JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

LGBTQIA+

Is Homosexuality a Sin? Can You Be a Gay Christian?

> The gospel is for all people. Scripture presents homosexuality as sin, and every sin is dealt with the same way: by grace through faith in the finished work and lordship of Jesus Christ. So LGBT people are welcome here, and the church walks with every believer through the long process of becoming like Jesus.

MAIN TEXT
Romans 1:26-27

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SERIES
We're Honoring to All People, Week 2 of 5

BY
Pastor Jason Mayfield

AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. The gospel is for all people, and that is where this message starts.
2. The Bible mentions homosexuality in six places, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, Jude 7 and Romans 1, so nobody has to cherry-pick and anyone can get a full education on the subject in about three and a half minutes.
3. Romans 1 is useful on three counts: it never uses the word homosexual but describes the relationship, so the 1946 translation argument does not apply and there is no Greek or Hebrew mistranslation to hide behind; it shows the root of the sinfulness in both the law of Moses and the law of nature.
4. Jesus did address it. In Matthew 19 he grounds marriage in male and female at creation, the same logic Paul uses in Romans 1, and 2 Timothy 3:16 means the whole Bible is his word, not only the words printed in red.
5. The word sin has a whole theology behind it, hamartiology, and the question people are actually asking is not the face-value one but whether God hates gay people and sends them to hell.
6. Sin, apart from and including homosexuality, is only dealt with by grace through faith in the work and lordship of Jesus Christ. There are not multiple paths.
7. Can you be a gay Christian: no, because the phrase asks whether homosexuality and Christianity are congruent, and they are not. Can you be a Christian while you are yet presently gay: yes, because justification is instant, glorification is instant, and sanctification in between is a long process.
8. The normative Christian experience is not instant deliverance. A gay person who gets saved here will probably walk out gay, and the church's job is to walk with them over time rather than demand they quit.
9. A preacher's job is not just to read the verse and say go to hell. Psalm 119:160, the sum of your word is truth, is his chief hermeneutical rule: cook with the book and work out how the whole thing fits together.
10. For the church family: homosexuality is a Bible-defined sin, and so is plenty of what else is in the room. LGBT people are welcome because whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The only exclusion is anyone who would endanger children. When someone walks in that you do not know what to do with, be loving, caring, considerate, respectful, friendly, and if none of those work, quiet, and bring concerns to the pastor.
11. To the community outside the church: you are welcome to attend, worship and engage regardless of what you do or do not do. Speaking personally rather than as pastor, do not come in to put on a

show or cause problems, because he will choose the people who trusted him with this message over anyone who comes to make trouble.

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/cp2sbfmE7dM

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/lgbtqia

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is the second message in a series on the value **we're honoring of all people**. The week before turned the examination on the church: undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression. This week takes up the question the church is asked most often on this subject.

Building a cohesive flow is hard. Start in one place and one group tunes you out; start in another and a different group does. The real risk is being misheard, misunderstood or, worst of all, unintentionally misrepresenting what the Bible intends concerning LGBT people. So say up front how the message is built, and ask people to stay to the end:

- First, what the Bible says.
- Second, what the church family needs to know.
- Third, a direct word to the community outside the church, spoken to the camera.

A note on terms: in this message, **homosexuality** is used as a blanket term for the whole range of LGBT issues. They are varied and diverse, but there will not be a separate section for each.

Two cautions. Be as clear about the welcome as about the conviction; both are part of the message. And keep the tone of honor from the week before. Clear is kind, but clear is not harsh.

Introduction

Turn to Romans 1.

Illustration: "Let's talk about the gaze." Years ago, at a large church in Michigan, the care ministries pastor, an older man named Ron Sparks, was one of the finest preachers on staff. People loved him, and sometimes people loved Jesus because Ron Sparks loved them. One night, halfway through a message full of hope and joy, he said, "Now, let's talk about the gays." The room came to a screeching halt. Then the slide came up on the screen: "Let's Talk About the Gaze." So today, in the spirit of Ron Sparks: let's talk about the gays.

This is an issue that touches many intersections of our lives and our culture. Start here, and make it the first thing everyone hears:

The gospel is for all people.

As we said last week, the goal is not to hurt or offend anyone. Like Brené Brown, I believe **clear is kind**, and the primary intention today is to be clear.

1. Is Homosexuality a Sin?

Every conversation about the church, the faith and homosexuality seems to come down to one question: **Is homosexuality a sin?** Well-known pastors like Joel Osteen, John MacArthur and Rick Warren have all been asked it on television.

The Bible gives a direct answer to the face-value version of that question. **Is homosexuality a sin? Yes.**

People often accuse Christians of cherry-picking verses on this subject. So name every passage openly. Besides Romans 1, homosexuality is mentioned in five other places in the Bible, six in all:

- Leviticus 18:22
- Leviticus 20:13
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
- 1 Timothy 1:9-10
- Jude 7
- Romans 1:26-27

Let the congregation take a picture of the list. In about three and a half minutes, anyone can read everything the Bible says directly on this subject.

> **ROMANS 1:26-27** ESV
>
> [26] For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Romans 1 is helpful in answering this question for three reasons.

FIRST, ROMANS 1 DOES NOT USE THE WORD "HOMOSEXUAL"

You will hear that the word *homosexual* did not appear in an English Bible until 1946, when the Revised Standard Version translated 1 Corinthians 6:9 differently than it had been translated before. That is true. It is not a conspiracy theory. But it does not mean much. The word *homosexual* did not enter the English language until 1892. Getting a new word from its first appearance in print to a Bible translation in about fifty years, without computers, is understandable. Bible versions are updated precisely because English changes over time.

More importantly, **no load-bearing passage on this issue uses the word homosexual.** Leviticus and Romans 1 both spell out the relationship. They describe it rather than naming it with a single term. There is no lone Greek or Hebrew word to mistranslate; you cannot mistranslate a description.

SECOND, ROMANS 1 SHOWS THE ROOT OF ITS SINFULNESS

The law of Moses contains laws that seem strange to us, and some of them get pulled out to dismiss Leviticus 18 and 20. "If you can't be gay, can you not mix fabrics?" (see Leviticus 19:19). Those laws seem strange because we are us and they were them. God was preparing a people to go from slavery into the promised land, to inherit houses, fields and crops they did not build, and to be protected there. Without instruction, Israel would walk into a house in Canaan and end up bowing to the idol in the master bedroom.

Illustration: the raise. Ever seen somebody get a $5,000 raise and buy a car that costs $80,000 more? Now imagine the jump from slavery to the promised land. The law served to guard Israel against idols and to order its life together.

Leviticus 18 lists many sexual relationships to avoid, including sleeping with your mother (Leviticus 18:7). Nobody is arguing about that one.

But Romans 1 tells us that homosexual behavior is not only a violation of the law God gave Moses. **It is a departure from God's created design, the order of nature.**

THIRD, JESUS AFFIRMED THE SAME DESIGN

"Jesus never said anything about homosexuality." We only have a small snapshot of what Jesus said on earth. John says that if everything Jesus did were written down, "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). It stands to reason He said more than the words printed in red.

But Jesus did affirm the very Scripture Paul argues from in Romans 1. When He was asked about divorce, He answered from creation:

> **MATTHEW 19:4-6 ESV**
>
> [4] He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Paul uses the same logic and the same Scripture (Genesis 1:27; 2:24) to say that homosexual behavior is a violation of nature.

And Jesus did address it directly, because "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus did not only say the words in red. He said the words in print. It makes no sense to argue that Scripture cannot be trusted and then claim certainty about what the red letters mean.

2. The Word "Sin"

So, is homosexuality a sin? At face value, yes. But here is the sticky wicket: the question is not the whole of what people are asking.

One word in that question complicates everything, so much that two people can think they are talking to each other while having two entirely different conversations. **That word is sin.**

There is a whole theology of sin. It has a name: **hamartiology.** A solid definition of sin has to answer:

- What is sin?
- What is the source of sin?
- What is the result of sin?
- What is the consequence of sin?
- What is the resolution for sin?
- What levels are there to sin?

Riddle me this: if someone tells a lie, which is a sin, and the lie is meant to and does protect another person from danger, is it still sin? Would it be a sin *not* to lie? In that one question you have the ethical, ontological, anthropological and theological meeting of sin. It is plain and simple, and it is far from plain and simple.

"Well, the Bible says..." Yes, and we are not afraid of that conversation. But the day your son or daughter walks in with this, you will want more than "the Bible says." You will be thankful for some theology.

When people ask, "Is homosexuality a sin?" they are usually asking something bigger: **"If someone is gay, does God hate them and send them to hell without any further context or consideration?"** That is an entirely different question.

3. How Sin Is Dealt With

To understand the question, we have to understand what the Bible says about sin.

> **ROMANS 6:23 ESV**
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> [23] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

> **ROMANS 3:21-26 ESV**
>
> [21] But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—[22] the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Sin, apart from and including homosexuality, is only dealt with by grace through faith in the work and lordship of Jesus Christ. Whether you lie, or you are a man with a man or a woman with a woman, the solution is the solution is the solution. There are not multiple paths. Jesus Christ is enough for everyone.

Romans 5 goes on to say that what Jesus remedied is not only the sin you do but the sin embedded in your very nature, passed down from Adam (Romans 5:12-19).

So follow the logic:

- Homosexuality is a sin.
- Sin is remedied only by the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- You can put your faith in Jesus and be saved while you are still a sinner, because "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).
- You can become a Christian through the blood of Christ before your behavior changes. That is how every one of us came.

Which opens a second question.

4. Can You Be a Gay Christian?

This has risen to the top of the questions people ask. To answer it, we need three doctrines about how Jesus deals with sin, how we are discipled, and how we get to heaven. Keep these on the screen while you teach them.

- **Justification** is the moment you become a Christian. When you call on the name of the Lord and put your faith in Jesus, you are justified, born again and blood-bought. It is **instant**.
- **Glorification** happens when Jesus returns and raises the dead in Christ: perfect bodies, perfect health, perfect behavior. It is also **instant**.
- **Sanctification** is the not-so-instant process between those two instants. You are growing in holiness, obeying God more, becoming more like Jesus, becoming who God intends you to be.

"For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). While you are in the process, you already carry the full stamp of God's approval.

HOW LONG IS THE PROCESS?

When it is our process, we want it to take a long time. When it is someone else's, we want it done by Tuesday. Someone said that **mercy for me and justice for others never works.** But that is how we often see the work of Christ: God understands what I am going through, but you need to get your mess together.

The Bible shows the length of the process in a concealed way.

> **JAMES 2:17-24 ESV**
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> [17] So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. [18] But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. [19] You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! [20] Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? [22] You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. [24] You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James says faith without works is dead, but he also gives a glimpse of sanctification. Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis 15 (Genesis 15:6). He offered Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22, and the Lord stopped him, a picture of Jesus stepping in so that we do not pay the price for our own righteousness (Genesis 22:9-12). Those events are decades apart. By James's own logic, Abraham's faith was shown to be working when he got it right many years later.

And Abraham being called the friend of God is not in Genesis at all. God calls him "Abraham, my friend" through Isaiah, long after Abraham's lifetime (Isaiah 41:8; see also 2 Chronicles 20:7). Sanctification is a long process. When it comes to how long people have to get it right: a long time.

"But Hebrews says if you sin after you know better, there is no sacrifice left" (see Hebrews 10:26). First, that calls for a closer look at your theology. Second, if that is what it means, every one of us is lost, because all of us have sinned while knowing better. It cannot be mercy for me and justice for them.

THE ANSWER

So, can you be a gay Christian? **No**, because of the way the phrase is put. It asks whether homosexuality and Christianity are congruent, whether they agree with each other. They do not. **A homosexual lifestyle and Christianity do not walk in agreement with one another**, and we will be very clear on that.

But change the question slightly: **Can you be a Christian while you are yet presently gay? Yes.**

"So you don't think being gay is a sin?" That is not what was said. Both answers stand together, and the theology is there.

So can someone be a Christian and still be in some type of practicing homosexuality? The original notes put it this way: you will likely become a Christian and continue to deal with it, maybe even to the point of engaging in it, but you are saved. This is where many preachers take the easy road and cast a whole group of people aside, a group we have to be able to reach. There is a place for preachers who stand up and say things straight, and it has been said as straight as it can be: homosexuality is a sin. At the same time, we have to handle the theology in a way that lets us walk people through it. **The goal is not to keep the kingdom small. The goal is to help people get through a process.**

There are wonderful testimonies of people who were saved and never had those desires again. We hear them about homosexuality, about drug addiction, about cigarettes. Praise God when that happens. But in

Pastor Jason's experience, it is the exception to the rule. The normal Christian experience is that you walk to the car after church the same person you came in, with a supernatural difference on you, and you work your way through over time. **The Christian life is a time game.** It is about consistency, showing up for the Lord and getting in His presence.

So most likely, **if someone who is gay comes into this church and gives their life to Jesus Christ, they will probably walk out of here gay.** And we are going to walk with them, help them and be there for them as a church, and we are going to see things change. It may take a long time. If they are willing to stay in the process, that is a win.

Some people online will hit hard for this, because it is not the easy position. But a preacher's job is not just to read a verse and say "go to hell." **The job is to cook with the Book**: to dig in and find where what the Bible says intersects with life, with faith, with the cross, with the power of the Holy Spirit and with real experience.

"The sum of your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160). That is Pastor Jason's chief rule for reading the Bible: look at the whole thing and work out how it fits together, rather than quoting one verse and saying, "It says it right here."

The next step for anyone who gives their life to Jesus is to let sanctification do its work. "Stop being gay" is not a helpful instruction. Anyone who comes to Christ has to let Jesus do the work. So to every person dealing with this or any other issue, in this church or outside it: **put your faith in Jesus Christ and let Him do a work in you.**

5. To the Church Family

Church, you need a clear understanding of where we are on this issue. If it is not clear, set up an appointment and we will clear it up.

Homosexuality is a Bible-defined sin. And a lot of what many of us do is also sin.

LGBT people are welcome in this church. The Bible says "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). LGBT people are a "whosoever," just like anyone else. Pastor Jason cited a figure that somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of believers came to faith in a local church. So, yes, our doors are open.

Our only exclusion is anyone who would endanger children. This is not just something we say; it has already been acted on, and it will continue to be. That is not open to individual interpretation. It is handled by leadership under clear guidelines. If someone could endanger a child, they will not be part of this church.

Here is the expectation for the church family. You are going to see people at times you do not know what to do with: the way they dress, talk, look or act. When that happens, **be loving, caring, considerate, respectful and friendly. And if none of those work, be quiet.** Your job is not to tell anybody off in the foyer. No positive fruit comes from that.

If you see something and you are struggling with it, bring it to the pastoral team. Come talk with the pastor directly.

6. To the Community

Speak to the camera.

As pastor, on behalf of the church: you are welcome here. If you are in an LGBT lifestyle, you are welcome to attend our services. Come sit under the ministry of the Word. Worship the Lord. Sing the songs, lift your hands, engage, and experience the power of God in this house. We believe it can make a significant difference in your life, regardless of what you do or don't do. We want you here.

Then take off the pastor hat and speak personally. Pastor Jason explained that leading a church is not all spiritual: there are power bills, deferred maintenance on the building, many people's opinions, and a Sunday service he was largely carrying himself. If someone comes in and deliberately puts on a show, it costs him a week of meetings. "You are in south Alabama. You know how to behave in a room." If someone comes in to intentionally cause problems, the pastor loves them and the church loves them, but Jason Mayfield will have a problem with it.

To transgender friends, he asked plainly that they not make the restroom an issue: use the restroom before you come. *(The original notes also offer the church's single-person restrooms.)*

He named the reason directly: some people in the room are indifferent about whether LGBT people come, but they are choosing to trust their pastor on this. **Do not dishonor that trust.** If someone does, he will choose the people who trusted him. "We love you. But if you're going to come to church, please come and behave yourself."

Then put the pastor hat back on: we love you, and we want you to come to church here. At some point, people have to matter most.

(Pastor Jason closed this section with a joke that anyone who wants to come and make a scene could try another church in town. Keep or cut at the preacher's discretion.)

Conclusion

Lift your hands and pray for a harvest.

Lord, we thank You for what You are doing in our city. Give us a great harvest of people who do not look like us or act like us, people who otherwise would not belong in another church. Give us the sensitivity to help people by walking with them through transformation and change, through the pathway of Your presence, Your love, Your forgiveness and the power of Your Holy Spirit, **not just a demand to quit.** Give us grace to minister to people.



ABOUT

PASTOR JASON MAYFIELD

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

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