

# The Shock Test!

## PASSING LIFE'S TOUGHEST TESTS

*Psalm 145:14-18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

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Here and in every place I served, I've witnessed individuals and families struggle with homosexuality. In some cases, dear souls have been tormented by feelings and attractions they don't want and then shocked their families when they say, "I'm gay." In other cases, precious souls have endured ridicule as hints of their homosexual tendencies surfaced long before they drew their conclusions and revealed them to their families. In some families the self-profession is spoken in anger and defiance.

Sometimes, I'm invited into the family struggle to pray and bring help. More often, I watch the families engulf their loved one with what they hope is a protective silence. Whether it's shame or fear of defaming their loved one, they create a no-speak zone that in most cases misses much of the help the Lord Jesus offers through his body, the church.

Understand that surveys of American culture reveal that as much as five percent of adult Americans experience some homosexual attraction. A much smaller percentage is convinced they are exclusively homosexual. Not a few are convinced they are transsexual. Still others consider themselves bisexual. The pilgrimage for these souls varies widely, and their self-disclosure may be in fragility or defiance. Truly, many are sincerely convinced they have been created a certain way.

Today, I speak as a pastor primarily to you who contend with homosexuality in your souls or in your families. Let me say to you who are dealing with homosexual feelings, I've witnessed

the deep hurt experienced in the journey to this self-understanding. I'm concerned about your hurt and your heart. To you families with members on this journey, I understand your special challenge. How do you represent Christ to your family member who is convinced he or she is homosexual? Christ is to live through you and minister through you.

You are aware of the great confusion in our western culture. The current climate is not helpful to any family member struggling with homosexual feelings, or any family responding to it. When feelings and desire resist change, we tend to accommodate ourselves to them. Once we begin the path of accommodation, we ignore or block out any witnesses that are contrary. Consequently, we find churches dividing and our country in bitter conflict. Right now, two denominations are undergoing painful and protracted schism. Five states recognize homosexual marriage either by court-order or legislative action. After referendums two additional states no longer recognize homosexual marriage. Our culture is in full propaganda mode, with factions using music, movies, television, science and religion to bolster their point of view.

You've heard people argue that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. Do you know of anyone who hung around Jesus all his life and heard every word uttered from his mouth? I don't. There is no way that you can prove the notion that Jesus never talked about homosexuality. The most you can say is that the gospels do not record for us any statements of Jesus singling out homosexuality as an emphasis. However, Jesus taught sexuality and marriage. He also explained the Mosaic Covenant that expressly forbids homosexual relations.

In Matthew 19, Jesus said:

***“Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”*** (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV)

Jesus identified people as male and female. That is our God-given sexual identity, not heterosexual or homosexual. God made us male and female. Those we label transgender testify that they feel like males trapped in woman's body or vice versa; yet, despite the surgery and hormonal therapy, their true sexual identity is stamped on every cell of their body. The feelings may be real and compelling, but they don't alter their identities. Jesus says the reason a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife is because God made them male and female. In other words, heterosexual marriage is not just a biblical norm, it's God's design for humanity. The union of male and female in marriage is a design and work of God. Male and female are an anatomical, biological, reproducing fit. No feelings change the design nor excuse the breaking of the union. The Apostle Paul and Jesus' brother Jude apply Jesus' teaching to homosexuality in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6 and the epistle of Jude.

Even as Jesus warned people not to attack such a union, his apostles, specifically Paul, called people to a life of celibacy outside such a union. This is not harmful repression. Jesus and the Apostle Paul lived fulfilling lives as chaste and single.

In every serious study I've read, single, chaste people are happier and more fulfilled than singles that are sexually active. Indeed, single, chaste people are often happier than married partners. Our society's belief that you are repressed unless you are sexually active is based not on experience, but on rebellion.

When Peter and John were beaten and told to shut up in Acts 4, they and those praying with them turned to Psalm 2, which says:

***Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." (Psalm 2:1-3, NIV)***

Modern sexual ethics are rooted in the desire to break the chains and throw off the fetters of God and his Anointed One. However, God gave us biblical teaching as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path in a dark and confusing world. This teaching is to lead us to the only one who both unconditionally loves us and is powerful and determined to heal us. Peter wrote:

*(Jesus) himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* (1 Peter 2:24-25, NIV)

Long before we experienced struggle, God knew what we would face. He points us to the washing, healing work of Jesus, who paid for our sins. Jesus is our healer. We don't need to beat ourselves up. We just need faith to cooperate with his work in our lives.

Here are five ways to respond to the shock of unsettling attraction or a painful disclosure by a loved one. They from the word SHOCK.

**S - Stay calm!** In Psalm 145 God reveals:

*The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.* (Psalm 145:8-9, NIV)

God further reveals:

*The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.* (Psalm 145:14, NIV)

You already have God on your side. He loves you and your family member. He awaits you in the love and power of Jesus. He loves you and is ready to touch you!

**H - Hold them in love!** This word is more for you if you're dealing with a family member. You need to listen with love and faith to the story and feelings of the one dealing with homosexual passions. God patiently holds us in love and continues to treat us with love. Your

family member ought to know above all else, by your words and actions, that you love them and you are a face of Christ's love for them.

**O - Open yourself to the help from Christian believers.** We are never meant to face our inner struggles or our struggles with family alone. When you fail to open yourself in a confidential relationship with a follower of Christ, you turn away from the help of your Lord. God puts believing people around you to help you!

**C - Call upon the Lord.** Raise your hands in prayer to your heavenly "Papa!" Your Papa so loves you and whoever in your family is struggling with these feelings. When you pray, you are actually joining Christ who is also talking to your Papa about your concern. Amazing things are accomplished through prayer. Power released in prayer. Call upon the Lord. Realize that no one is a puppet, so God often works through many channels and avenues in response to your prayer. Call and call and call, and have others call with you. God can't resist your prayers, and Satan can't withstand your prayers.

**K - Know what God has done and is doing.** God heals all kinds of people and all kinds of families. 1 Corinthians 6 reminds us that God has transformed lives, driven by all kinds of appetites. The early Christian community was composed of people who struggled with homosexuality and found healing in Christ. That is happening today. Find out how and where.

I'd like us to finish our time praying with one another. During our closing song, I invite you to join me here at the communion railing where we will pray and together draw near to the shepherd of our souls.