

LIES THAT BREAK US TRUTHS THAT HEAL US

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"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Genesis 1:27

PROLOGUE

Sexuality is a hot topic today, both inside and outside the church. Debate runs rampant. Hearts are broken. Dreams are crushed. Families are at war. Parents are estranged from their kids. Why?

The world will tell you it's because too many people are intolerant. We need to just accept everyone as they are.

Many in the church will tell you it's because we have abandoned the precepts of God. We need to just get back to obedience.

But there could be another explanation. Could it be that both the world *and* the church have both into a set of lies and that by buying into these lies both "sides" have become so entrenched in their stances that they can't hear each other *or* accept the truths that God has for us? Could it be that these lies, once exposed, could open up the door to truths that can unite rather than divide?

These are the questions explored in this program.

What is not directly discussed are the doctrines of the matter. I hold to the biblical model of sexuality! that there is female and male, created in God's image, and that they are to be joined in union to more greatly reflect the glory of God. That this is the biblical and ultimate purpose of humans sexuality is assumed, and it should be upheld as truth. We just need to know how to relate to people in the truths that we hold dear.

Chapter 1 THE HEART



was once sitting in Sabbath school during a men's retreat at Camp Cherokee in the Adirondack Mountains and National Park in New York State.

Seating in the chapel is set with benches in a semicircle, with the speaker in the middle. On the day in question I was sitting on the front row to the right of the speaker. Class was going on as normal, meaning the teacher was guiding a conversation, asking questions, and I was trying to talk more than I should have.

About half way through the class a man sitting in the second row directly in front of the teacher raised his hand. I noticed this was the man I had seen walking around with two crutches and legs that looked like they barely functioned. When called upon he asked, with very slurred words, "Why does God allow evil?" The teacher was smart, and engaged the rest of the class. A variety of answers came - all good doctrinal answers like:

- God gives us freedom of choice
- Satan is after us
- We live in a world of sin because of Adam and Eve
- Have you read Job?

Now, each of these answers is doctrinally correct. But the man in question didn't care. Shaking his head he raised his hand again. "But why does God allow evil?" The class was once again engaged. And, again, correct doctrinal answers were given.

- There might be evil now, but Jesus died to get rid of the evil
- When Jesus returns we will know no pain
- God does not cause pain, but He allows it and works all things together for the good of those who love Him

As these answers came the man continued to shake his head, even more violently now. I suddenly realized that because of my seating, I was one of the few who could see his responses. And I was probably one of the few who could clearly see by his responses that doctrinal answers were not what he was looking for. So I raised my hand. But because I had already spoken so much the teacher looked at me, shook his head (we are friends, so I wasn't offended), and moved on to others. I kept raising my hand, and he kept brushing me off.

Then the man raised his hand again. "BUT WHY DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL!?" I shot my hand up in a manner that the teacher couldn't ignore. When he looked at me I gave him a death stare (we are friends, so he wasn't offended), and he let me speak.

"Let me tell you about my daughter," I said. "When she was four years old she was diagnosed with diabetes." The man leaned forward with hungry eyes and looked at me. "Let me tell you," I continued, "there is nothing like being the father of a four-year-old with diabetes. She has times when she faints into my arms. Times when she is

emotionally out of control, knows it, but can't do anything about it. There are times when we have spent days in the hospital to get things 'under control' but don't really walk away with answers. This is evil in my world." The man looked at me with tears in his eyes, and, holding his hands out to me, nodded his head.

"Would you like to know what I say to my daughter when she asks me why?" He nodded yes. "I ask her, 'Do you love Jesus? Do you trust Him with everything else? Do you trust that He will take care of everything else?' When she says yes, I then tell her, 'Then, baby girl, I don't understand this either. But I know He will somehow, someway, take care of this too.'"

At this, the man sunk back in his bench and quietly cried as the rest of the class went on.

After the class was over, I went to speak with him and hear his story. He told me of his father, who died after an aneurism. He had several brothers, each of whom also died after an aneurism. Then he had an aneurism, but he did not die. Instead he lived in a body that was broken, with a broken heart that had questions.

After some discussion, he expressed interest in knowing more about the doctrines. He just needed someone to care about his heart first.

And this highlights an important lesson. **Doctrines are** good, but not if they are not connected to the heart. Then they are damaging.

Stories like this can illustrate this fact, and most people learn the lesson and begin looking for ways to connect with the heart, not just with doctrines. But, somehow, matters of sexuality stand apart. They shouldn't, but they do. Somehow we get so set in what we believe is right that we

never take the time to listen to the heart of those who are dealing with issues of sexuality. Consider the following.

Parents whose children are expressing an interest in non-traditional sexuality have strong emotional responses. These emotional responses may include fear, disappointment, anxiety, sadness over the potential of not having biological grandchildren, confusion as to how to respond to their child and their partner, and worry over how God or the church may feel about them or their kids.

Children who are feeling an interest in non-traditional sexuality are also having strong emotional responses. These may include fear of parental backlash, fear of backlash from the church, fear of alienating God, fear of losing friends, anxiety over how the world will respond to them, and real concern about losing their biological family or church family. In fact, many of these young people will attempt to commit suicide over these feelings. And many will succeed in that attempt.

Before doctrines can be explored, the heart must be considered. Like the man at men's retreat, turning to doctrine will be at least almost no good until the matters of the heart are dealt with. This is not easy, but the following must be done:

- Parents, connect to the heart of your young people.
- Young people, connect to the heart of your parents and to the heart of God

Before you focus on the sexual questions, focus on each other. On each others' hearts. Reaffirm love. Enjoy hobbies together. Spend time together. Worship together. Connect.



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Chapter 2 THE BIG LIES



Sometimes the Enemy of our souls does such a good job introducing a lie that both sides of the argument lose ground by focusing on that lie. Take creation for example. Early on, some on the side of evolution realized that if they could prove Genesis incorrect, then the faith of many would be shaken. They argued that if Genesis were incorrect, then there were no literal Adam and Eve. And if there was no literal Adam and Eve, then there would be no original sin. And if there were no original sin, then there would be no need for a savior. And that would cause the story of Jesus and all of the writings of the New Testament to be invalidated. And, therefore, Christianity would be proven false.

Christians also bought into this. Listen to most apologetics and their arguments. They typically go back to this idea, *affirm it*, and then argue against it. Did you catch that? They *affirm it*. They can't argue against an idea until they establish what they are arguing against, affirm its rationality, and then try to disprove the so-called evidence that supports that idea. In so doing, they set up a dangerous scenario. People who listen to their positions will often agree with them and stand on the side of

creation...until they meet someone who is very persuasive in the other direction. And if they don't know enough, they will easily be persuaded to switch sides. This happens all the time in colleges. The real damage is not that they decided to believe in evolution but that they bought into the foundational idea that if you do, then you must give up Christ. And their faith is lost - lost because it was based on a false idea. It was based on the lie that without Genesis, there is no salvation by faith. It takes out the need for faith in a resurrected Savior, which is easy to support even if you take Genesis out of the picture. And once you have a resurrected Savior, creation can be more easily established.

The issue is not creation and evolution. The issue is starting the argument on a lie.

And that is what has happened in our discussion on sexuality. Two lies have been presented. One side wants us to buy into those lies to move us from our biblical stance to theirs. The other side affirms the lies in order to then try and work against them. And this creates confusion in the minds of people leaning towards non-traditional sexuality and those that want to "get them out of it." So we need to expose those lies and move away from them and into the truth.

The first big lie is that your sexuality is your identity. This is simply not true and must be eliminated as a thought process. It is fair to say your sexuality is a part of who you are, but it is not your identity as a whole. And an acceptance of this lie is dangerous for all people, including traditional heterosexuals. Yes, that is right; it is dangerous even for traditional heterosexuals.

Let's be brutally honest for a moment – honest, vulnerable, and mature. In the typical heterosexual marriage, there is usually one partner who has a higher

libido than the other. A natural, yet frequent result is one partner sexually approaching the other partner and being turned down. And then what happens?

For one thing, the partner that gets turned down can be emotionally crushed. Is this just because they are aroused and got turned down? No. It is because on some level they bought into the lie that their identity is their sexuality. So when they got turned down, it wasn't just being turned down for sex; they as a whole person just got rejected, and rejected by the most important person in their world. Then continued rejections lead to a wide range of responses, such as resentfulness, anger, frustration, sadness, and coldness. After a while, this partner may even turn off their love emotions towards their partner all together and shut down completely.

What about the other partner? They may experience guilt over not pleasing their partner. They may feel self-loathing for not being enough. They may feel anger towards their partner for not accepting them for who they are and loving their low-libido self. They may feel like a failure. Often their positive love emotions may turn off completely as well.

What is at the center of all of this? The lie that our sexuality is our identity. The first partner needs to realize that they as a person were not rejected. There is more to them than sexuality, and their partner still loves the whole "them", even their sexuality, even if they don't share their libido. And the second partner needs to realize that their lack of libido doesn't make them a terrible partner. There is more to them than their sexuality as well and much there to be loved. They <u>do</u> need to work together to find a healthy balance in their sex life, but that healthy balance must begin with an abandonment of the lie that their

sexuality is their identity and an embracement of their whole self. More on that in the next chapter

If this lie is toxic for the traditional heterosexual, it is also toxic for those considering a non-traditional sexuality. Often people in this valley of decision feel like they are in or have been in an identity crisis. They might feel that they are living a lie because they can't show their sexual identity. Or they may feel that they have been lied to. Or they may feel that they will be rejected if people knew the "real me." All this goes back to that first big lie, a lie that is making it impossible to reach the realities of the heart.

The second big lie is that your sexuality is static.

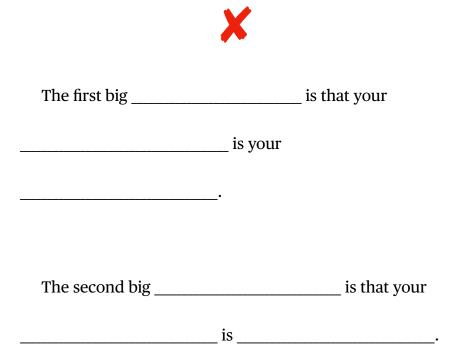
Ask any married couple if their sex life is the same every day, and they will laugh. All you need to do to prove that human sexuality is not static is look at the hormone changes that take place in the average person. In men, testosterone levels shoot up in the teen years, leading to heightened sexual drive. Over the decades that follow, it drops slowly, and this drop affects sex drive. In women, the monthly changes in a variety of hormones will boost and lower libido over the course of a single month. And often no two months are alike. No, sexuality is not static.

And then take circumstances into account. The arrival of kids into a family, or extra people staying in the house overnight, or bad news from the job, or health issues can all impact a person's libido at any given moment. Proving again, that sexuality, or at least sexual drive, is not static.

And then there are many testimonies of people who grew up going to all-boy schools or all-girl schools. I have been told multiple stories of people who grew up to be happily married people in traditional heterosexual relationships who, while growing up at one of these schools, experienced strong sexual desires for people of the

same sex. Many of them even acted on these desires. Yet these same individuals, each one of them, later came to the clear realization that they were heterosexual – many of them while still in that school, so it wasn't simply a change of scenery. No, sexuality is not static.

So don't buy into either of those lies. Sexuality does not equal identity. Sexuality is not static. What you feel today you may not feel tomorrow. And what you feel does not constitute who you are.



Chapter 3 THE BIG TRUTHS



ow let's look at the two big truths of this topic. The first big truth is that your identity is deeper than your likes and dislikes, or your strengths and weaknesses. "But I just like this gender or that gender. I feel it deeply." Many people may try to argue that. I won't. If statements like that exit your mouth, or even pass through your mind, I have no doubt they are truthful statements. I will not argue that. It is a statement of something you like.

But so are your hobbies. I am a musician. It is not my profession, but it is something that strikes deep at my core. I think in musical terms. I have music in my head all the time. I write music to commemorate important life events. Listening to music brings back memories like they are a part of the here-and-now. I dislike hip-hop. I accept country music. I love both classical music and hard rock (I know, strange combo). This is deep within me. But music is not who I am.

I am an educator and a leader. I have been for a few decades now. I think I'm good at my profession. I can honestly say I love it. I think about it all the time, and I'm always thinking about how to do it better. Separating me

from my career would be heart-wrenching. But it is not who I am.

I am a family man. I love staying up at night and playing games with my wife and kids. Camping with them has provided some of the best memories I have. I hold as precious each Christmas, each birthday, each milestone in their lives. I've cried at graduations and weddings. I've cried at their heartbreaks. Their health issues keep me up at night. I love them dearly. Taking them away from me would be worse than cutting off a limb. But "family man" is not who I am.

In the same way, my sexuality is not who I am. Time to be mature again. Don't get me wrong - I love sex. And within my sex life I have strong likes and dislikes, as any human being does. There is something about having sex with my wife that makes me feel more complete, as it should, since "a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). But even this is not who I am.

As a human being, who I am is very deep. Yes, these things are all aspects of who I am, but they are only aspects, and there are many, many more. To say that any one of them, sexuality included, is my whole identity cheapens who I am. I am a man, who is a musician, who is a leader and an educator, who loves his family, and who loves sex. But even that statement doesn't say all of who I am.

As a creation of God, my identity lies deep within Him. That is where I come from. That is where my life force flows from. I carry in me characteristics that reflect Him, go back to Him, and are sustained by Him. When my roots are in Him, then, like a plant made up by the elements flowing into it from the ground, I am made up by the

elements flowing from God Himself. The plant may be green, but it is not the essence of green. I may be sexual, but I am not the essence of sexuality. Green does not equal plant, and sex does not equal person.

We are made in God's image.

- God is grand, so we are grand.
- **God is complicated, so we are complicated.**
- **God is deep, so we are deep.**
- **God** is more than just one thing, and so are we.

When we can connect to the truth that we are more than just one thing, our lives can become very deep. If all I am is my hobby, I am shallow. If all I am is work, I am dead to my family. If all I am is family, I am useless to the world at large. If all I am is sexuality, then I miss out on so much more to live for.

So live in the truth of the matter. Don't box yourself into any corner, because it will ultimately break you. When you live in God, for God, letting God live through you, experiencing life to the fullest as He promised, then you are really living. And you will find that that one thing that was always so important, while still a part of you, is no longer the center of your identity. And you will be much happier with the new identity you have.

The second big truth is that your sexuality fluctuates. In chapter 2, we looked at how hormones and circumstances all by themselves can make sexuality fluctuate. But the truth, again, goes even deeper than that. Sexuality was meant to be a fluctuating part of our lives to keep things interesting. Imagine your favorite movie, TV show, musical, book, or radio drama. You probably have a favorite episode, or song, or scene, or passage. But now

imagine that every day you partook of that favorite part and only that favorite part. Every day. Week after week. Month after month. Year after year. How long would it be before you couldn't stand that song anymore? Before you turned off the screen and swore you would never watch that again? Before you hid the book under your bed hoping to never see it, ever?

Sexuality is the same way. No matter how you feel about it, being the same all the time is, well, not fun. So God created us to go through sexual stages.

- We have a curiosity in our young years when we know the adults know something we don't, and we try to figure it out.
- We have an awakening in our puberty years when feelings start to come, friends say things, and we witness things we maybe shouldn't.
- Later in our teen years, we have strong passions, chances to experiment (whether we are told we should or shouldn't, the opportunities are still there), and we begin to falsely think we have it all figured out.
- In our young adult lives we typically find the one we will marry. We have freedom to try new things with them, and it is usually a great time of exploration and education.
- As we get older, we go through more stages, some experimental, some tender, some routine, but the cycle of change continues.

Why is this truth important? Because people often make the mistake of thinking that the stage they are in is all there is. The likes they have now are all the likes they will ever have. The dislikes they have they will always have. And none of this is true in a traditional heterosexual relationship.

And it is not true for the person contemplating a non-traditional sexuality. The statistics in the next chapter show that large numbers of people who identify as a non-traditional sexuality at one point in life will often identify as a heterosexual a few short years later. Is this always the case? No, but it is more often than is reported in the world at large. These people find that their likes and dislikes have changed. Why? Because sexuality is not static. And in the stages where discovery and awakening is happening, confusion may set in, and later it is erased, for some at least. So if you are contemplating, don't settle into a lifelong identity.



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Chapter 4 THE STATISTICS



any people feel that their situation is unique. So when people start to consider non-traditional sexual concepts they may feel like they are alone in their journey, and their parents may feel that they are alone as parents. This feeling of aloneness may lead to poor decisions and to a lack of searching for help and answers by both groups.

The statistics that follow are here simply to highlight the fact that if you are feeling alone, you don't need to. The Bible tells us that nothing is new under the sun, and these statistics show this very truth. You are not alone; others out there are experiencing what you are.

If statistics are not for you, then you can skip to the end of this chapter where I will make some conclusions based on the statistics. If you like numbers, then continue.



The number of teens who change the sexuality with which they identify is 20% according to a study done at North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Pittsburgh (https://news.ncsu.edu/2019/11/teen-sexual-orientation/).

Girls are more likely to experience changes in their sexuality. According to study mentioned above, with "31% of girls reporting changes in romantic attraction, compared to 10% of boys."

Nine percent of the girls in the above studies reported being heterosexual yet still having some attraction to other girls.

Many of these students report having multiple changes in their sexual orientation. In different years they identify differently.

According to a study done by the Pew Research Center, most people identifying as LGBTQ+ start having their non-traditional feelings in the early years that I previously described as the stage of sexual awakening in chapter 3, or in the stage where passions are strong (https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/06/13/chapter-3-the-coming-out-experience/). This would be before the time mentioned in the previous study when young people tend to become fluid and changing in their sexuality.

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ are four times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to attempt suicide (https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/estimate-of-how-often-lgbtq-youth-attempt-suicide-in-the-u-s/).

Studies show that young people identifying as LGBTQ+ have experienced higher rates of abuse than their heterosexual counterparts (https://news.vumc.org/2022/02/24/study-finds-lgbq-people-report-higher-rates-of-adverse-childhood-experiences-than-straight-people-worse-mental-health-as-adults/).

A study done by the National Library of Medicine (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5127283/) shows that when young people feel rejected by their parents due to their sexual orientation, a detachment may occur, resulting in long-term mental health issues for the child.



The studies mentioned in the chapter support the ideas brought forth in this little book. But one I want to highlight is the need for people sexually identifying as nontraditional to receive mental health support. This does not mean that mental health issues have led them to be LBGTQ+. But with the potential rejection by parents and church, with the confusion that comes with this topic, with the stereotypes they will face from the world and the church, it should be no surprise that there is a lot of pressure on their souls. This requires understanding, support, and help. In short, we need to continue to connect to the heart and provide help where necessary.

Chapter 5 WHAT TO DO WITH IT



o now we know that we need to connect with the heart, that we need to abandon the two big lies, and that we need to embrace the two big truths. And we have some statistics to go with that. But what do we do in a practical sense?

What follows are just a few practical suggestions. This is not an exhaustive list, so feel free to try different things. But if you don't know what to do, here are some beginning steps.

Parents:

- Don't focus on the sexual choices of your kids. You can talk about them, but don't make it the focus.
 Remember, your kids are more than their sexuality.
- Hopefully you have trained them to know what you believe. You can remind them of this, but don't lecture, and don't make it an ultimatum. Don't even make it the focus of what your discussions are. They already know.
- Spend time celebrating all the things they are.
 Support their hobbies. Encourage their career choices.
 Get to know their friends.
- Continue your spiritual time. They may face rejection from others, even in the church. But don't let them face

rejection from you. Do you do family worships with them? Continue to do so. Do you pray with them? Continue to do so. Do you express how God is blessing you in your daily life? Continue to do so.

- Embrace their questions and conversations, about sex and about everything else. You are still their parent, and they still need you to be there for them.
- Do you have things you like to do as a family (music, camping, trips, watching sports, favorite shows)? Keep doing them.
- Above all, connect to your child's heart by being a part of their lives. Kids in the best of circumstances will push their parents away. So don't be discouraged by this. Continue to be there. Be vulnerable. If they see your heart they will be more likely to come around and let you connect to theirs.

Young People:

- Don't focus too much on your sexuality. It is a part of who you are, but so are a lot of other things. Explore your other gifts, your other strengths, your other talents. Make sure you explore the depths of who you are.
- Look for God in your self-searching. He is there because He made you. There may be confusion and questions, but He is there to do the journey to truth with you.
- Don't ever believe that God doesn't love you. He does. And if you feel like you aren't making Him proud, then talk to Him about that. You might find that He has an opinion that is different than what you think.
- Find things to do with your family that you like. At different stages of your life that may be harder than at

other stages. But they are your family. If you think they are hurting because of your choices, realize that any hurt is coming from a place of love. So go into that love. And the best way to do that may be to find things to do together that connect you.

- Connect specifically with your parents. You are their baby, and whatever choices you make will be a choice that shows you are growing up and away from the little baby you once were. Help your parents with this by connecting specifically with them. Every day.
- Stay open to what your sexuality may look like in the future, and don't paint yourself into a corner. All people change with time, so be open to it.



If you are looking for more information identifying your purpose or your true self, contact the author for more resources.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremy Garlock is the current superintendent of schools for the NY Conference and the principal at Union Springs Academy. He has served in ministry, not only in these positions, but also as teacher, assistant youth director, and camp pastor for over 20 years. He is married to Joya Garlock, and together they have five beautiful daughters. Mr. Garlock loves to play and record music, go camping, and spend time with his family.