, to restore healthiness while creating a biblical approach of truth and love in relational engagement between the two communities in view.
CHAPTER III

Observations and Notable Findings

Introduction

If a research project were simply meant to accumulate data, then surveys, questionnaires, and testimonies would suffice; however, in a phenomenological project, it is essential to value the interrelation components being studied so that one can profit from the research in a pragmatic manner. For example, it has been observed that some of the expected or anticipated responses were different from those that were actually given. These differing responses give the researcher the opportunity to validate the differences and to begin asking why the reality and the assumed are not actually corresponding. Is that due to a misinformed bias? Could it be that often groups of people are miscategorized and therefore forced to believe one thing over another? In the guilt and innocence cultures that exist in the western world, it becomes necessary to choose between black and white when a situation is not as clearly presented as such in biblical terms? This isn’t to argue that something which is clearly opposed by God in scripture now becomes subjective rather it is the value of seeing the entirety of scripture and understanding how each subject can be handled with love and truth at the same time. That is the intention of this chapter. What can be learned from the research that was presented particularly within the relationships that exist or lack between the local church and the homosexual community? How can restoration and healing exist in an environment that is often deemed to be hostile towards selected errant behaviors?

Data Analyzed

To begin this section, it would be valuable to see that out of all the participants, more than 12% stated that they were not close to anyone who is homosexual. Another 47% said that

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they simply knew someone who was homosexual, yet the available options do not offer a choice that indicates a level of intimacy within these relationships; therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that at least 59% of the participants did not have a profoundly deep relationship with an individual who was homosexual. Yet all of them had opinions or beliefs as to how a church should handle this particular subject matter. It should be noted that one does not need to be drunk to be able to form a belief about alcohol use; however, when life involves relationships it is incredibly important to process those relationships through a scriptural lens while also valuing the people with whom those relationships are made. If one were to consider the rejection that the women caught in adultery faced in John 8 as a result of her lifestyle, it would be hard to imagine her being loved or valued in the church. Were the authorities justified in their initial judgement? Perhaps. It is likely that the modern church would have acted accordingly? Likely; however, Jesus transformed the situation by valuing both the woman and the zealots. Ironically, Jesus did not tell her that she was right in how she was living. Nor did Jesus pass over her sin, rather this interaction between them beginning with Jesus’ question, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “no one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” John 8:10.

What is most interesting in this story is that Jesus does something that is regularly missed in the western world. When the religious leaders approach him with their rightful judgment, as the Rabbi and wisest leader among them, He kneels down drawing the shame to Himself and away from her. This would never happen with a man of stature or respect in that culture. Then He knelt down and began writing in the sand. This action is often emphasized by the western church as many try to assume what Jesus wrote, yet it was insignificant enough, that no description of these words was even given. One must therefore ask himself, why does the
modern church focus more on assuming what He wrote rather than valuing the position He took? In kneeling down, Jesus humbled Himself placing the responsibility of appropriately deducing the law on the religious leaders for this situation. The act of not engaging their accusations was significantly more important than what was actually written. Quickly it becomes evident that they had no response for the situation. In bowing Jesus drew the attention away from the woman and toward himself, exactly like the action of the cross. He took all the shame, guilt, and condemnation upon Himself.

How does this relate to the current subject matter? Often the church is so quick to deliver judgment but offers no possibility of future grace or hope. Unfortunately, she often is quick to recognize the sins of others while validating and excusing her own. What would it look like if the church acknowledged the truth of sin, particularly in this case homosexuality, and then approached the individual who was entrapped by extending grace, love, compassion, and hope of what could come with the help of another? Is it possible that disciple-making relationships, like Jesus demonstrated, could offer this lost hope and that through Him? What would it look like if the church or her members taught truth, but allowed God to condemn as they do with other sins that they are not nearly as passionate about? It would be foolish to eliminate confrontation, as even Jesus confronted sin, but what happens after the confrontation could change this broken relationship that exists between the church and the homosexual community. In doing this she offers herself as a harbor for the weary to anchor in during the storms of their lives. What is the real plan of grace and redemption? How is the church willing to help this individual or even view

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them? Often Jesus offered Himself to others in order to guide them in life. Jesus did not shy away from confronting sin, but He also avoided continually rubbing salt into the wound except toward the religious zealots and those who blinded themselves to His grace. Notice this was almost always the ones who thought they were holy and righteous. Often the sinner already knows and sees their sin and brokenness but those who are religious ignore their sin in order to focus on another sin. By seeing the “greater treason” of others, they often feel better about their own failures. Yes, Jesus is the savior, but He is so much more than that as well. He is also the healer that walks daily with the believer through the Holy Spirit, breaking chains of bondage through confession to Him alone so that one can “Go and sin no more.”

In this biblical illustration one can see that these religious leaders quickly found an example to use against Jesus to support their firmly held beliefs yet without valuing the individual that literally was about to die. There was no compassion. Jesus demonstrated this to them by using their own knowledge of the law and their experiences as teachers of the law. He led them to self-discovery and let the Holy Spirit do His work. One might say that this is a unique situation in scripture with an extremely intentional lesson. One might even say that this story was added later and not actually part of the original texts. Both of these responses are valid, yet the life of Jesus is full of other examples. The woman at the well in John 4 was an outcast and rather than shaming her, Jesus forgave and restored her. He recounts the truths of her life, yet again Jesus leads her to discover truth and forgiveness in Him. Luke 7:36-50 recounts the narrative of the prostitute who anointed Jesus feet. No one at the table was comfortable with her


presence and she most certainly was not welcome. When Jesus was confronted about the woman’s act of anointing him by the Pharisee Simon, Jesus challenges his heart. In fact, Simon internally accused Jesus of not even being a prophet for Jesus clearly did not know what kind of woman she was, yet in his response to Simons internal thoughts, Jesus clearly demonstrated his stature as a prophet. He then forgives the woman and tells her to go in peace which can only occur with the forgiveness of sin. She knew her lack of human worth and dignity, yet Jesus gave her another chance to be restored to honor. Finally, in Mark 10:17 the bible introduces the rich young ruler that ran and bowed to Jesus. His response seemed to be purer than the most devout believer today. He did all the right things and would surely be accepted by the religious leaders of the time. Yet Jesus rejects the man as his heart worshipped another God, namely his belongings. This response baffled the disciples however a short time later Jesus encounters blind Bartimaeus. This blind beggar was rejected by all and thought to have been cursed because of sin. Even the disciples tried to hush Bartimaeus, however he cried all the louder for Jesus. As a result, the beggar was forgiven and healed unlike the rich young ruler.

The point of these stories is to expose that the modern church has truly learned very little about living out truth in love. She quickly condemns the sinner while offering no hope or she readily accepts the sin without calling the sinner to recognize the truth. Both are essential. Jesus did not let any of these individuals continue to live in their sin without responsibility, rather He told them to go and sin no more just after forgiving them for their sin. Even John said in John 3:17, “For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.” The church loves to condemn without ever beginning a relationship with others. Yet Jesus, in an incredibly intimate manner, knew people deeply and restored their sole, as if He had known them all their existence. As if He was God. In order to
truly bring healing to the broken and to restore biblical life value to humanity, in all realms, one must be able to personally connect with his own humanity. One cannot simply judge or condemn outside of relationship.

Connecting this to the research it was discovered that out of the individuals who said that they believed the Bible was very important in informing their lives, only 68% read daily. This is likely a false positive response as often people believe that somehow others will find out that they did not read daily and therefore lie about their daily routine all the while actively pretending to be righteous. This can be substantiated by the Pew Research Centers that indicates that at least 63% of church goers read their bible one time a month or less. Furthermore, only 15.5% of these individuals had a close friend or family member that was gay. True, 50% said they knew someone that was homosexual, but that does not qualify their level of intimacy with that individual. This could simply mean that someone they went to school with 5 or more years ago is now homosexual. Ironically 51% of these individuals argued that homosexuality is sin and that one ought to confront this sin and walk with the individual toward healing. One cannot confront and walk with someone with whom they have no relationship. How can the church recognize her need to walk with individuals toward recovery, yet avoid tangible relationships with those individuals? Why does the church constantly choose to marginalize particular sins, leaving those who are entrenched in them to fend for themselves? Does she not really understand that proximity and relationship are necessary for healing and true-life change? Why do the church attenders always anticipate that someone else will do it for them? It is simple, being around brokenness is uncomfortable and awkward. That is why the pastor is paid for his work, so thinks the church.

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Observations

Therefore, the first observation or notable finding is that true healing doesn’t often happen because the church avoids relationship with the counterculture. When reputation is on the line, when media worthy issues are at the forefront, the evangelical church tends to always side with the charged rhetoric at the expense of the suffering individual. Furthermore, the individual believers that make up the church rarely engage these difficult relationships, assumptively as a result of fear and misinformation. This begs to question, how does the average believer, that does not regularly engage in daily nourishment of the scriptures, actually form their beliefs on any issue, particularly an issue so controversial as homosexuality. It would seem that whatever the mouth of the church and her leaders teach, the hearts of the followers believe as long as it suits them. Her members actively listen to what tickles their ears, and that with passion, while ignoring what should make them think and study for themselves. This ought to be highly valued as a pastor since their impact on others regarding the Bible is extremely weighty, powerful and valuable. If leaders do not teach others to learn for themselves, they have simply propagated disciples of ignorance. Unfortunately, it is more comfortable to be agreed with than challenged.

A second observation that was deduced comes as a result of the responses toward church attendance. It could be assumed that the way one regards, or values church attendance can also indicate how he values relationship. Too often the church argues that people leave because the gospel has become offensive, the people have become judgmental, the music isn’t entertaining, and so on. While this is true at times, in his book, *You Lost Me*, David Kinnamin argues that “…most young Christians are struggling less with their faith in Christ than with their experience of church.”95 He further argues that many leave the church due to a disciple-making gap found in

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relationships. In their research they discovered that often young adults, twentysomethings, often feel alone and isolated from other adults namely their parents when speaking of the realm of faith and spirituality. In fact, most of these young people believe that the church does not value their doubts and concerns and few of them have a meaningful relationship with another adult friend outside their parents. What Kinnamen is exposing here is that valuable relationships are essential for active church involvement. People do want truth, but they want it to come in the context of authentic relationship, not just from the mouth of someone they don’t know who is speaking from the pulpit. As Jim Rayburn, Founder of Young Life said, “We must win the right to be heard.” It takes relationship to be able to speak meaningful truth into peoples' lives. Those who feel valued will likely continue to attend even if others do not agree with them. It is important to distinguish the difference between agreeing with ones doubts and valuing one’s doubts. One leads to argument the other provides opportunity for disciple-making in leading others to self-discovery of the truth which comes only from God’s Word.

If these previous discoveries by Kinnamen and the Barna Group are valued, then it can also be assumed that the reason the homosexual community does not value the church is due to a lack of relationship. This does not mean that the church embraces sin but rather seeks relationships with the wounded, wandering, curious, or lost. Is it possible that the best process for healing in the church community for the doubting homosexual is to provide healthy, valuable, loving relationships where truth is valued but shame is avoided? Glenn Stanton shares several stories of individuals who “got it right” in maintaining relationships with homosexual individuals

96 Ibid., 29.

without compromising truth. It always rested in displaying the gospel, living out care and compassion, and not attacking this “detestable” sin rather focusing on the personal relationship of the individual and Jesus Christ. In other words what if the church taught truth but didn’t kick the wounded? What if she spoke the truth lovingly and allowed the Holy Spirit to be God? The safest environment for this to occur is in close proximal relationships of which few individuals have. In this research it was discovered that 82% of those who believed that the Bible is very important for informing their lives also believed that the bible taught that homosexuality is sin. (Figure 3.1) Concurrently, 78.5% of those who were actively religious also believed that homosexuality is sin. (Figure 3.2) This is valuable because these individuals are identifying their view of homosexuality and are also valuing their perception of the church. They have deemed the bible to be important in daily matters and attend church at least once a week. Contrariwise, less than 33% of the actively religious feel safe enough to self-disclose to the church if they were homosexual and less than 30% of those who find the bible very important in daily matters would self-disclose. Ironically neither of these groups have large numbers of individuals within them who have personal relationships, either friend or family, with an individual who is currently homosexual. What this indicates to the researcher is that there is a lack of trust of the church with what they would believe to be a sin of greater gravity. They are not willing to sacrifice relationships within the church on the altar of truth because they know shame, judgment, and condemnation will arrive and destroy relationships. They don’t trust themselves. The shame isn’t the only fear, it is the lack of relationship as well which comes out of the shame.

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98Stanton, 108.
Figure 3.1 Q11 Please complete this statement, “The bible teaches that…”- Bible Very Important

Figure 3.2 Q11 Please complete this statement, “The bible teaches that…”- Actively Religious

A third observation, there is an incredible dissonance between what one believes about their church and what actually occurs. For example, over 78% of the participants who took the survey believed that their church would, at the very least, walk with them toward healing and restoration. (Figure 3.3) Some of these believed that the church would simply accept their homosexual lifestyle or maybe even embrace the lifestyle without confrontation. The point is that less than 30% believed that their church would make them leave; however, as was already demonstrated, more than 67% still would not likely disclose to their community of faith if they were homosexual. What is the hidden truth here? (Figure 3.4) The reality is that often
congregants want to believe that their community of faith is safe but in reality, they would not trust church due to fear of being deeply hurt, rejected, and stripped of relationship. Believers do not trust the church when it comes to the deepest secrets of their life. They have learned this both actively and passively from their leadership. They see their pastor as faultless therefore they must also hide their own sins.

Figure 3.3 Q26 How do you believe your church would respond to a parishioner announcing he or she is attracted to the same sex, bisexual, or homosexual?
Figure 3.4 Q24 If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your church or religious community?

Knowing this phenomenon, why would a struggling homosexual ever enter the doors of a church with hopes of restoration and healing. This is simple deductive reasoning. It could be argued that one reason the parishioners would never trust the church is because the leadership does not trust the church either. Peter Scazzero illuminates on this reality in saying, “The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership. In fact, the key to successful spiritual leadership has much more to do with the leader’s internal life than with the leader’s expertise, gifts, or experience.”  The leader may be incredibly gifted at exposing scripture and teaching truths but if he does not model this behavior, if he does not live graciously and lovingly while valuing truth, then the congregation will follow his example. Scazzero further argues, “The emphasis in my seminary was to learn so I could teach others. Thus, ‘teach and instruct,’ not ‘listen and learn,’ were the dominant behaviors

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expected of trained leaders.” People will never feel free to share their darkest struggles if the leadership is not willing to lead in this manner. This does not mean continually airing dirty laundry but rather being transparent enough that others can value the sin struggles that exist in the life of the leader. Ironically when this occurs, the congregation begins to feel free to follow suit which ultimately leads to repentance and restoration. As was stated in chapter one, when the church recognizes the value of her own forgiveness, this mercy and grace will dissipate through others she comes in contact with. This must happen from the top down.

**Areas of Interest**

At this point it would be valuable to address areas of interest that were postulated in the thesis construction phase of the first chapter. The three areas of interest mentioned were categorical markers, ideological beliefs, and theological conflicts. The first area of interest involves categorical markers. One assumed categorical marker would be a vastly negative response of the Fundamental church toward the gay community at large, particularly with an individual in the church that self-discloses. In some respect this did prove to be a correct assumption as no more than 28% of these self-identifying participants had a close relationship with someone who is homosexual. (Figure 3.5) Again, this can indicate that the church has taught to create barriers until someone is evangelized. Often in the fundamental church, congregants avoid significant relationships with “gross sinners” as they fear what others might think of them or that in some manner this sin will affect their lives in a negative way. These same participants also disclosed their value of their own faith community in terms of homosexuality as no more than 20% would even consider disclosing to their church that they were gay. (Figure

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100 Ibid 185.
3.6) Actually, these participants were two times more likely to disclose to the gay community, with whom they have very limited contact, instead of their faith community. That is astonishing.

![Figure 3.5 Q20 What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community? - Fundamental](image)

![Figure 3.6 Q24 If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your church or religious community? - Fundamental](image)
Going further, the researcher assumed that this style of ministry would actively seek to confront homosexuality in harsher terms than were discovered. According to the results, 48% or almost half of these participants believe that their church would respond by sharing their beliefs about homosexuality being no different than any other sin and that they would walk with the self-identifying individual toward healing by leaving this lifestyle in an understanding way. (Figure 3.7) The caveat however is that the researcher has found a flaw in this question. The survey response offered the choice of, “…walking with them through the healing process of leaving that life of sin in an understanding way” yet there was no description of what understanding means. There was an intentionality of the vagueness offered in this response but with no proper definition one can believe they are being understanding even if they are not. Further research might reveal a difference in defining what it means to be understanding. This same error can be found in the position these believers think the church should take toward homosexuality. At least 14% believed that the church should embrace the practicing homosexual and include them in church ministry. Again, this is not the initial reaction that the researcher expected to find which therefore warrants further discussion. Ultimately, this categorical marker did prove that there is an assumed harsher treatment toward the homosexual community or sin in general which causes congregants and others to be fearful of self-disclosure which ultimately prohibits healing.
Another area of interest to be addressed was the reality of theological conflicts. Though everything is theological at some point, the foci of this research is the theological positions taken regarding the creation of mankind and the bibles’ position of homosexuality. Typically, if one believes that God created man to be homosexual or to have the freedom to choose homosexuality, they will also believe that homosexuality is not sin. When considering the former, 15.75% of the participants believed that man was either created gay or free to choose. An additional 13.5% believed that God created man as heterosexual but that there is possibility for a genetic marker that predisposes someone to be homosexual. In contrast over 70% believed that man was created heterosexual, though only 30% of those individuals were willing to identify homosexuality as a sin. (Figure 3.8) This then begs to question, if God created something to be in
a particular fashion, is it reasonable to assume that He also intended for it to remain that way, therefore making any deviation from that original created act a willful choice of sin.

Regarding the latter area, is homosexuality a sin, 76.25% of the participants chose to identify this lifestyle as such. There was a relatively low number of participants, around 15%, who argued that homosexuality is acceptable by God; however, the most ironic revelation here is that over 8% of the participants did not know what the bible teaches about homosexuality.

(Figure 3.2) It is not astonishing that people did not know what the bible teaches as that is identified fairly quickly by a simple conversation with another believer regarding this topic. The astonishing part is that so many identified as such. In today’s economy very few individuals are really willing to admit a lack of knowledge about a given topic, especially a topic this charged. Rather they tend to run toward prescribed rhetoric they have embraced which has been spewed out towards them whether in the church or through social media friends. When cross-tabulating these two questions, it appeared that at least 75% believe that mankind was created as homosexual and that homosexuality is a sin according to the Bible. This is a significant

Figure 3.8 Q10 Please finish this statement, “I believe…”

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theological precedence that also informs how one might feel, think, and react towards another individual that self-discloses. The deeper question to now ask is, “Are all sins equal and how does one believe that God would have the church respond to this self-identified sin?”

Figure 3.2 Q11 Please complete this statement, “The bible teaches that…”

The last area of interest that was postulated in chapter one regards the ideological beliefs. How do ideological beliefs effect one’s responses toward a particular idea specifically homosexuality? The researcher expected to find that the churches who are more fundamental would also take a stronger stance on literal translations, opposition toward homosexuality, stronger belief considering the creative act of mankind regarding homosexuality, and that they would be more likely to act rigorously toward the homosexual community. There was also an assumption that churches or individuals who are generally more liberal in their ideological beliefs will also have more relationships with the homosexual community and that they would me more open regarding their views of creation, homosexuality as sin, and willingness to accept and embrace homosexuality. Ironically this was not the case. Though there was a difference in views of man’s creation, it was actually the fundamental church that had a lower percentage of participants who believed that homosexuality was sin. The difference was negligible at best, but
it was interesting to discover this difference. However, the fundamental participants were 14% (Figure 3.9) more likely to believe that God created man heterosexual with no exceptions than the evangelical group. (Figure 3.10)

**Figure 3.9 Q10 Please finish this statement, “I believe…” - Fundamental**

**Figure 3.10 Q10 Please finish this statement, “I believe…” - Evangelical**
The disappointing discovery in this arena was again the lack of relationship that both of these groups had with someone who is homosexual. In total only 18.5% or 26 of the participants admitted to having a friend who was homosexual, and 20% or 28 individuals disclosed that they had a family member that was homosexual. (Figure 3.11) If one were to also value that 29 individuals skipped this question it could easily be seen that the percentages actually drop to 15% and 16% respectively. While one could easily celebrate the fact that a little over 30% of the participants had a personal relationship with someone of the homosexual community, only 15% of those were likely made by choice. In other words, one cannot choose their family, but one does choose their friends. All this to say, the church is failing to reach into a community that is in dire need of Jesus redeeming love and insurmountable grace for redemption, freedom, and healing not to mention His love. It was assumed that the more open evangelical perspective would be more likely to have a relationship with the gay community than the fundamental church, this was not true. It was also discouraging to find that the leadership of the church was the least likely to have a relationship with the gay community meaning they were not leading by example.
Another evident ideological belief presented itself in the style of church that individuals seek to attend. For example, the majority of participants desired to frequent a church that took some sort of stance against homosexuality. At least 13 participants argued that the church should regularly confront homosexuality, 47 individuals looked for a church that stood against homosexuality while encouraging the individual to attend regularly and another 47 said that this sin is no different than other sins and the individual should be a part of the church though without membership. (Figure 3.12) These indicators show that these participants ideologically believe that homosexuality is sin. Ironically how can homosexuality not be marginalized in the latter example if the individual is still not allowed to be a member of that church community. This is not an affirmation or condemnation of that stance, rather a recognition of the existing dissonance. These beliefs are not determined to be right or wrong at this juncture, they are simply indicators of ideology that exists within the ecclesiastical world.
These previous three concerns present another discovery. Though most church bodies would argue that they do not see homosexuality as being any different than any other sin and that their respective church would welcome with open arms someone who is homosexual and looking for help the economics of their beliefs would not agree. There is too much data that illustrates a resistance toward the homosexual community whether that be a result of theological conflict or ideological belief; the categorical markers are clear. Therefore, it is apparent that the church beliefs and actions are not equivalent and even the congregants know it which is displayed through their fear of self-disclosure.

**Interview Analysis**

The most telling discoveries come from the interviews which confirm and clarify what was discovered through the survey. The phenomenological study of these different relational components: the church, the gay community, the believers in the church, the ideological beliefs, and theological conflicts are further exposed when the individuals were willing to share their
story as well. In conducting the interviews, it was discovered that each individual had to truly count the cost of their disclosure and the weight of their identities even if they did not believe that they had chosen this identity. It is often said in local church settings, whether by the pastor or by congregants, that God, “Loves the sinner but hates the sin.” Though ontologically this is veritably biblical, it also demonstrates a failure to truly value the sinner. This isn’t to say that one should believe otherwise but to believe something and to publicly state it are two entirely different realities. In the gay community one does not simply define himself by a random set of definitions rather his identity is often securely attached to the actions of his life. In other words, I am what I do, and I do what I am. This may seem a bit inordinate at the base, but it is necessary to value this existence. If a believer was to approach an individual who was living in any form of sin, namely homosexuality, and say to that individual, “God loves you but hates what you do,” what would this communicate? Believers quickly define the homosexual community as recalcitrant at best but in reality, the church and her congregants are often quite similar as they play the role of pharisee. Often the believer will strain their water of the gnat, all while trying to swallow a camel, Matthew 23:24.101

Sadly, just as the pharisee often attacked the outward life of the sinner rather than sharing the story of Redemption that would come from the Messiah, the believer tends to attack the issue of homosexuality before a relationship has ever started. One of the questions asked to the interview participants was, “Do you believe it is right to confront same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay? If so, how should this be done?” One participant, identified as Trevor for the purposes of this project, said affirmatively, “It is ok if and only if the individual is claiming to be a believer, just as every other believer in the church

should be confronted for the sins they are willfully living out.” Trevor himself is same sex
attracted and currently involved in a local body of believers though much of his life and
attraction has been hidden for fear of losing all relationships. When asked if he had ever
personally been confronted due to this attraction he replied, “Not by the church, I have chosen to
inform very few individuals and those who do know, I deeply trust. They have confronted me
and walked with me, but I am very guarded with this information.”102 Sadly, the largest
contributor to this fear in his life is the church, it was there that he would hear side comments
made by others in the church in his presence whether toward him or simply about the
homosexual community in general. He disclosed that he could never trust the majority of
believers that he knew with this information as it would be, “catastrophic and painful.”103 It is to
this very issue that the researcher desired to produce this project. Why are so many hurting
individuals, particularly those who do not want to experience this attraction, so guarded if the
church is truly the representation of Christ to the hurting world? Why is this community so much
more derided than any other community? Churches care for reaching out to almost every
community, even Islamic communities but will rarely if ever intentionally develop relationships
with individuals from the homosexual community in the same manner. Why? Though there are
exceptions, it is often only done by churches who either embrace homosexuality as normal or go
as far as to celebrate the homosexual lifestyle.

In further conversation the question was posed to the participants, “Are there specific
churches you would avoid due to Same-Sex Attraction, or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-
sexual, or ex-gay?” Ironically the participants took different positions regarding this question.

102 Trevor, Interview by author, Albertville, France, July 31, 2020.
103 Ibid.
Trevor responded by stating that other than churches such as Westboro Baptist or those who are militant against homosexuality, he would not specifically avoid the churches because he knows what God teaches in the bible and that he must choose to follow what it teaches. “If the church is biblical, it will biblically teach that homosexuality is sin, and I must continue to live a life of purity.”

He did however state that certain churches are more uncomfortable to worship in as they continually highlight the gravity of homosexuality and abortion higher than any other sin, even infidelity and divorce.

Considering disclosure at his current church, Trevor shared that his current pastor is trying to, “Break down the barriers that exist between these two communities and that his current church does not give him nearly to fear at a moment of disclosure as other churches have.”

Actually, during the time when he was doing a personal meeting with the pastor for becoming a member, he disclosed his struggle with same-sex attraction and the pastor simply thanked him for his honesty and willingness to share this information and offered to be available when the temptation is too much to bear alone. Trevor added that the pastor even asked someone to speak on a Sunday morning that also struggled with same-sex attraction in 2019. This is not the normal practice of the local church. Furthermore, as it pertains to active involvement, Trevor believed that if the homosexual can openly express their reality while actively living against it, they should also be able to actively serve in the church. It is no different than any other sin. He further described a distinction between homosexuality and homosexual romance. Homosexuality, according to him, is someone who is experiencing same-sex attraction and is open about it to their community. Contrariwise, homosexual romance is the acting out of this attraction within a

\[104\] Ibid.

\[105\] Ibid.
relational unity with another individual or individuals. If one is living in homosexual romance, Trevor did not believe that individual should be allowed to serve in the church. According to him they are significantly different. He believes the only way for true healing and change is through the local church but that the local church has to move beyond the barriers that currently confine her in order to make an eternal impact into this community. She must stop marginalizing sins.

To close out this section it is important to end with a view of personal relationships. Without personal relationship, the church will cease to exist and because there are so few personal relationships between the church congregants and the members of the homosexual community, the evangelical church is almost non-existent in their world. This is not to say that there are not churches in the gay community. If fact there are several denominations that support and even celebrate homosexuality, such as the Metropolitan Community Church which was started by Troy Perry a defrocked Pentecostal pastor in the 1968, but the overall evangelical community would not agree with this position nor would they recognize those houses of worship as biblical or even Christian.\(^{106}\) Digging deeper into the personal effect of loss when an individual self-discloses, the greatest fear is a loss of relationship. When asked how they would guide a family through a recent self-disclosure from their child, one participant said, “First, imagine how hard this is for you to discover, then multiply that by 10 or more. This is how difficult it is for the child that is disclosing. Now, actively think about how you will respond because your choice will affect your relationship for the rest of your lives. If the relationship is severed or severely damaged, restoration and mending are possible, but the security and trust will never be the same.”\(^{107}\) He shared that he has friends who have “come-out” to their family and


\(^{107}\) Trevor, July 2020.
found themselves homeless an hour later. As a result of being rejected by their family and immediate community, they look for security elsewhere and the homosexual community immediately welcomes them in with open arms. What the child does not know is that the homosexual community will continue to love and support them as long as they walk the line and never deter from their disclosure. It is not possible to change. This is eerily similar to the response of the church. Therefore, if the immediate family has rejected them, unless they change, and the homosexual community accepts them, as long as they don’t change, there is neither security nor compassion at either end. The church needs to be the security. To this end Trevor shared, “The church must respond with love as they would with any other sin present in the congregation. Don’t shun the homosexual because if the church does reject the individual, they will likely never dawn the doors of another church again. It is important for the church to realize; the attraction is not a choice but how one responds to the attraction is a choice.”

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, it seems clear what has been discovered. There are significant gaps and a large dissonance between what the church believes she is and how she actually responds to deviant lifestyles. Furthermore, there are many ideological beliefs and theological conflicts that hinder true self-evaluation in this area of ministry and the church needs to be willing for an outside believer who is familiar with this work to help her begin building a safe community for gospel centric, redemptive, and healing relationships. Her loud preachers should practice the instructions of James 1:19 which says, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{108}}\text{Ibid.}\]
righteousness of God.”109 As has been identified by the interview participants, this attraction is not something one would choose to place in their life but the way that an individual chooses to respond to this attraction has life altering consequences and without the church community the options are fearful at best. Lastly, at the base, mankind is relational and as such need’s healthy relationships for spiritual growth. Because this particular sin is often so marginalized it makes it incredibly difficult to have authentic relationships within the church community which in turn hinders healing, disclosure, and hope. If the church is going to make an impact, she must be willing to remove barriers and to show people the love of Christ without sacrificing truth. The obvious question now ought to be, how?

109 James 1:19.
CHAPTER IV

Summary and Conclusion

Purpose Re-Expressed

In order to summarize the purpose, research, results, and observations of this project so that a valuable conclusion can be made, it is necessary to begin with an anecdote. There was a young youth pastor who was attending a conference with his students. Each morning the students would learn a particular subject of apologetics during the morning and then follow that time up with practical use in the streets of the large city where the conference was hosted. One afternoon the youth pastor took his group of students, known as a POD, out on their mission to a well-known tourist attraction in this city. Unfortunately, one afternoon they were to work at a large park near a lake. There were two busses with the same number for the route they needed to use, and he accidentally chose the incorrect bus literally going the opposite direction of the intended site. The POD exited the bus, in one of the most dangerous parts of this city. Upon realizing the danger, they immediately entered another bus so that they could turn around and head to the correct location.

Upon re-entering the bus, the youth pastor sat down beside a young woman on the only open seat that remained. The young woman studied his t-shirt deeply before saying, “Oh no, there is no reason for me to stay seated here beside you. I already know we have nothing in common so I will just stand toward the front of the bus.” The youth pastor found this hello to be quite bizarre, so he asked the lady how she was so sure that they had nothing in common. She replied, “I saw your shirt and I know what that place believes about people like me. I will just be honest with you; I hate that place and anyone from there.” Upon looking down he realized he
was wearing a shirt from a large Christian university in that city. He had just bought the t-shirt the day before from the clearance table of the conference. He explained this to the woman still seated beside him and asked for another chance to make a good introduction. She said, “Well, I’m gay and like I said, we have nothing in common. My preacher already told me how much the people at that school hate homosexuals. My preacher said Jesus created me to be gay and so I celebrate being a lesbian.” The youth pastor thought and prayed for a few seconds that seemed like an eternity. He was reminded of a similar story he heard from Greg Stier, the pastor that was speaking at the conference.\textsuperscript{110} He thought to himself, “Surely God gave me this story to be able to speak with this woman.” He then turned to the woman and simply said, “Honestly ma’am I think we have more in common than you realize. Have you ever been attracted to women? Have you lusted over them? I am a recovering addict of pornography and have lusted over many women at one point in my life, so we do have a very strong commonality.” Amazed the woman decided to stay seated and quickly began to laugh. She explained that she had never heard a response like that from a Christian let alone a pastor.

The youth pastor then went on to simply ask what she knew about the life of Jesus. This led to a profound conversation about sin, forgiveness, redemption, and healing through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that lasted for more than an hour. She was amazed at the stories of His interactions with so many broken and rejected people. He discovered that many of these stories had never been taught by her pastor and she did not have a bible to read. She was particularly interested in the story of the woman at the well. They left both agreeing that this was an incredible time of conversation, enjoyed by both individuals. He was even able to leave a contact and his bible with her. This conversation became possible because he changed the status

\footnote{\textsuperscript{110} Greg Stier, “Loving the Unlovable: Sharing your faith without fear” (Muve Conference, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL, July 5, 2014).}
quo and redirected the misinformed hatred this young woman possessed. The young youth pastor in this anecdote was the author of this research project and if God had not intervened, this opportunity would have been totally lost. Sometimes being right eliminates the opportunity to speak the truth. At other moments loving inhibits the ability to speak truth out of fear of losing a relationship. Therefore, it is necessary for believers to learn how to speak the truth at the right time, through the avenue of love and compassion. This only comes through Holy Spirit guidance. Dann Spader argues, “The beauty of Christ’s life is that He modeled how to live life in total dependence upon the Father. Jesus showed us how to live as humans: fully dependent, fully obedient, fully reliant upon the Word of God, Spirit of God, and prayer.” Going further, Gerald Hawthorne says, “The Spirit of God is seen to be at work within individuals, to be sure, and at work within them for the sake of the larger community, not primarily for their own sakes. Because of the rhetorically charged political positions of both the church and the homosexual community, very little valuable conversation like this is actually occurring. The Church is not relying on the Holy Spirit.

Why this anecdote? It should be clear that the intention of this project is to discover how to have a biblical approach for the church toward the homosexual community. This anecdote was fundamental in helping to inform the reader of the colossal gap that exists between these entities. Both believe that a relationship exists, yet this relationship is fictitious at best. The faulty view that the homosexual community has toward the church which presents her as always hateful is inappropriate; however, the equally distorted view that the church has toward all the individuals

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within the gay community as being intentionally lewd, belligerent, and is also inappropriate and unfair. Sadly, each party involved in this relationship always assumes the worst of the other yet neither has enough valid relationships or experience across the aisle. For the purposes of this project however, the researcher places all of the responsibility upon the shoulders of the church to begin rectifying the brokenness that exists. As has been clearly stated, this does not mean compromising the truth of God’s Word, rather it means embracing it in a deeper manner while attempting to live as Jesus lived in speaking the truth in love.

The value of humanity

How should one then live? This is a very valuable question that leads the conversation toward the review and resolution of this project. First, one needs to value what was taught by Francis Schaeffer, modern day Christian philosopher, who created L’Abri fellowship in Switzerland. He said, “The bible says that you are wonderful because you are made in the image of God, but that you are flawed because, at a space-time point of history, man fell.”113 Far too often the church has failed to remember that all humans, including those with whom they disagree, were created wonderfully in the image of God and that all humans are equally as broken. Anthony Hoekema said, “In contemporary society this tendency to hate others often takes the form of indifference or alienation…Indifference toward others is a common phenomenon in our growing urban civilization, where many people hardly know their next-door neighbors and, what is worse, do not care to know them.”114 This indifference is simply a failure to acknowledge the image of God in all created humanity. Though as image bearers all are in

113 Francis A. Schaeffer, Escape from Reason: A Penetrating Analysis of Trends in Modern Thought, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (1968) 22.

need of renewal and redemption to properly reflect Christ, at the core, all mankind still reflects the image of God in a threefold manner: man and God, man and the rest of humanity, and man with nature.\textsuperscript{115} If it were not for the love of Christ toward humanity, all hope would have been lost. In this same vein, mankind ought to value his fellowman. This does not insinuate that love is gentle and weak, rather that love requires strength, determination, and a willingness to see an individual through the eyes of Christ on the cross as well as through eyes of the Father at the judgment. Schaeffer later explained, “What the Reformation tells us, therefore, is that God has spoken in the Scriptures concerning both the ‘upstairs’ and the ‘downstairs’. He spoke in a true revelation concerning Himself-heavenly things- and He spoke in a true revelation concerning nature- the cosmos and man.”\textsuperscript{116} Explaining the need for relationship that leads to redemption, James Beck and Bruce Demarest have argued that mankind is not the ultimate image-bearer of God, that is reserved solely for Jesus, by becoming man, Jesus entered into His creation in order to redeem this broken image and therefore conform believers into this renewed image of God. Ultimately it is the believer who is the imitation of Christ and therefore ought to value all mankind, regardless of choice sins, as created beings of God in need of redemption.\textsuperscript{117} Without relationships, the indifference supersedes the image of Christ in believers and therefore impedes the work of Christ in the lives of the sinner, in this situation, the discriminated homosexual.

Ironically both of these revelations are called “The Word” and both are equally as valuable. What Jesus fulfilled on earth did not negate what was taught in the Old Testament rather it clarified the teachings and made them practical by expressing that without grace there is

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{116}Schaeffer, 23.

\textsuperscript{117}James R. Beck and Bruce Demarest, \textit{The Human Person in Theology and Psychology}, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional (2005) 150.
no hope for restitution. The same remains true even today. Without the compassion of Jesus Christ offered by grace through His act of love on the cross, all men stand condemned with no hope of healing or freedom. Yet with His grace, love and compassion, all mankind has the opportunity to truly experience freedom through Jesus; however, as Rob Parson has expressed, the church should pray that the prodigal will meet the father rather than the older brother at his return. The question now at hand is simple, how can the church act like the father in this parable?\(^{118}\) Henri Nouwen says, “The elder son’s dilemma is to accept or reject that his father’s love is beyond comparisons; to dare to be loved as his father longs to love him or to insist on being loved as he feels he ought to be loved. The father knows that the choice must be the son’s…”\(^{119}\) The pharisees of Jesus time, and the church today, must also face this dilemma. Will she choose to accept the same love from the Father that the most heinous of sinners receives, or will she continue to insist on another love created specifically for her? What she chooses also indicates how she values her own sin.

**Failure of the church**

The whole purpose of this research was to discover if the assumption being made by the author was in fact correct. Is there a normal, healthy, biblical response from the church to the homosexual community in a time where society continually declines away from her morals? It was discovered that another, more fundamental, question needed to be processed. Is there a healthy relationship between the homosexual community and the local church whereby a believer, or anyone else for that matter, hoping to leave this lifestyle can truly find rescue and

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\(^{118}\) Parson, 105.

restoration? The assumption was that any relationship that exists would be insufficient at best, to which the research validated this assumption. (Figure 4.1) Only 38% had a relationship with a homosexual and likely many of those were not by choice as they were familial.

Figure 4.1 Q20 What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community? The goal then for the project was to provide a biblical response of the local church to the homosexual community in a world of continual spiritual decline. The success of this goal depends upon one’s vantage point. The researcher would argue that the achievement of this goal has begun but that the goal in itself will take much longer to come to fruition. However, it should be noted that to achieve a goal, movement must occur and for movement to occur questions must be asked. Furthermore, for questions to be possible, relationships must also exist, if not the only person responding to the question being asked is the researcher himself in a confirmation bias. Dr. James Petersen illustrates that relationship is formed by when one party begins to listen.120 He taught that the first three goals are to, “provide safety, understand, and clarify…Talkers can’t

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relax when they’re in danger of being put down. For them to share freely and examine their feelings and thoughts they need ‘safety’.” If the church expects to make an impact, she must be willing to listen to the individual and value their life.

**Importance of research Re-Expressed**

It is important to express once more the importance of this research. The church is needed for true restoration and this happens in context of relationship. It was also observed that though the gay community promotes safety and acceptance, which on the surface does truly exist, it firmly rejects and even cancels any individual that does not fully support all of her philosophies, there is no wavering allowed. Even within the context of a so-called healthy relationship there is often violence, abuse, and even harassment. In their work *Same Sex Domestic Violence*, Sandra Lundy and Beth Leventhal contemplate, “How do you celebrate Pride Day- the one day we are supposed to be able to walk the streets relatively unafraid- when you need to hide not from the violence of straight people but from a member of you own community who is stalking you?”

In fact the express the existing violence and hypocrisy even more in sharing, “Norms within our own subcultures support the battering and isolate victims as well.” This is not a report or study conducted by heterosexuals fighting against the gay community, rather it is a report from the homosexual community itself. There is a significant amount of hidden violence within the homosexual community. These realities preclude a healthy and biblical response from the church, yet very little is actually being accomplished in this regard. In fact, the church frequently misses this opportunity all together by either being silent biblically such as the Metropolitan

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121Ibid., 93.


123Ibid.
Community Church or by reacting with extreme vitriol as is the case for Westboro Baptist Church.

**Three Basic Responses**

According to the research that was done, there were three basic responses from the local church. Each of the three had a theological position that was rooted heavily in their ideological beliefs which in turn established categorical markers for each of them. In the survey, thirty-five individuals argued that the church should embrace homosexuals. Their basic response was to understand, to celebrate and even to affirm their lifestyle according to the self-identifying homosexuals or bisexuals that participated in the survey. (Figure 4.2) The biblical value that is prioritized here is love but there is an avoidance of truth by many. It was however discovered that there are some who do view homosexuality as sin and search for churches who stand against it even if they identify as homosexual. Even in this case, the error is toward confronting lovingly. (Figure 4.3)

![Figure 4.2 Q6 How do you believe a church should be involved in the homosexual community? - Homosexual or Bisexual](image-url)

Figure 4.2 Q6 How do you believe a church should be involved in the homosexual community? - Homosexual or Bisexual
Figure 4.3 Q9 Please finish this statement, “When choosing a church to worship in, I am looking for a church that…” – Embracing

Ironically this love is often not inclusive toward a heterosexual that wants to be part of the community, particularly in the metropolitan community church. In her book, *Coming Out in Christianity*, Melissa Wilcox even notes that some LGBT people are averse to the including of heterosexuals into LGBT churches like the MCC. She further advocates that the exclusively LGBT church is not needed anymore and that allies are needed for community. This community is looking for others to affirm their beliefs. Many who choose this position attempt to argue that others are taking a poor hermeneutical approach in standing against homosexuality. Some even go so far as to say the bible of the first century is not relevant enough to the current day and therefore needs to be reevaluated. (Figure 4.4) Furthermore, this group is the most likely to have a relationship with someone who is homosexual which impacts their beliefs. (Figure 4.5)

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Although the researcher would agree that a healthier relationship is necessary and that this view supports the need for relationship within the context of church, he would oppose the idea of affirmation of homosexuality.

Figure 4.4 Q12 Please complete this statement, “I believe the bible…”

Figure 4.5 Q20 What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community? - embracing
The second response is one the author identifies as capricious at best. This position can be both judgmental and unkind all the while boasting the love of Christ. They are often more economically and politically regarded as what they stand against, rather than what they do support. Though the author assumed that this would position would be mostly fundamental churches, the largest number of respondents for this position came from the evangelical group. (Figure 4.6) Some in this group attain the levels of true vitriol such as Westboro Baptist Church which states, “We neither condone nor advocate human hatred,” yet their web address is www.Godhatesfags.com.125 This extreme of this position is neither forthcoming of a believer nor does it in any way express the love of Christ. Simply stated this position ideologically believes in truth but ignores love. Few of these individuals have any notable relationship with the homosexual community. (Figure 4.7)

Figure 4.6 Q5 If you are religious, which describes your church most accurately?

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Sprinkled into these positions are individuals that do desire to both speak truth and to express love at the same time. In fact, 58 participants argued that the church should be understanding toward those who are homosexual. (Figure 4.8) It is this group of individuals that seems to be seeking a biblical narrative for approaching this relationship with a desire for freedom for the one trapped in the sin of homosexuality without compromising truth. This same group of people desires to express the love of Christ though they may not yet have enough relationships with this community. (Figure 4.9) They often represent the woman who anointed Jesus feet at the table of Simon. She was clearly aware of the value of her forgiveness. These individuals normally battle their own brokenness by walking through the bible regularly and trusting in relationships of accountability. Fighting homosexuality is very similar to fighting other sexual addictions. Joel Hesch, the founder of Proven Ministries, argues, “Maybe, you have

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tried program after program with minimal impact in the long run. It’s time to face the reality that programs don’t work. In order to see freedom, it’s going to take a partnership." Programs will not change the lives of homosexuals either, it will only occur in the context of relationships built over a long period of time. It is here that true health and repentance can occur, and it takes a significant amount of time to achieve that level of vulnerability.

Figure 4.8 Q6 How do you believe the church should be involved in the homosexual community? – understanding

Figure 4.9 Q20 What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community? -encourage.

The final group represented in this relationship or lack thereof is the sufferer, the one who is actually homosexual and who wants to change, be freed, and live victoriously in the love and truth of Jesus Christ. Sadly, it is this individual who rarely finds the help they are looking for within the church walls. Often, they seek Christian counseling, therapy, group sessions, or even specialized ministries for deviant behavior and addictions; yet they rarely experience true freedom and connection in the church atmosphere. They long for relationship yet are forced to hide the deepest of pains because the cost is too great to pay. While both extremes mentioned earlier are expatiating their positions with extreme eloquence or passion, the sufferer continues to ensconce in the darkness of his brokenness with no hope on the horizon. It is to this end that this project has been proposed, to find healthy responses and offer alternative guidance to the local church to reach into a very dark and often neglected people group.
Research results

In an effort to be concise and clear in this section, only some of the results of the findings will be presented again rather than the hard data that was already observed in chapters two and three. However, the grand narrative that was discovered in chapter two, having been illustrated through the hard data, will be summarized here. It begins with the fact that the vast majority of the research participants found the church to be highly valuable in their lives. (Figure 4.10) There was also an overwhelming majority of individuals that valued the bible highly and generally saw it as being without error (Figure 4.11) and important for daily decisions in life. (Figure 4.12) Generally speaking, the participants recognized homosexuality as sin, though that came at different levels and with different nuances. (Figure 4.13) This data reveals felt beliefs about the church, homosexuality, and the bible in general.

![Figure 4.10 Q14 How important is church attendance to you?](image)

Figure 4.10 Q14 How important is church attendance to you?
Figure 4.11 Q12 Please complete this statement, “I believe the Bible…”

Figure 4.12 Q16 How important is the Bible in helping to shape your lifestyle?
Looking into the hard data a bit further, it became evident that a significant dissonance existed between what one perceived their church to be and how much they actually trusted their church. That is to say, the vast majority of the participants believed their church to be willing to walk alongside an individual toward healing in an understanding way, yet a majority of these same individuals confessed that they would not be willing to disclose to their church if they were homosexual. (Figure 4.14) More questions surrounding this dissonance would have been significantly helpful. The last major revelation was simply that very few individuals who took the survey had an actual relationship with someone that is homosexual. Furthermore, at least half of those who had a close relationship with someone who is homosexual did not have a significant choice in the matter as that individual was part of their family. Granted, anyone could choose to separate from family but that is not nearly as likely in the demographic that took this survey as one might find in a more traditional or fundamental setting. This being the reality, the assumptions taken by the author were validated in that there is little to no healthy relationship between the local church and the homosexual community at large. The findings would be further discussed in chapter three with observations added as well.
Figure 4.14 Q24 If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your church or religious community?

**Findings**

The goal of chapter three was to report on the findings that were discovered as a result of the research conducted. This is not merely a repetition of the data, rather an analysis of said information. In this section, it was reported that there was little to no relationship discovered between the local church and the homosexual community. Both parties made gross assumptions about the other without actually having a relationship established. Therefore, it was postulated that one must presume that very little true healing is taking place through the church, which is His tool for this time. Without the local church, very little truth is dispersed. Sadly, with the local church, love is often replaced with condemnation. These were discovered to be two very sad realities. Furthermore, it was reported that even the members or faithful attenders of any said congregation were unlikely to disclose a “Super Sin” to their church let alone the sin of homosexuality. The question was then postulated, if one cannot trust their own church and their
own relationships with the darkest difficulties of their life, why would someone outside of that community, ever dare to ask the church for help. Often it is the by-standing observer who sees the atrocities of war in a clearer manner than the soldier himself. In the same way, the bystander, often the homosexual in this conversation, is the one who sees the heinous abuse and judgment offered by the church as being greater than the love she should be known for.

These realities beg to question why there isn’t more relationship between the two communities. Why is there such a division when there are other sins that are even more prevalent in the church on a regular basis? Some of those common sins that are often quickly overlooked are gossip, lying, divorce, gluttony, arrogance, judgment and abuse. Often the marchers along the street holding signs of condemnation with photos of failed abortions, scripture passages used in a condemning manner towards a lewd lifestyle, and shouts of faithfulness for one’s beliefs are lauded while the actual sufferer passes by feeling less loved than before. The church simply added shame. Why would he ever ask one of those individuals for help? Why would he ever call on the church for security and recovery? The reality is that change is needed within the church itself and that will only happen when the leadership itself is willing to confess, live transparently, and exemplify humility with his own faults. When this occurs the rest of the church follows, and the floodgates open for others seeking life and freedom.

Postulated Areas of Interest

The three major areas of interest that were introduced were categorical markers, ideological beliefs, and theological conflicts. Though none of these were exhausted in this project, there were examples given of each. A categorical marker is simply viewed as something that is known or expressed by any entity about any particular issue. For example, there is a categorical marker that the fundamental church takes a stronger and more conservative stance
against homosexuality and therefore would be less likely to have a personal relationship with someone who was homosexual. Ironically some of these categorical markers are more assumed than proven as was discovered and reported in the findings section of chapter three. This assumption was discovered to be true but not nearly to the extent as was expected. Next, ideological beliefs are in essences a belief that characterizes a particular group of individuals. Often an ideological belief informs the individual or group as to what they should believe and becomes the foundation for how they will pursue more information. Often these ideological beliefs create a significant amount of confirmation bias in their research. In chapter three one belief addressed was the style of bible translation and how that informed the individuals beliefs toward the homosexual community. In other words, is one more likely to choose a liberal translation in order to further validate their position of affirming homosexuality due to a vague translation of biblical terms? The opposite can also be true in this particular situation. Finally, theological conflicts were discussed. A theological conflict arises in the interpretation of scripture toward a particular subject matter. For example, is one who believes God intentionally created mankind to be heterosexual more likely to confront and judge than someone who believes that God allowed homosexuality even from the point of creation. These theological conflicts create confrontation and disagreement between groups but also create a resistance toward listening to an opposing position for further growth. It is important that one is able to listen without compromise. Certainly, one ought to be able to change their view if truth is presented and scripture convict, however that is not to say that one should simply hold his convictions lightly, willing to change their position, even if scripture is not the agent of change.
The last focal point of research in chapter three was focused on the interview with Trevor. It was in this interview that clarifying observations were made. For instance, a common statement made by Christians concerning “Super Sins” like homosexuality, pornography, and abortion is as follows, “God loves the sinner but hates the sin.” As a result of the interview, it was affirmed that this quote often is misunderstood by the gay community and is often hurtful. Normally, someone who is homosexual understands this statement to say that God supposedly loves me yet hates what I do, yet what I do is who I am, therefore God actually hates me. It was also disclosed that to the gay community it seems that Christians are much more interested in condemning sins than they are in loving their neighbor. It was then asked in the interview, “When is it ok to confront the sin?” Trevor responded to this question by stating that an individual ought to be confronted in their sin if they are a professing believer. If they are not a believer, why would one confront the sin rather than share the gospel. The Holy Spirit must first justify an individual before He sanctifies that same individual.

This same process revealed a valuable question. Why does the church have ministries focused on Hispanic communities, Islamic communities, poor communities, and even global efforts of evangelization, yet ignore the homosexual community that is ever present in her front yard? How should this be established and addressed? The interviewee suggested that the only way for this relationship to be constructed is by personal contact through small groups and one on one conversation. Again, this must begin at the top level with the pastor being the agent of change. The pastor must willingly break down the barriers that are so ever present in this failed relationship. When the pastor can provide personal example of building relationships with a homosexual and be willing to self-disclose his own brokenness and faults, he will also
demonstrate how to have a one-on-one relationship with others that is loving with purpose. The biggest fear of the homosexual in this context is the outcome of his self-disclosure. The believer never sees the cost involved in this situation, but the homosexual has already counted the cost and realizes the lifelong impact that self-disclosure can cause. Therefore, within the context of a long term one on one relationship or a small group atmosphere, the individual is more willing to disclose his greatest failure. He has already established a relationship of trust and love with others who are also disclosing their own moral failures. This result must be precluded by an atmosphere of trust and by a sense of transparency among all parties involved. If other members are not willing to be honest, neither will the homosexual looking for freedom.

In conclusion the interview participant disclosed that very few knew about his lifelong struggle because of the fear of rejection and condemnation. His childhood church did not know, and he did not trust her even though he loved her deeply. That being said, there were individuals from that church that were very aware because they had proven their faithfulness to him, and he was therefore able to trust these individuals. That was the first realization of freedom he had ever experienced. Sadly, even his parents are unaware of the situation because he fears their response. The point is personal relationships that are deeply built on trust are the only way true freedom, healing, redemption, and hope are experienced by any individual and this same truth rings loudly in the homosexual community. If the church expects to make an impact and to have a biblical response to the homosexual community, she must begin by building a community of safety through individual and small group relationships that are modeled from the top down. Then and only then will the homosexual begin to dawn the doors of the church with the hopes of actually experiencing forgiveness when the church finally decides to speak the truth in love.
Significance

The significance of this project lies in the clarification of missed opportunities. What has occurred as a result of the research that was included was the illumination of dissonance between perceived notions and true realities. That is to say the church has long thought that she is truly loving and caring toward all communities, however there are several minorities that are truly rejected and avoided by the local faith community. America measures her success largely based upon the efficiency in that which she does. If a factory produces more products in a quicker fashion, it is applauded and deemed successful. Often the church is operated with this same theory in mind, success is measured by production over depth of relationship. As it pertains to this research, often, as has been presented, churches seek programs to help those who are struggling with “Super Sins,” as a means of provided help. Unfortunately, even though some programs are able to boast successes, these programs simply create a different space for the “wayward” to find help without complicating the church environment. In this project it has been clearly presented that without relationship no healing, freedom, or redemption will occur. This is to say that the individuals who are searching began to do so as result of the Holy Spirit beckoning their lives, the Holy Spirit draws people to Christ and therefore to His bride, the church, as well. It is here that the individual can truly find healing. It is here that he may be set free. It is through the testimony of His bride that Jesus redeems the lost. It is through His redemption that the individual is able to then redeem the time that rests in his life.

If relationship is this necessary, then programs are only the beginning. This project does not argue against the use of programs rather it argues that deeper relationships that are built with believers and members of the local faith community are absolutely vital for long term success. This long term, continual freedom comes through relationship that is formed with the church.
Therefore, it is suggested that individual relationships are necessary for true healing. The researcher proposes that this occurs most often in the small group atmosphere, if the members are willing to be transparent and loving, where the individual builds friendships that offer safety and security. When done correctly, a small group will commit to working together through all of life’s trials, but this requires significant training, personal transparency beginning with leadership, and honest commitment to one another. When these qualities are offered, individuals begin to live as a family that is arranged with the walking wounded or the worried well. These members often mold together stronger than biological family because of transparency and freedom to leave the group. When a biological family is involved, it can lead to greater hurt and pain as one is shamed for different failures in their life.

What is the difference between programs and groups? Programs do not require intimacy and often look at the individuals as projects. The participants are encouraged by the leaders who often are out of touch with the individuals who are attending. Secularly, the alcoholic finds his new party friend at Alcoholics Anonymous, the heroin addict finds his new dealer at Narcotics Anonymous, and so on. As for Christian Programs, they are often modeled after secular programs but always add an extra step deeming it evangelistic at the core. All of these, at the base, are forms of behavior modification, yet only Christ can truly change lives, and He has chosen to do this through people. In small groups, there isn’t an educated individual that is an expert in a particular field, rather it is often another human who has been trained to shepherd others. He is close to the individual members of the group, and he has learned how to walk with them without abandoning them. Understand, this is not to deny the use of programs or support groups, rather it is to divide the difference between the role of professionals and the role of the church. When the church is involved relationally, the individual, through concurrent work in
groups and therapy, will truly find healing. The homosexual looking for freedom needs professionals, but he also needs the relationship of the church. It is for this reason, that the researcher chose this topic. People need one another. Relationship provides safety and security for others to truly experience a healthy life.

The significance is manifested when the church decides to walk alongside those who are truly battered and feel completely imprisoned. How can this happen though if the testimony of the church is clearly to stand against the evils of her society in such a manner that the person himself is condemned before every visiting the church? There is a significant difference between confrontation and condemnation; confrontation works best in the context of healthy relationships. The church must see this gap in relation to the homosexual community. The church should be the first place a homosexual comes to find healing. It should be the safest place for an individual longing for freedom to confess his deepest sin. It should be the place that welcomes the sinner to reveal himself long before the homosexual community even knows his name. It would be significant if the church read this challenge, reflected on her own testimony, and then acted relationally toward the community she fears the most. This fear is the primary reason she normally reacts in anger and vitriol.

**Accomplishment**

At this point it is necessary to truly evaluate whether this project was effective or not. Seeing that the design was phenomenological, success isn’t measured in numbers or specific concrete outcomes. Rather the success with be proven evident over time with the implementation of the lessons learned throughout the research. In that regard, it should be counted as an accomplishment because the goal was to provide a response. The response is clearly outlined through the project as creating a healthy relationship between the homosexual community and
the local church so that the church can earn the right to speak into the lives of the individuals
who are seeking change. There is no efficacity in attempting to change someone who has no
desire, however, if God is convicting an individual and changing their life, the church must be
available.

This project clearly shows that, as a whole, she is clearly not available. It would be
impossible to give one or many methods to establish a relationship between the church and each
community around the globe. In fact, that would simply be what the church longs for, another
program to avoid relationships. Rather, a list has been provided of current resources that can
individually consult with the church to help her evaluate what would be best in her own
community. That relationship will look different in Los Angeles, California than in Albertville,
France, then in Southwest, Virginia. Each of these communities have their own identity and
therefore the church needs to discover how she can be a healthy expression of Christ to that
community. A program will not suffice. In that sense, this project has effectively accomplished
the objective of the project which was to begin creating a biblical response from the local church
to the homosexual community. She must provide relationship to be able to speak the truth in
love.

Changes

Any honest researcher ought to be able to admit faults, express other possibilities, and
even provide realized limitations that could have inhibited the work. For the purposes of this
project one major possibility that could have helped strengthen the work would have been more
interviews. Due to a limitation of time and proximity, this was not possible but late into the
project it was realized that the survey was not nearly enough, and that more information was
needed. Unfortunately, that was not nearly as possible with time constraints as it was realized too
late into the process. This anecdote might illustrate the value of the interviews. The experiences of the author provided dots on a page that had some similarities and seemingly possible connections. One investigated through reading and conferences; those dots began to display sequential numbers that provided a possible design. The researcher then offered a survey and as a result a line was drawn that connected all the numbered dots, creating a picture that was clear. However, all the information was still not available, so an interview was created and conducted. This interview began to add color to the photo offering so many more details. If more interviews could have been conducted from various points of view, the colors of the photo would have been much more vibrant as would the information provided by the project at hand.

On a second note, it was discovered that more detail could have been added to the survey which could have clarified regional influences. A clearer definition of words could have drawn harder lines between certain religious influences. More specific questions about religious influences could have painted a clearer picture of how one might expect different individuals to react to certain relationships. Even the question asking about relationships between the participant and the homosexual community could have been more specific in order to provide clarity. All of these items could have made this project even stronger for those who are interested in profiting from the research. More time could have been spent in the actual research development than in the study of past literary resources. Alas, these choices have already been realized.

The Future

The goal for this project now is to continue developing the information provided by into a useable format for the local church. The information is helpful but how is the local church herself supposed to profit from this information. Though this work will be published, it is still
not user friendly for the local pastor of the small suburban church. Therefore, the researcher desires to use what he has learned to help others also. This has already occurred in many settings as several pastors already know the author and the work he has accomplished in this field. Now with the time already spent in research, a tool can be designed and built that will allow the researcher to help churches begin creating pathways into the homosexual community. This will come in the form of seminars, training material, and hopefully a book that is pragmatic and relational. In doing this research more than 40 pastors have already asked for the finished project because there is a curiosity in the subject matter. It is now the work of the researcher to help guide curiosity into desire for helping churches truly provide a biblical response to the homosexual community. In this sense the word response is not implying an answer to a specific question rather and availability to many questions that will come due to a vulnerable, transparent, loving, and honest relationship.
Appendix 1

Survey Questions

1. What is your religious affiliation?
   a. Non-Religious
   b. Anti-Religious
   c. Actively Religious
   d. Indifferent

2. If you are religious, which describes your church most accurately?
   a. Evangelical
   b. Catholic
   c. Fundamental
   d. Not Applicable

3. How do you believe a church should be involved in the homosexual community?
   a. Embracing
   b. Accepting
   c. Indifferent
   d. Understanding
   e. Opposed

4. How important is a churches stance on homosexuality to your choice of membership in that body?
   a. Very Important
   b. Somewhat Important
   c. Indifferent

5. Have you ever identified as one of the following categories?
   a. Same Sex Attracted
   b. Same Sex Oriented
   c. Bi-sexual
   d. Homosexual
6. Please finish this statement, “When choosing a church to worship in, I am looking for a church that…”
   a. Stands against homosexuality and would expect regular confrontation from the church in dealing with homosexuality
   b. Stands against homosexuality but attempts to understand the lifestyle by encouraging the individual to regularly attend without judgment
   c. Does not set aside homosexuality as different from other sin and embraces homosexual individuals as part of the church body without membership
   d. Embraces homosexual individuals as they are and includes the individual as a church member
   e. Embraces homosexuality and fully encourages the individual to live out their created design

7. Please finish this statement, “I believe…”
   a. All mankind was created heterosexual and that homosexuality is a chosen sin.
   b. All mankind was created heterosexual and there is no genetic marker for homosexuality
   c. Mankind is created with a genetic marker that makes him either homosexual or heterosexual
   d. Mankind was created neither heterosexual nor homosexual; therefore, man is free to choose
   e. God does create mankind to be homosexual and therefore supports homosexuality

8. Please complete this statement, “The Bible teaches that…”
   a. Homosexuality is sin
   b. Homosexuality is acceptable
   c. I don’t know

9. Please complete this statement, “I believe the Bible …”
   a. Is God’s Word without error, fully preserved through all generations, sufficient in its completion, and mankind’s guide for all things pertaining to life.
   b. Contains truth that God wants us to know and live by
   c. Is a collection of historic narratives written by men generations ago that needs to be understood differently in today’s society
   d. Is irrelevant to our society and needs to be ignored
   e. I don’t know
10. Please complete this statement, “If my adult child professed to be homosexual…”
   a. I would confront the sin expecting a change and breaking off communication until they agreed.
   b. I would share the truth of God’s Word, continually loving them, but voice my disagreement.
   c. I would share the truth of God’s Word, understanding their challenge, and walk with them.
   d. I would share the truth of God’s Word, embracing their newfound truth, and encourage them on their path.
   e. I would celebrate their life and revelation of their identity.

11. How important is church attendance to you?
   a. Very Important
   b. Somewhat Important
   c. Indifferent
   d. Somewhat Unimportant
   e. Very Unimportant

12. How often do you attend church?
   a. Frequently (at least once a week)
   b. Semi-Frequent (1-2 times a month)
   c. Semi-Infrequent (6-9 times a year)
   d. Infrequent (major religious holidays)
   e. Not at all

13. How important is the Bible in helping to shape your lifestyle?
   a. Very Important
   b. Somewhat Important
   c. Indifferent
   d. Somewhat Unimportant
   e. Very Unimportant

14. Which best describes how often you read the Bible?
   a. Daily
   b. A couple days a week
   c. Sporadically
   d. Only at church
   e. Never

15. What style of Bible are you most likely to read?
   a. Literal Translation- KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, HCSB
   b. Dynamic Translation- NIV, TNIV, REB, NCV
   c. Free Translation- NLT, MEV
   d. Paraphrase- The Message
16. What category best describes your age?
   a. Greatest Generation/Traditionalist (73+ years old)
   b. Baby Boomer (54-72 years old)
   c. Generation X (37-53 years old)
   d. Millennial (22-36 years old)
   e. iGen/Centennials (18-21 years old)

17. What best describes your relationship with the homosexual community?
   a. I am not close to anyone who is homosexual.
   b. I know someone who is homosexual
   c. I have a close friend who is homosexual
   d. I have a close family member who is homosexual
   e. My significant other is homosexual
   f. I am homosexual

18. What is your experience with homosexuality and the local church?
   a. I am homosexual and was asked to leave my church
   b. I am homosexual and was confronted in an ugly manner by my church
   c. I am homosexual and was confronted lovingly by my church
   d. I am homosexual and have not been confronted by my church
   e. I am homosexual, and my identity is not an issue at my church
   f. I am homosexual and attend a church that embraces my homosexuality
   g. Does not apply

19. What is your experience with bi-sexuality and the local church?
   a. I am bisexual and was asked to leave my church
   b. I am bisexual and was confronted in an ugly manner by my church
   c. I am bisexual and was confronted lovingly by my church
   d. I am bisexual and have not been confronted by my church
   e. I am bisexual and attend a church that embraces my bisexuality
   f. I am bisexual, and my identity is not an issue at my church
   g. Does not apply

20. What is your experience with Same Sex Attraction (SSA)?
   a. I am attracted to the same sex and was asked to leave my church
   b. I am attracted to the same sex and was confronted in an ugly manner by my church
   c. I am attracted to the same sex and was confronted lovingly by my church
   d. I am attracted to the same sex and have not been confronted by my church
   e. I am attracted to the same sex and attend a church that embraces my Same Sex Attraction
   f. I am attracted to the same sex and my identity is not an issue at my church
   g. Does not apply
21. If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your church or religious community?
   a. Highly Likely
   b. Somewhat Likely
   c. Somewhat Unlikely
   d. Highly Unlikely
   e. No Way

22. If you were/are attracted to the same sex, bisexual, homosexual, or are an ex-gay, how likely would you be to make that known in your public community?
   a. Highly Likely
   b. Somewhat Likely
   c. Somewhat Unlikely
   d. Highly Unlikely
   e. No Way

23. How do you believe your church would respond to a parishioner announcing he or she is attracted to the same sex, bisexual, or homosexual?
   a. We would share our belief that the Bible teaches that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins. We would remove them from membership and ask them to leave the sin or leave the church.
   b. We would share our belief that the Bible teaches that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins. We would give them a period of time to repent while requiring counseling before removing them from the church.
   c. We would share our belief that the Bible teaches that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins but that all sin is the same. We would then walk with them through the healing process of leaving that life of sin in an understanding way.
   d. We would share our belief that the Bible teaches that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins but that it is not our place to judge them, so no action would be required, but help is available if they should want it.
   e. We do not believe that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins, so no action would be taken.
   f. We do not believe that SSA, bisexuality, and homosexuality are sins, so we would celebrate their identity.
Appendix 2

Interview Questions

Questions for personal Interview:

Note: Before we get started, I want to take a moment to converse about the nature of this interview. This interview is being conducted for the purposes of defining the relationship between the local church and the homosexual community. The purpose is to identify areas of difficulty that can be discussed and improved. The ultimate goal is to provide a tool to the local church that will enable it to better serve the homosexual community without compromising its stated values. Every effort will be made to protect your anonymity as was explained in the disclosure and confidentiality statements.

Do you still agree to be a part of this interview process?

_____Yes     _____NO

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________  Role  ____________________________

Name  Date

1.) Do you currently attend a local church regularly? If so, state your attendance pattern by use of the following: A.) Consistently, B.) Occasionally, C.) Rarely

2.) What is a working definition of homosexuality?

3.) Is there a difference between homosexuality, same-sex attraction, bi-sexuality, or ex-Gay? If so, please define the differences in your own words.

4.) Have you personally struggled with homosexuality, same-sex attraction, bi-sexuality, or other?

5.) Have you personally been confronted due to same-sex attraction or engaging in a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?
6.) What has your experience been in regard to the relationship between the local church and same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?

7.) Are there churches you would avoid due to same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?

8.) If you were to be a consultant for a local church dealing with issues surrounding same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay, what would you recommend the church do for healthy connectivity?

9.) Do you believe it is right to confront same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay? If so, how should this be done?

10.) How would you describe your current church, as it pertains to handling the issues associated with same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?

11.) Do you believe that someone who is same-sex attracted or lives a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay would be welcomed in your church as a regular attender? Why or Why Not?

12.) If you were guiding a family through the process of their child recently professing same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, s-sex attracted, bi-sexual, or ex-gay, how would you guide them?

13.) What level of involvement in the local church is appropriate for someone who is same-sex attracted or lives a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?

14.) What ministry policies regarding serving the church should be instituted in reference to same-sex attraction or a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?
15.) How should a church respond to an individual who is same-sex attracted or is engaging in a lifestyle defined as homosexual, bi-sexual, or ex-gay?

16.) Do you have any other questions you feel would be appropriate to ask others in this interview?

17.) Are there any other comments you would like to add to help us better understand the gay community?
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