

I am not gay... I am David

By David Prosen

March 12, 2015 (CUF.org) -- Are people born “gay” or do they choose to be gay?

The answer to both questions is no—although in many passionate debates generated by this topic, we are quick to dismiss objectivity. In reality, these questions provide a smoke screen to a much bigger problem that is pervasive in our society, in religious circles, politics, and clinical settings. The problem I speak of is the idea that homosexuality is an identity.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that every individual must “acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*” (no. 2333). This refers to the “physical, moral, and spiritual *difference and complementarity*” of both genders which are “oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life” (Ibid.). At the most basic level, our identity is rooted in the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God—“Male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27).

I used to believe I was a “gay” person. I had been attracted to the same gender for as long as I could remember. Because this attraction was present from early on in my life, without my conscious choice, I concluded that I must have been born this way. After all, that’s a logical conclusion . . . right?

The attraction I had to the same gender when I was a little boy was normal and similar to what many boys experience. Boys look for heroes, role models who they respect and want to emulate. For me, the attraction to men started out with normal admiration but then began to take some dysfunctional turns. As a child, I was often made fun of and told by my peers that I wasn’t like them. This made me question what the difference between us was. At this point, shades of covetousness characterized my admiration. I secretly wondered, “If I looked like so-and-so, would I be accepted?”

In puberty, this attraction or admiration became eroticized. The derogative homosexual label was given to me by my peers, and I yielded to their accusations because I truly did have a sexualized same-sex attraction. Eventually, I embraced this label and called myself “gay.”

Although I didn’t freely choose same-sex attractions, I did willfully choose to act upon them. My decision to sin brought me intense pain, loneliness, and—worst of all—separation from God. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explained this reality in a statement that observed, “As in every moral disorder, homosexual activity prevents one’s own fulfillment and happiness by acting contrary to the creative wisdom of God. The Church, in rejecting erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality, does not limit personal freedom and dignity realistically and authentically understood.”[1]

Eventually, in my brokenness, I responded to the Lord’s loving call to forgiveness and healing. He has brought me through the valley of shame and out of the darkness of my past and shined

His light of truth upon the many lies I believed about myself—especially the one that claimed that I was a “gay” person.

Defining Terms

By defining myself as a “gay” male, I had taken on a false identity. Any label such as “lesbian,” “bisexual,” or even “homosexual” insinuates a *type* of person equivalent to male or female. This is simply not true. One *is not* a same-sex attraction, but instead *experiences* this attraction.

In his book, *Growth into Manhood*, Alan Medinger shows that homosexual tendencies and behaviors have been around for thousands of years, but the idea of a homosexual identity only began to evolve about 150 years ago with the emergence of the term “homosexual.”[2]

In a later study, Medinger further demonstrates his findings, revealing a number of untruths that tend to surface when one accepts homosexuality as an identity:

+I must have been born this way.

+If I was born that way, God made me this way.

+If God made me this way, how can there be anything wrong with it?

+It’s in my nature and I must be true to my nature.

+If it’s my nature, I can’t change.

+If I try to change I would be trying to go against my nature and that would be harmful.

+Accepting myself as gay feels so good—I feel like a thousand pound load has been lifted off of my back—so it must be okay.

+If people can’t accept my being gay, then something is wrong with them.

+If people can’t accept my being gay, then they don’t accept me because that’s *who* I am.[3]

When I read these, I was floored. I believed each and every statement deep down to my core. When I was engaged in this lifestyle, it made perfect sense to go along with what felt natural. However, it was logical only because it *appeared* to be truth. In reality, lies had to be built upon lies for them to add up to something with the semblance of truth.

I believed I was gay. But I was also certain that I didn’t choose this for myself, and so I believed that God must have made me this way. However, Scripture verses like the following made no sense in light of my feelings: “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them” (Lev. 20:13).

How could a God of love create me this way and then condemn me to hell? I began to do what many other Christians struggling with same-sex attraction do and searched for “pro-gay” theologies for explanations. I desperately wanted to be in a loving relationship with the same gender, but at the same time, I had a gnawing feeling in my heart that this was wrong.

Time for Truth

Looking back, I believe that my search for truth and struggle against accepting this lifestyle was ultimately the way in which the Holy Spirit convicted me. Still, this gnawing feeling—that same-sex attraction was not God’s plan for my life—was not easy for me to reconcile with because I believed that my sexuality alone was my identity.

Ignorance of this distinction is dangerous. My false beliefs regarding my identity deterred me from accepting the conviction in my heart from the Holy Spirit. St. Paul acknowledged this very same process, explaining:

Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . . God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural 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 their own persons the due penalty for their error (Rom. 1:25-27).

Only after I accepted the truth that acting on homosexual attractions was a sin did I begin to ask for the strength and the grace to carry that cross—and the Lord abundantly poured these upon me. Several years later, He showed me that homosexuality was a false identity that I had embraced. And at this point, my integral healing began as I searched out who I really was. My reflections led me to the discovery that I never truly believed I was a man, and yet I didn’t think I was a woman. In that searching process, I realized that I did not fully identify with either gender.

Through the sacraments—especially the Eucharist—as well as counseling, spiritual healing retreats, and much prayer, Christ revealed to me that I *am* a man. I have many masculine traits that I was never aware I possessed—such as courage and strength. I can never adequately express the tremendous joy I felt when I began to internally recognize and accept the fact that I am a man, I am masculine, and I do belong in the world of men. At the same time this recognition occurred to me, my attraction to men continued to decrease drastically and my attraction to women increased.

Identity and the Church

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned the discussion over whether persons are born homosexual or if they choose to be. Neither is true because same-sex attraction is an experience—not a type of person. Accepting homosexuality as an identity, which has largely been affirmed in our culture, brings so much confusion. In order for a Christian to justify homosexual behavior, he or she needs to alter and contort Sacred Scripture.

Many individuals from within are trying to force the Catholic Church to change her stance toward homosexuality because it *seems* like discrimination against those who are just “being themselves.” But it is not discrimination when we identify and seek to correct falsely held beliefs.

The problem has not just effected those dissenting in our Church. There are very good Catholics and even good priests who wrongly assert that people cannot change their sexual orientation. These people may have the best of intentions, but for whatever reason they have bought into the lie that homosexuality is a type of person.

The Church’s response to those suffering with same-sex attraction offers us this perspective:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition (CCC, no. 2358).

There is hope for those who have same-sex attraction, and we must not abandon efforts to help others understand the truth. This is not to say that God will “change” His creation, the person, because He did not make them this way or intend for them to experience this attraction. Rather, God can change the person’s way of thinking by revealing the lie that the individual has accepted and assimilated into their sense of self.

Once the lie is exposed, wounds that led to this lie such as abuse, rejection, or lack of affirmation in one’s gender identity can be addressed, healing can begin, and the person’s true identity can emerge. When this healing process begins, the attraction to the opposite sex for many has increased.

Courage, the Catholic support group for those with same-sex attraction, as well as many Christians, refrain from using words such as “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” “transgender,” or even “homosexual.” Words can have powerful effects. Because these words are labels which insinuate that homosexuality is an identity, they reinforce untruths and continue to escalate the problems in our society and our Church. As Catholic Christians, I encourage each of us to be careful with our speech and eliminate the use of labels and instead use the words “same-sex attraction” which more accurately describe the experience that these men and women go through.

Heart Knowledge

Earlier, I spoke of the importance of recognizing that I am a man and feeling it internally within my heart. Fr. Larry Richards’ challenging book *Be a Man!* helped me obtain even deeper healing. Intellectually, I knew that God was my Heavenly Father, but I didn’t really know and believe it with my whole being. And then I read the following passage in Fr. Larry’s book:

When we were baptized, the sky opened up just like it did upon Jesus, and spiritually, God the Father, the Creator of the universe, looked at you and me and said, ‘You are my beloved Son.’ You stopped being a creation and you became a son of the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.[4]

Talk about the power of words! In Jesus, we *are* sons and daughters of the Creator of the universe. He truly loves us more than we could ever imagine. *This is our true identity; this is who each of us truly is.*

Isaiah 43:4 states, “You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you. . . .” Fr. Larry brought this verse home to me in a very personal way by explaining:

We must enter into a relationship with God knowing that truth. We must know that our relationship begins where Jesus began, with the knowledge that we are loved by the Father. The God of the universe looks at you and says: ‘I love you!’[5]

This touched me deeply. Before this inner healing took place, I had known with certainty that God loved everyone. But when it came to Him loving me *personally*, I only knew this intellectually— not in my heart. Fr. Larry helped me to connect this truth from my head to my heart.

I am grateful to God for showing me my true identity in Him. Now, I embrace my masculinity and know that I am a man of God. In Jesus, I know I am a beloved son of God who is uniquely and wondrously created, and whose name is David.

[1] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons,” July 22, 1992, no. 3.

[2] Alan Medinger, *Growth into Manhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2000).

[3] Medinger, “Calling Oneself ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ Clouds one’s Self-Perception” from *Same-Sex Attraction: A Parent’s Guide*. Eds. John F. Harvey, OSFS, and Gerard V. Bradley (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2003) p. 173.

[4] Fr. Larry Richards, *Be a Man!* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2009), p. 43.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

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For more information on Courage, the support group for men and women with same-sex attraction who strive to follow the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, visit www.couragerc.net.