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Is Christianity Anti-Gay?

The Christian gospel has a number of sharp edges to it that many find difficult to hear. Today, one the sharpest of those edges seems to be what the bible teaches about sexuality. It has led many to change their mind about what the Bible says, in order to seem more accommodating and “relevant” to the rest of the world. But how does the Christian view actually reconcile its doctrine on homosexual behaviour? I mean just read what the bible says about homosexuality, it’s not vague. Now I don’t doubt that many have asked this question with a mix of both emotion and frustration. This topic can be very personal, which is why it’s such a difficult subject to discuss.

Before we dive into this question we need to remember that no matter how much our worldviews may differ on this, we shouldn’t mistake disagreement with devaluing someone. We have to admit that some so-called ‘Christians’ have undoubtedly been abusive in their behaviour and language towards gay people, thinking they were somehow advancing the Christian faith. So let us be clear, such behaviour is not itself Christian in any way at all. It comes not by adhering to the message and example of Jesus, but by contradicting it. The Christian framework demands that we are to love all people, but this does not mean we are to agree with and affirm all of their desires or accept all their actions and beliefs. It does, however, entail compassion for everyone, whatever their perspective. Let’s keep that in mind.

Here is where I think our culture clashes: the Judeo-Christian worldview establishes a fixed basis for morality, claiming that right and wrong are objective and absolute. This often causes conflict in our culture as so many of us try to dictate our own moral preferences in life. Now we all live as though we believe in objective standards around sexual ethics. Most people agree that no one should be forced to have sex against their consent, and most agree that paedophilia is wrong. These claims can carry weight if we believe there is an objective standard outside ourselves for sexual ethics. However, if morality is entirely subjective, being merely a matter of opinion relative to one’s culture, ethnicity, background etc, then there’s no external rubric by which we can say consent is always good and paedophilia is always bad – it’s just a matter of opinion, and yours is as strong or as weak as the person you disagree with. This leaves us all with the following situation:

- On the one hand, you may believe that all morals are objective, that certain actions are absolutely right or wrong independent of one’s thoughts or feelings.
- On the other hand, you may believe that all morals are subjective, that no action is truly right or wrong since there isn’t an absolute basis for right or wrong independent of human opinion.

The first view is incompatible with atheism; the second is incompatible with Christian theism. If there is no absolute basis for morality even around sexuality, then there are no definite moral limits to sexual behaviour. In the Christian worldview, where right and wrong is defined outside ourselves, God establishes a moral limit to sexual behaviour and borders against sexual relations of the same sex.

The question is why He has chosen certain standards?

Why does God not approve gay marriage?

First, let's be awkward and talk about sex: many have the idea that the Bible is somehow disapproving of sex, as though it was something we discovered behind God's back, without his complete approval. God is the one who made humankind male and female, and God is the one who commanded them to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1 v 28).

Sex is God's idea and he wants us to bonk.

Sex was not our invention but His gift. God gave us a means of reproduction that was not just functional but deeply pleasurable. The purpose of sex here is to express and deepen the unity between two people. The man and woman become "one flesh." But it's not just describing the sense of togetherness a couple might feel while caught up in the height of passion. It is something objective and real. Physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually, two people are becoming knitted together, hence why sex is biblically expressed as being confined within marriage. God has designed it to work that way and it works very well. *Sex is a good thing.* The binding effect of sex in a relationship is what makes the breakdown of a sexual relationship so painful. And the more that union is forged and then broken, the more our capacity for deep and abiding unity is diminished. We are simply not designed for multiple sexual relationships. Sex becomes less relational, more functional and less intimate as a result.

God created sex as a good thing. Sex is good for marriage.

In fact, God created everything to be an expression of His nature, and everything finds its greatest harmony and fulfilment when it aligns with His intentions for His creation. Marriage is no exception to this - God intended it to reflect something of His nature. In the most famous creed in the Old Testament, believers are reminded that: "*The Lord our God, the Lord is One.*" The particular Hebrew word for "one" (ehad) is not primarily a mathematical observation, it is an assertion about God's nature. He is One. There is unity in Him. We see in the Bible that God is triune - He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, but all that this triune God is, does, and says is perfectly integrated. He is One. This very same word is used in Genesis 2 v 24 to describe the union of a man and woman in marriage. They become one (ehad) flesh. Marriage is a wonderful God-given way for humanity to reflect the unity and diversity that is seen in God. That is what marriage is about. God's oneness is not sameness, as though the three persons of the Trinity were identical to one another. It is unity in difference, not in uniformity, and the same is true of the union of a man and woman in marriage.

But some may object that they wouldn't find fulfilment with someone of the opposite sex as they're not attracted to that sex. The point, though, is not that our ultimate fulfilment is to be found in marriage - this is the idolatry of romance. We find ultimate fulfilment in our relationship with our maker, and out of this relationship flows a God-centred lifestyle that reflects His nature in a hundred different ways. Marriage is just one of those ways, *but not a necessary part.*

Because God's creation is an expression of His nature, He intends to express the nature of His diverse unity through marriages that are both diverse in gender and unified.

We are male and female: "for this reason a man will leave his parents..." Marriage is based on gender, it would not exist without the sexual differences between men and women. Now the same is not true of gay sex. Two men, two women cannot be *one flesh* in the way that God is *one* ('ehad) and in the way that a man and a woman are *one*. This is not to say that commitment, faithfulness, emotion and passion cannot be present in a gay relationship, or that they automatically exist in a heterosexual relationship just by virtue of the couple's heterosexuality. The issue is not the feelings

of commitment that two people may have for one another, but rather, the kind of union God gives to a man and woman when they become physically “one”. However else we may differ from one another in temperament, personality, culture and background, it is ultimately the joining of male-female that leads to the one-flesh union. From this union flows the possibility of new life. Procreation is not the sole purpose of marriage but it is clear that procreation is intended to be rooted in marriage. Sex is a good gift that God has given exclusively for opposite-gender marriage.

In light of the above, this does, of course, mean that “gay marriage” is not marriage at all within the Christian world, and let us be reminded, secularism did not produce marriage; religion produced marriage. What marriage is and who it is for is not a matter of democracy. It’s God’s idea. Don’t believe in God? Then why are you interested in marriage? If someone wants to enjoy what marriage provides while changing what constitutes a marriage, that’s like wanting to have a Ferrari made out of aeroplane parts. It’s something fundamentally different.

Marriage was defined and instituted by religion under faith in God. We reason by means of concept and definition, we make laws by definition. If we don’t respect definitions, we can’t make law. To change the principle and meaning of marriage you have to take down the institution of marriage from its origin. Once you make marriage relative to personal opinion, that its definition can just change to what we want, it has no definite value. So when one claims that someone’s homosexual lifestyle is private to them, “*it doesn’t affect you, stay out of it*”, but it does. It’s pressing upon culture as a whole because it’s framed in the language of civil rights, so you tell me that I can go ahead and practice my faith, it has nothing to do with me following my faith, but then *forcing* onto Christianity a redefinition of marriage which originated from absolute faith. Marriage is not based on popular opinion. It’s a religious ceremony. So telling people of faith that homosexuality is nothing to do with them then forcing them to change the principles of that faith, based on a preference that is outside of the faith lacks all respect and rights of that people group. Those of the gay community with a secular point of view can be entitled to other forms of relationship such as a civil partnership and the like, but secularism is not entitled to dictate Christian commitments. Unfortunately, those who question gay marriage can be equated with prejudiced bigots on the wrong side of history. *We must stop assuming that all traditional Christians are hateful bigots simply because they define marriage as a union between a man and a woman.*

What if I’m attracted to the same sex?

It’s easy to write about things, it’s another thing to actually experience such things. My experience with friends who are part of the gay community is that it can be natural for someone to experience same-sex attraction. The attractions that one may feel since a young age are not necessarily about the lifestyle they have chosen, but part of their natural person. Our romantic attractions and desires often shape us, and don’t they matter? Don’t our desires point to something outside ourselves, something we long for and are made to experience? But why have we assumed that our internal desires are right because they are innate to our nature, as if “whatever I desire is what I ought to have”? Feelings have indeed become our masters. For example, marriage itself is a commitment to not pursue every fleeting ‘natural’ inclination to infidelity for the sake of faithfulness. Many of our desires compete with each other so it’s impossible to fulfil every desire at once – if we fulfil some desires we will necessarily deny others, so sometimes it’s necessary and healthy to do so.

Paul the apostle had something to say and describes in the book of Romans that both lesbian and male homosexual behaviour as “unnatural.” This clearly a massive thing for the Bible to say and, correspondingly, a very hard thing for many people to hear. To say that certain behaviour is “unnatural” is nothing to do with the subjective experiences we encounter of ourselves, which may be same-sex attraction, but instead, refers to the fixed way of things in creation. Paul calls gay sex

unnatural as it goes against the body's natural physical design. As God is our designer and creator, gay sex therefore goes against God's intention for us, and to desire something against His intention is sinful. The "nature" that Paul says homosexual behaviour contradicts is God's purpose for us. "But God made me this way!" Paul's point in Romans 1 is that *our "nature" (as we experience it) is not natural (as God intended it)*. All of us have desires that are warped as a result of our fallen nature. *So not every desire we have is as God intended it to be.*

We asked for a reality where God is exempt and He allows us to have a taste of it. He gives us what we want. At the "fall" of humanity, God gave us over to "*impure lusts and dishonourable bodily conduct*", and to "*shameful lusts*"... The presence of same-sex desire in some is *not* an indication that they have turned from God any more than others, or have been given over by God to further sin more than others. Similarly, the presence of homosexual feelings one may experience reminds someone their desires are not right because the world is not right. Together we have turned from God and together we have been given over to sin. It makes no difference if someone is part of a gay couple, a straight couple, or anybody else. When it comes down to it, regardless of our positions and circumstances, we are all sinners, and all need God's grace. So desires for things God has forbidden are a reflection of how sin has distorted me, not of how God has made me. Our collective rejection of God has meant we find ourselves craving what we are not naturally designed to do. This is as true of a heterosexual person as a homosexual person.

In today's society, all the body's desires are perceived as good and infallible without filter. Because of this assumption, we treat our feelings as the guiding force for our decisions, actions and lifestyle. What feels right is right, what feels bad is bad. Feelings have become our idols, the central element of our pursuits, our identity. So to tell someone that a feeling they have ought to be neglected or filtered could be interpreted as harmful. Why? because basing your identity in feelings means that when a feeling is unfulfilled, you see yourself as unfulfilled. But it is an illusion to think identity is simply an expression of inward desires and feelings. We all experience strong feelings of various kinds, and in one sense they are all part of "you", but just because they are there does not mean you must or can express them all. No one identifies with all strong inward desires. Rather we use some kind of filter - a set of beliefs and values - to sift through our hearts and determine which emotions and sensibilities we will value and incorporate into our core identity and which we will not. It is this value-laden filter that really forms our identity, rather than our feelings themselves.

The Christian worldview is in conflict with the idea that your identity is based on your desires and feelings. Although feelings come naturally and in many circumstances ought to be enjoyed, there are times and circumstances where certain feelings are not to be embraced. It's natural for us to desire things which are not necessarily good. Just because something may feel natural to me that doesn't make it right. We must beware of allowing feelings and desires to dictate actions. *They say feelings make brilliant servants but terrible masters.* According to the bible's unflattering diagnosis, we are naturally sinful and confused, and God calls us all to roles that require self-constraint. The Christian worldview teaches that our identity springs most fundamentally from God, not our feelings. However ingrained homosexual feelings and temptations may be in someone's behaviour, homosexual conduct is not inescapable. Temptations and feelings may well linger, but what defined us before no longer finally defines us now. So for the Christian, neglecting certain feelings which are contrary to God's universal moral law isn't an attack on our identity, it's simply the right thing to do. This means that the presence of temptation, whether that be an attraction to the same-sex or whatever it is, isn't itself a 'wrong' to be repented of. Christians have always made a distinction between temptation and what is called sin. Being Christian makes us no less likely to fall ill, face tragedy, or experience insecurity. *All of us experience fallen sexual desires, whether those desires are heterosexual of homosexual by nature.* It is not un-Christian to experience same-sex attraction any more than it is un-Christian to get sick. What marks us out as Christian is not that we never experience such things,

but how we respond to them when we do. At the very moment we experience inappropriate desires or attraction toward someone of the same sex, or anything forbidden by God, then we are able to resist impure thoughts and emotions that we may be encountering, acknowledge that we do not want to embrace such things, and seek God's help and strength to do so. We remember that such experiences are not God's design for us and therefore not ultimately right for us. We fight to honour God, trusting that he is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.

To clarify the above, I think it's important to discern that promiscuity and sexual orientation must be separated in our thinking. While we do not choose our sexual *attractions*, we do choose our sexual *actions*. What we do therefore carries moral weight in a way that our attractions do not. There is a distinct difference between being attracted to the same sex, and labelling yourself as gay. The second is based on an identity and lifestyle based on those attractions, while the first is simply acknowledging those attractions are there, and if you are Christian, doing what you can to not feed those desires.

It is also important to note that sexuality is not necessarily a static thing. Our desire at one stage of development may not be the same at another. This is perhaps especially true during puberty when sexual attractions can change considerably. In the developmental course of events, once-SSA (same-sex attracted) does not necessarily mean always-SSA, just as bisexual people can sometimes be more attracted to one gender, sometimes to the other, or people who would consider themselves to be straight may occasionally fantasise about gay sex. It is all the more important that someone experiencing SSA for the first time does not assume that this is now the "orientation" they are to live with for the rest of their life. For example, the national survey of Family Growth shows that a large proportion of self-identified lesbians and gays report fantasizing, desiring, or even engaging in heterosexual sex.

Make no mistake about it, God does indeed forbid homosexual activity. Given what the bible says about God's purpose for sex and marriage, this shouldn't surprise us. But it doesn't just end there, God is opposed to all sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage. It's not that the bible opposes all homosexual activity but approves of any and every sexual act between heterosexual people. Of course, this does also mean that for as long as someone is unmarried, they ought to abstain from sexual activity. "Celibate" and "chaste" are somewhat old-fashioned words, but they capture the sort of thing being spoken about: single and sexually abstinent. But can we actually expect unmarried people to refrain from all sexual behaviour? In one sense the question is answered for us immediately if, and only if, we are already committed to the authority of God's word. If we follow God, we must adhere to Him on this point. *You can't claim to be God-fearing but then reject particular teachings at our own discretion. That would make us, and not God, decide what is true.*

I know this isn't easy to swallow. As one Christian experiencing same-sex attraction said it seems unfair that same-sex attracted Christians should be sentenced to loneliness. But I know plenty of married people who are lonely. In modern society, we are led to believe we can't live without sex. In fact, I believe we are more likely to wither without the love of friends and family. You can still have a rich life full of community and deep friendship while being single. Jesus himself never married. While Paul the apostle commends marriage, he values singleness more. *We should allow those who remain single to thrive.* I do not mean to minimize the pain and I don't doubt that some of those who find themselves same-sex attracted experience a drum-like beat of sexual temptation every now and then. But this is also true for many heterosexual Christians, whether they are married and struggling to be faithful to their spouse or single and longing for marriage. Ultimately, every Christian is called to self-restraint in many areas of temptation, and we're all going to struggle at times. The more I go in life, the more I realise that every Christian is struggling in some area of life, dependent on help from close friends, family and other Christians who know their needs and vulnerabilities. Lungs don't work without hearts or legs without feet. Were simply not designed to go through these

struggles alone.

A lady who previously experienced same-sex attraction throughout her teens and early 20s said that while it is tempting for same-sex attracted Christians to retreat from friendship for fear of messing up, she *"believe[s] this is quite the wrong approach. Whatever our sexuality, we are all more prone to eat junk food when we are hungry, and we are all the more prone to seek illicit relationships when our core relational needs are not being met. For Christians capable of experiencing attraction to same-sex friends, the solution is not friendship starvation but healthy nourishment."*

Now, one of the common arguments made today in favour of same-sex partnerships is that what must surely count above all else is faithfulness and commitment. Shouldn't faithfulness within a relationship be what determines its moral goodness rather than the gender of those involved in it? A promiscuous gay lifestyle with multiple partners and one-night standards might be wrong, but two people who love each other and are faithful to whatever promises they have made, surely that's okay? Well, let me give you another example to illustrate.

Consider a romantic relationship between a parent and child, an arrangement commonly forbidden within society today. Hopefully we wouldn't even have to stop to question whether this particular couple loves each other, their level of commitment or whether they are being faithful. How emotionally tied the two are is not the point. Whether or not they are in a long-term committed relationship is irrelevant; the fact remains that it is morally wrong and should not be happening. Faithfulness demonstrated in an otherwise prohibited relationship does not make it less "sinful". In many areas of life, it is possible to demonstrate good qualities while doing something wrong. A thief in a gang may demonstrate impeccable loyalty to his fellow gang members during the act of stealing: looking out for them, protecting them from danger, being sure to give them a generous proportion of the takings. But an activity that is faithful and committed is no more permissible than an activity that's promiscuous and unfaithful.

The war within

The gay community is made up of people who are loved by God. We should be willing to reach out; connect and share with that community rather than moralize and judge. The biblical teaching of grace makes it clear that one's sexual orientation has nothing to do with one's position before God. *Being gay doesn't send you to hell, just as being straight doesn't send you to heaven, it's irrelevant.* All that matters is whether each of us are ready to submit ourselves to God as our king. God accepts you because of the message of the gospel. Your sexual orientation, your desires, do not exclude you from God, rather how we act upon those desires, how you choose to behave is the test of your character. So when charitably understood, the Christian view has nothing to do with homophobia or denying the equality or rights of the gay community.

David Bennet, a former atheistic gay right activist, in his book 'A war of loves' details this moment in his life where he's proudly participating in a Gay march in Sydney, celebrating the freedom of his sexuality. When the evening came he found himself discouraged when the march he was proudly participating in turned to a lustful fest, with all sorts of acts of adultery, fornication and promiscuous behaviour going on around him. He was marching to stand for 'love', not just the lustful parade of sexual thrills and flings it had turned into. He began to interview people on what they thought love was and wrote: *"In all our films, songs and art, we worshipped love, but no one could define it. Maybe no one did know. Maybe in the end, we were just slaves to our biological impulses, cultural aspirations, and desires for fame, attention, and company. Maybe love was just a game of illusions in a reality of 'blind, pitiless indifference'. Years later I would read C.S. Lewis's words that describe what I experienced: If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical*

explanation is that I was made for another world.” David started to sense that there had to be a higher love that corresponded to his deep desire for intimacy and so began losing faith in the secular world.

He continues to write: “The war to find love still raged within me, but I knew there had to be more than my incessant search in relationships. It just didn’t satisfy any longer. We frequently used the famous slogan ‘love is love’. Love as we defined it, was our highest ideal and our sacred entity. That in our minds settles the issue. But while our slogan was popular, it was shallow at best. ‘Love is love’ doesn’t mean that much semantically, and it provides no definition of what love actually is. Nor can it differentiate between the various kinds of human love and desire... A mother’s love is not a friend’s love. A friend’s faithfulness and a total stranger’s act of compassion are both touching and wonderful. But they are not the same, cannot be, and shouldn’t be... When the Christian faith makes the bold statement, God is love, the possibility approaches of being accepted not by our mirror but by our maker. The cross is where that strange and holy God most clearly reveals his love... Human romance and attempts at religion can never provide lasting meaning. The cross is God’s intimate act of self-giving, his gentle way of critiquing our love of money, sex, self, romance, fame and above all, power. These weaker loves, these idols we raise in our own image, could never compare with infinitely greater love. Jesus taught that both the worst sin and the most sacred worships originate from the same place, the heart. That God’s love should displace all others and occupy the primary space in our hearts, that this is what we are made for... Even the incredible intimacy of marriage is only a shadow of that great love we were made to experience... It sounds like heresy in our culture, but romantic and sexual desire are not the deepest expressions of our humanness. Unconditional love, God’s love is. And in Christ, our romantic status no longer defines our value, wholeness or wellbeing.”

Whether homosexual or heterosexual, we long for a true encounter of love. Your identity is not bound to your physical attractions or desire, but rather your identity is found in the meaning and purpose of life, and this is inseparable from God. *So being gay is not about having gay sex.* That is a moral choice separate from gay identity. I think it would be wrong to teach that an individual experiencing same-sex attraction (SSA) must have gay sex to be whole as a gay person. A SSA person can give their same-sex desires to God and find a deeper satisfaction and love in knowing and worshipping him than in pursuing what any desire could provide. In the book of Romans chapter eight, it talks of this love which, *“neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!”*

So for the gay person who has become Christian, they must **not repress or indulge** their erotic longings or base their identity on such desires. Instead, they should remember these longings originate from a more fundamental craving for intimacy with God and others, even if twisted by a morally imperfect nature.

Finding fulfillment

Bread isn’t something I have ever worried about. I have a number of supermarkets just a short distance from where I live. Bread is everywhere and there hasn’t been a single occasion when I needed bread but wasn’t able to get hold of any. In many parts of the world this is unfortunately not the case, nor was it so in the time of Jesus. Bread was the staple food. It wasn’t that everyone lacked creativity or just decided to stick with bread alone, bread was just the main thing people had to live. Without it, people starved, literally died. When we appreciate this, we can begin to get a sense of what Jesus is claiming when he says *“I am the bread of life.”* Jesus says that he is the staple of life. He is what we need in order to truly live. There is a difference between living and being alive, and

Christ claimed to be the very ingredient for that. Bread keeps our bodies going, but Jesus is what our souls need to live. Without him, we are spiritual corpses. We are incomplete.

And so it's a huge comfort to reflect on these words of Jesus. I can tell myself, on his authority, that he - and no other person, no other friend - is the bread of life. He is life. The more I live from this truth, the more true I know it to be. Life is far, far better when he is at the center, and far, far worse when anyone or anything else is. The invitation is there for everyone to have him in their life. He is waiting, he is knocking at the door. Because what we are all genuinely searching and longing for beneath our comforts and desires, is meaningful and purposeful love. This is the ultimate void we search to fill, and this is the very void God promises to overflow for all who call upon him.

Mainstream culture today shouts that "*love is love*" with no idea of what love really is. Scripture tells us that God is love. If you want to know what real love is, look at Jesus crucified and risen to redeem. Love is who He is. And it is receiving God's love that in turn reshapes how we see ourselves. Jesus Christ is the expression of God's love to us, and so precious is this gift that God cannot be truly said to be "anti" anyone to whom this wonderful gift is being offered.

There is a war within over who will win the central place in your heart? Will it be Jesus, the bread of life, who will define your identity? In the secular world, we have elevated sexual desires to a godlike authority, preferring pleasure more than God. Sexual identity has become a powerful force in western society. We have made sexuality the foundation of self-understanding. Sexual behaviour has therefore become a primary means of self-expression. To restrict sexual behaviour is seen as denying who that person really is. It is telling them to repress something central to their identity, and consequently, to their ability to flourish. But as discussed before, this is not the right way to think. If we are defined primarily by our sexual and romantic desires, then we are really saying that our sexual desires need to be met in order for us to be fully ourselves. This sort of pressure is only going to add to the emotional pressure felt by those who are encouraged to make sexuality their core identity. *Sex is a powerful urge, but it is not fundamental to wholeness and human flourishing.*

The gospel liberates us from the toxic mindset that sex is intrinsic to human fulfilment. Such a mindset can be crushing. I remember an incident where a teenager became suicidal due to the pressure and feeling of shame for still being a virgin. He went to a railway, willing to throw his life in front of a train because he didn't feel life was worth living without sex. This is both desperate and sad.

Christianity tells a different story that we find our ultimate identity in the person who has most loved us - Jesus, "*That while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" From a Christian perspective, who I am in relation to God is my authentic self. I find myself not in the depths of my psychology but in the depths of His heart. And when He called you and I "child," "beloved," "friend," that's who we are, and any other identity flows from that. No experience or temptation, however unremitting it may seem, is ever a threat to that. In Christ, we are presented holy and blameless in God's sight (1 Col 1 vs 22). This means that our sexuality has less of an impact in dictating our life. I have met those who had feelings towards homosexuality, directed their heart and lives to God, and no longer have attractions to the same-sex. I have met others who in the sacrifice of celibacy have found a transformed place of satisfaction and joy, making a personal lifelong decision to not walk in their natural desire because they have a stronger desire to glorify God and honour Him.

Jesus Christ put an end to this war of loves between our idols and the true and living God. He stands ready to welcome us into his embrace; if we are willing to lay down our right to define ourselves. Instead, embrace a new, God-given identity. For every Christian: "*we have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us.*"

This article contains references to material by Sam Allberry