Here are some things to keep on your radar:

**40 Days of Compassion:** As we finish the last 40 days I hope your groups will continue to practice compassion. If you didn’t get a chance to do a compassion project over the last 40 days, please put one on the calendar by the end of the year.

**Attendance:** Thanks for taking attendance every week. We are almost at 100% of our leaders taking attendance and communicating with us. Please keep it up.

**Homosexuality:** This week’s conversation is sure to be challenging. There might be many opinions on the topic. Your job as the leader is to drive every conversation back to Scripture. What does the bible say about sexual immorality, temptation, forgiveness, grace, truth and compassion?

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**MAIN POINT**

The practice of homosexuality just like any other sexual sin is outside of God’s plan and as Christians we must speak and act with grace and truth into a culture that desperately needs to hear it.

**INTRODUCTION**

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What challenged you from Alan’s message this weekend?
2. How would you answer if your child asked you, “What does it mean to be gay?” How would you approach the issue?

You might have some people in your group who have had a child or parent say this. Be sensitive to their story. Remember that you might even have people in your group who struggle with homosexual thoughts and desires and so the language and the way in which you might joke about this issue could cause some people not to open up.

3. If someone told you, “I’m Christian and I’m gay,” what would be your initial thoughts?
   a) “You can’t be a Christian and gay”
   b) “If you’re a Christian, you’re still immature.”
   c) “Are you gay in desire or gay in behavior?”
   d) “I question whether you’re really gay or just struggling with misplaced longings.”
   e) “It would be best not to tell anyone else here.”
   f) “Tell me about your story.”
   g) Other

Go around the group and ask people to give you their answer. This is really a great opener question that gets people thinking.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Read Romans 1:18-32.

Paul says here that what can be known about God is plain to all, yet not all acknowledge God’s existence. We deny Him. And so our sin distorts our thinking.

4. What does Paul specifically point to as evidence that humanity has denied God?

Paul is unapologetically clear on this point: homosexual behavior is the result of sin. Because we’ve sinned against God, our thinking is corrupted, and God has given us over to “impure desires.” We do things that ought not be done. But more than that, it distorts our identity. We were made in the image of God—that means our primary identity was to be God’s image bearers. But our sin confuses that and makes us find our identity in other things.

Follow up Questions: Ask the group to look at the list of sins vs. 29-31. Why does Paul include this list of sins right after he talks about homosexuality? How would “retaining the knowledge of God” help us recognize sin. How does removing God’s righteousness and judgment from our thinking lead us into sin?
5. Why does Paul tie in creation (v.20) in his argument regarding sexual behavior?

The claim that people are born with homosexual desires does not change the reality that Scripture defines homosexual behavior as sin. Jesus makes clear that the human heart is plagued by sin. From birth, the hearts and minds of all people are afflicted by sin (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12). Paul makes the argument that sex was created by God to occur between the male and female in a marriage relationship only. Sex is one of God’s good gifts to us, but He designed it to be enjoyed in the confines of marriage. God gave us sex to deepen the relationship between husband and wife (Gen. 2:24-25) and for the purpose of bearing children (Gen. 1:28). God also created marriage and defines it as a lifelong union between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:6).

6. Is there a difference between same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior?

There is a massive difference between attraction and homosexual behavior. It’s the difference between sin and temptation. It’s not a sin to be tempted to do something. Jesus was tempted as we are, but did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Never once did He look lustfully at a woman. Never once did He succumb to gluttony or a loose tongue. Not once did He commit any form of sexual immorality. Same-sex attraction is a temptation to be overcome. Homosexual behavior is a lifestyle that must be repented of.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

7. Is homosexuality greater than any other sin? Is homosexuality an unforgivable sin?

According to this text, no sin is unforgivable. Paul is very clear that people who are characterized by these behaviors—homosexuality, reviling, swindling, greed, and all the rest in the list—will not enter the kingdom of God. That means that if your life is marked by continual, unrepentant sin, you won’t spend eternity with Jesus. But he gives such wonderful news in verse 11.

Homosexuality is a very serious sin—in fact, all sexual sins, including fornication (sex before marriage), adultery (sex outside of marriage), and homosexuality, are grievous sins in the eyes of God.

8. Why might it be important for us to remember who we were before coming to Christ (v. 11)? How does this help us with compassion, interaction and sharing the gospel with those who identify as gay?

Paul leads off saying, “And some of you used to be like this.” The Corinthians were engaging in homosexual behavior. They were swindlers. They were greedy. They were adulterers. They were idolaters . . . But they were “washed . . . sanctified . . . justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” They were forgiven, made clean from their sins, and set free to live a life in pursuit of Jesus. Paul says here that there is no sin too big for Jesus.
9. Should the church treat same-sex practice different from heterosexual sex outside of marriage? Why or why not?

God is anti-sin and homosexuality is one sin among many. It is neither excusable nor more serious than other sins. We are all broken and can all find redemption. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged the common understanding of the Law in His day. He equated anger with murder and adultery with murder. As the best interpreter of the Law, Jesus recognized that the essence of the Law is obedience at the level of the heart. The Pharisees could never seem to take this teaching to heart. All believers must take care of their hearts.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. What are some ways you can show love and compassion to those who identify as gay or lesbian without compromising your biblical convictions?

Extra Question: Why is focusing on Jesus and the gospel in your relationships with people who identify as gay or lesbian so important?

11. Is the church and are YOU personally a safe place for people who are struggling with same-sex orientation to talk. What can the church and YOU personally do to be a safe place?
Commentary
Romans 1:18-27

1:18. All people need the gospel because they are under God's wrath, which stems from His holy revulsion to sin. Paul wrote this letter from the Greek city of Corinth—a city full of idolatry and immorality. Mankind originally knew God and fellowshipped with Him (Gen 3:8a). The history of the world and of the OT reveals a subsequent regression and loss of moral knowledge. Since the garden of Eden, people have been unrighteous, and they have suppressed the truth.

1:19. God as Creator has disclosed Himself in creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands” (Ps. 19:1). People also have an innate capacity for God as well as a moral conscience. God is at work to show Himself in the world, yet the world is in rebellion against Him.

1:20-21. Mankind’s problem isn’t that he doesn’t know the truth. The history of the human race discloses a determined effort to oppose the will of God. People are without excuse for their idolatry and practical atheism. Because of human willfulness, people’s knowledge of God became clouded and their thinking became darkened. Without contact with God, the center of man loses contact with reality, misses the purpose of his existence and becomes ungrateful. People are supposed to glorify Him as God, but instead find all sorts of created objects to worship. Part of the wrath of God is revealed in humanity’s loss of intelligent thinking.

1:23. Many people think that the history of religion developed along an evolutionary model. In this view, humanity originally held animistic beliefs and then progressed to polytheism, to tribal deities, and then to a single creator God. From there we progressed to a vague philosophical monotheism in the Enlightenment, and finally we are now embracing atheism in the age of science. But this is not true to the early history of religion. Instead of starting in polytheism, the Bible says humanity started with knowledge of the one true God and then declined into polytheism as humans were separated from God and fractured from one another. Paul warns that loss of knowledge of the true God resulted in the worship of images resembling mortal man. Even in the modern age we have seen dictators worshiped as god, and the Bible says this sin will be repeated climactically in the end times (see 2 Thes. 2:3-12; Rev. 13:1-18).

1:24-25. Because they rejected the truths of God revealed in creation, God punished the Greco-Roman world by delivering them to the cravings of their hearts. A similar scenario played out in the life of King Ahab of Israel, who continually rebelled against God (1 Kings 16:29-33). As a judgment, God permitted a lying prophetic spirit to deceive Ahab to his doom (1 Kings 22:22-23). The ancients were enmeshed in polytheistic idolatry, and in their devotions to their false gods they practiced all sorts of immorality. The loss of the knowledge of God in the mind and heart leads to an exchange of truth for a lie. Something created is served and worshiped rather than the Creator, and judgment is the result (Ps. 81:12; Acts 7:42).

1:26-27. Lesbians and homosexuals often argue that this verse only prohibits sexual abuse of children, or else they say that natural sexual relations are not violated when men and women who are born with a tendency for homosexual desires (as they claim) practice homosexuality. But Paul clearly says lesbianism is unnatural, and the Bible elsewhere strictly prohibits all homosexuality (see Lev. 18:22). The Creator intended male and female to be joined in marriage (Gen. 2:24). As an example of the sort of sexual perversion Paul would have been aware of in his day, the emperor Nero castrated a boy named Sporus and married him. Such degrading passions result in appropriate penalty.
1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Believers should not be deceived into thinking that unbelieving judges (the unrighteous) and their slap-on-the-wrist verdicts about serious sin can render justice in the church. These people have no inheritance in God’s kingdom. Only believers, who are washed... sanctified, and justified, can rightly judge sins (v. 1). Paul’s Corinthian readers would also take this admonition as a cause for asking themselves if their behavior matched that of “the unrighteous” or that of the “washed,” the “sanctified,” and the “justified.”