



Homosexuality

Conflict...Identity...Love

"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Jesus

"If you judge people, you have no time to love them"

Mother Teresa

Homosexuality: An introduction to the series

A series written by Katie Vassar (SrHi LG Leader '05-'09)

Most people have strong feelings (either way) on the debates about whether people who practice homosexuality should be allowed to marry, adopt children, or serve in clergy roles in church. While the Bible clearly lists homosexual behavior as a sin, it more clearly outlines what our response to others should be regardless of the lifestyle they live or beliefs they hold to. As Christ followers, we are called to be righteous and live according to God's word. We are called to live out what it says about our hearts and our actions, and we are called to love others and pray for them...even our enemies. It is our hope that this series will raise some important questions and provide some ideas of how to students can interact with their friends, family members and the public as they are challenged about what Christians believe about homosexuality.

Over the next 3 weeks, this study will discuss the conflict that typically occurs within Christians over the topic of homosexuality, our identity as Christ-followers and how that affects our actions and beliefs, and how to love (not judge) people who live differently than us. The focus throughout the entire series will be that God does not call us to point out the sin in others. Instead, He calls us to be primarily concerned with taking personal responsibility in our relationship with Him. We tend to be pretty self-focused and can only see a small slice of the world from the vantage point of our schools, jobs, neighborhoods and friends. Yet despite our narrow perspective, we are typically quick to pass judgment on those around us. However, God has told us that HE will be the judge. He is stern and serious about this, but His role as The Righteous Judge is meant to be a comfort to us, not a threat. He knows the ins and outs of how each of us were made, why we are the way we are, and the position we each have in the big picture of His plan.

This may be a touchy subject for you and your students to candidly discuss. However, many of us work with, go to school with, and are friends/family with people who live a homosexual lifestyle, and we need to understand what we believe and why we believe it. Encourage your students to discuss their challenges with the topic, but keep leading the conversation back to God's call for us to love each other and leave the judgment part to Him!

Homosexuality: “Conflict”

Katie Vassar’s Blog (some thoughts to help you lead this conversation with your students)

I am excited to explore this topic, because it’s a personal challenge for me. I work for a large corporation where being open to diversity (including sexual orientation) is a priority. I struggle with this focus and also see the benefits. Homosexuality has increasingly been portrayed in movies, music, TV shows, the news, and “celebrity news” (if you can call it that ☺) as casual and “nbd” (no big deal). However, as the homosexual lifestyle is pushed as “natural”, it conflicts with my beliefs about what the Bible says about homosexuality and why God created both male and female.

During my time at a Christian college, I used to love the show Will & Grace. At that time in my life, I did not see a problem with being a Christian and openly supporting a show centered on a homosexual lifestyle. Yet it’s these conflicts that our students run into all the time at school, in their friends groups, and even in their families, that are important for students to recognize, yet hard for them to deal with. In addition, it can be especially confusing for a student when a close friend or family member is living a homosexual lifestyle, and they are put in the position of balancing their beliefs on homosexuality with the love and acceptance they feel towards that person.

We need to help our students think well about this topic. Our public circles and our churches have mostly asked people to be black or white on the issue. However, this doesn’t leave much room for gray, which means students have to accept homosexuality as a good thing and ignore that God calls it sin, or judge those who practice and support it and ignore God’s call to love and to not judge.

Tonight we will take a look at the conflict between understanding that God calls homosexuality a sin, but knowing that God calls us to love and not judge. As you go through this study with your students, help them see that if we prioritize our lives with the guidance given by God, we will find it much easier to live according to how He has called us to live in the midst of this conflict.

GOAL: (everyone's will be a little different, write yours here to remind you of what you are leading your group toward)

INTRODUCTION:

Tonight we will be looking at the conflict between what the Bible says about homosexuality and what our Culture tells us.

PRAYER:

Lord, it's hard to follow You and still be involved in things here on earth, but that is what You have asked us to do. Please help us know how to hold on to your truth when it is challenged by the world around us.

INTERACTION:

When have you been challenged in your beliefs about homosexuality- either in church or at school or in your family?

What have been the most influencing factors in what you think about homosexuality?

How have you responded in the past to friends or family or others you know in regards to homosexuality? In love? In judgment? Other?

TRANSITION:

What the Bible teaches and what the world teaches about homosexuality do not match up.

SCRIPTURE:

What is Homosexuality?

Leviticus 18:22; Romans 26-27.

1. What is homosexuality? What is unnatural about it? (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:21-24)

God lists sin and offers hope

1 Corinthians 6: 9-11

1. What does it mean to 'inherit the Kingdom of God?'

2. Is that something you desire?

3. Are there any sins listed here that surprise you?

4. Do you think the sins listed are on equal ground with each other? Why or why not? What does that tell us about homosexuality?

5. What is the hope that is offered to us and to everyone in verse 11?

John 15:19

1. Will others always agree with everything we believe?

2. How should we blend in with our culture? How should we stand out because of our faith?

TAKE AWAY:

How can I stay true to God's word and what He says is the truth, and at the same time show love to everyone I come into contact with?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, I choose to read your word so that I know what the truth is. Please help me use what you have shown me for Your purposes and not to create divisions in people.

Homosexuality: “Identity”

Katie Vassar’s Blog (some thoughts to help you lead this conversation with your students)

Many of us have heard the phrase “love the sinner, hate the sin.” In theory, this is a great idea. However, it’s not a good phrase to live by when it comes to homosexuality. Here’s why: we all have messed up identities. The Bible tells us what God thinks of us: that we are His children; that we were made by Him that we are heirs to His kingdom; that we are made victorious through Christ; that we have the power of Christ in us. The list goes on and on. However, we tend to create identities for ourselves that aren’t centered on who we are in God’s eyes. We spend a lot of our time, and many of our resources, attempting to create an identity for ourselves that makes us feel accepted. We try to fit into a certain group, or try to be a certain person to make sure others like us. Since all of us struggle with having a skewed identity, it is no wonder our world is a messy place!

Not all people who struggle with homosexual thoughts and temptations are gay. Just like not all people who struggle with lust end up having sex before they are married, get addicted to pornography, or cheat on their spouses. When we find ourselves struggling with issues that are embarrassing to talk about or make us feel different, we look to surround ourselves with others who affirm who we are, or who we think we are. We have a hard time separating our identity (what God says about us) from the person we have made ourselves to be.

We can’t claim to “love the sinner, hate the sin” when the sinner is gay, because we tend to subconsciously attribute part of their identity to their sexual preference, and so do they. A homosexual who is told they are loved, but their sexual orientation hated, will always feel like they are hated. I experienced something like this when I was in high school and my parents did not like some of my friends. I thought my parents didn’t like me because they didn’t approve of my friends. I was wrong in my thinking, but it’s easy to see how we put our identity in our choices and lifestyle.

People identify themselves by who they are friends with, what sports they are best at, what college they go to, and (for some) their sexual preference. While all of these things are part of our lives, they are not who we are. When it comes to loving ourselves, and those that are different from us, we have to remember that the center of everyone’s identity is they are a child of God – created and loved by Him. At all times, we need to look past the earthly identifiers we place on ourselves and others, and see how God views us!

GOAL: (everyone's will be a little different, write yours here to remind you of what you are leading your group toward)

INTRODUCTION:

Tonight we'll look at who God says we are and how that is our TRUE identity.

PRAYER:

Lord, we choose to trust in You. We choose to trust that what You say about who we are is true, and who You have made us to be is our true identity.

MEDIA/ACTIVITY/INTERACTION:

What is your favorite or your least favorite trait you have inherited from your parents?

If you were going to be famous for something, what would you want it to be?

What things do you think you put your confidence in? Having a boy/girl friend? Being the best at a sport, class or other activity? Your looks? Your car? Being funny or smart? Others?

TRANSITION:

We inherit part of who we are from our parents and we often present an image for ourselves that we want others to see. Yet in reality, God has already told us who we are and what He sees in us.

SCRIPTURE:

Look at the Scriptures on the following page. Think of a creative way to have your students engage with them.

1. After reading through the passages, have your students name the different things God says of our identity and purpose. (Bring a big piece of tag board/paper and a marker and write the list down with the students...visuals are always good!)
2. Which stands out as the most encouraging to YOU specifically?
3. What is easy about accepting all these things as the truth of who you are? What is hard?
4. If you didn't have God, what would you put your identity in?

The center of everyone's identity is that they are created and loved by God. How should this affect the way view and love those that are homosexual?

Talk about "love the sinner, hate the sin" from the blog.

TAKE AWAY:

How can I view myself in the way God views me so that I don't need to focus on earning acceptance through other things?
How can I view others in the way God views them instead of seeing their outward traits or lifestyle choices?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, help us to see others the way You see them, regardless of our earthly prejudices, so that we can learn to love the way You do.

Who I Am In Christ (From Victory Over the Darkness , by Dr. Neil Anderson)

I am accepted...

John 1:12	I am God's child.
John 15:15	As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:1	I have been justified.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20	I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.
Ephesians 1:3-8	I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.
Colossians 1:13-14	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
Colossians 2:9-10	I am complete in Christ.
Hebrews 4:14-16	I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.

I am secure...

Romans 8:1-2	I am free from condemnation.
Romans 8:28	I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.
2 Corinthians 1:21-22	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
Philippians 1:6	I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.
Philippians 3:20	I am a citizen of heaven.
2 Timothy 1:7	I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.
1 John 5:18	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

I am significant...

Psalms 139:13-14	I am created by God and have been wonderfully made.
John 15:16	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
1 Corinthians 3:16	I am God's temple.
Ephesians 2:6	I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.
Ephesians 2:10	I am God's workmanship.
Philippians 4:13	I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

"The more you reaffirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity!"

Homosexuality: “Loving, not Judging”

Katie Vassar’s Blog (some thoughts to help you lead this conversation with your students)

A few summers ago, I had an intern working for me, “Anna.” Anna is a girl, but had a short boy-like haircut, wore men’s suits and had a girlfriend. My first reaction was to be overly (fake) polite, just to show that I was not ‘prejudiced’ towards people who are gay. However, I struggled to understand why she would choose to live like that. As I got to know her over the course of the summer, I learned more about her family life, her friends, and her outlook on life. While I never got to the point of agreeing with her, I got to know her as Anna, not as ‘that girl who looks like a guy.’

I began to see her the way that God does, and I began to see some of the hurts she was compensating for by seeking out a community that accepted her and loved her. In 1 Samuel 16:7, we learn that God does not look at outward appearances like we do. He sees who people really are, what their hurts are and what needs they are seeking to fill, and He offers true life and healing by offering His full love. However, not everyone chooses to listen and accept it.

It is not our job to ensure others change their behavior to reflect the life we think they should lead. Rather it our responsibility that they are able experience God’s love through us. When we’ve been affected and changed by God’s love, we are then responsible to help everyone we come into contact with feel that same love and have the hope of that same change. This does not come about by judging people and asking them to change their outward appearance and actions. We have to trust the Holy Spirit to initiate these changes in God’s own timing. Our role is to love the people around us and pray for them. “Loving” in this sense means seeing them the way God sees them (we can ask Him for His help in doing this), and praying that they come to experience His presence.

Over the past two weeks, we’ve looked at the conflict we experience in what the Bible teaches about homosexuality and what the world serves us as ‘truth,’ and the way our skewed identities distract us from who God says we are and cause us to search for love and acceptance in all the wrong places. This week, we’ll discuss how to respond in love to people who have chosen a lifestyle of homosexuality (Romans 18:25) and accept that as part of their identity. May you be blessed by the Lord, and your students, as you lead them tonight!

GOAL: (everyone's will be a little different, write yours here to remind you of what you are leading your group toward)

INTRODUCTION:

Tonight we will look at loving people who struggle with homosexuality, not judging them.

PRAYER:

Lord, help us to learn what it means to love others and let You judge people according to your plan.

MEDIA/ACTIVITY/INTERACTION:

Perhaps you want to start the evening with a water balloon activity in light of tonight's Scripture passage and lesson (John 8:1-11). Create a list of 3-5 "I have..." or "I have never..." (Make sure they are not embarrassing or condemning in any way. Sick to things like "I have been to France" or "I have never eaten sushi.") Those that "have" or "have not" then line up and the other students get to throw a water balloon at them. Guys: make sure your students don't throw too hard and keep the target below the head and neck. Process this activity when you are done and use it to transition into tonight's topic of loving vs. judging.

Or you can begin with the following questions...
At school or in your family, who is someone that it is hard for you to love because you disagree with them? What is that disagreement over? How do you move past that?

TRANSITION:

It's easier to judge others for sins that we don't personally struggle with than to accept responsibility for our own sins.

SCRIPTURE:

John 8:1-11

1. Why did Jesus not follow what was written in the law in this case?
2. What do you think was going through the accusers' minds after Jesus responded?
3. Was Jesus' response letting the woman off the hook or no?

Matthew 7:1-5

1. What is your first reaction to this passage?

Matthew 22:34-40

1. What does Jesus mean in verse 40?
2. Does Jesus put any qualifiers on this commandment? (reasons someone would be exempt from following it... like love your neighbor as long as they...)

**What do all of these passages have to do with homosexuality?

TAKE AWAY:

How can I practice loving friends at school or people in my family regardless of the sin in their life?

How can I show to others that God is a loving and forgiving God who wants a close relationship with us?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, help me to love better. Give me your power to do so, and Your eyes to see others the way you do!

