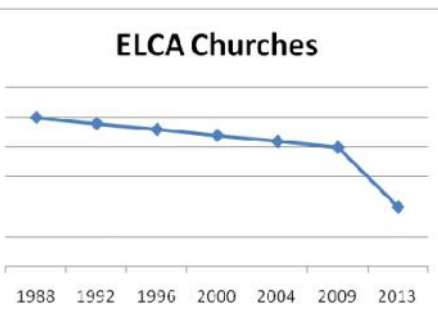
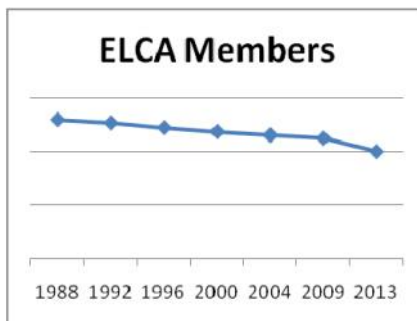


# THE DARK EXCHANGE

## PART TWO

Romans 1:24-32

I will never forget our first worship service in our new building. The date was August 30, 2009 and just two days prior, the ELCA officially voted to ordain practicing homosexuals.

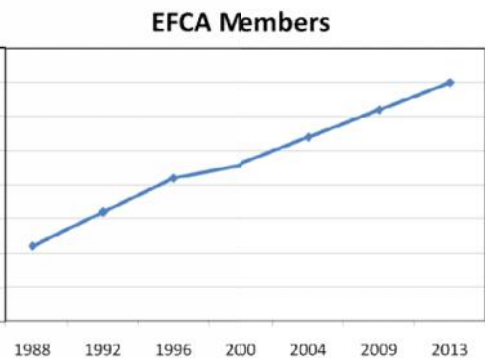
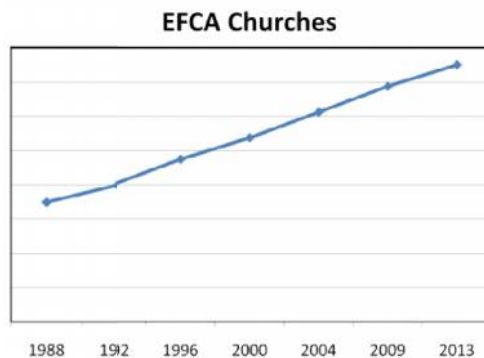


It has not been a good four years for the ELCA. Their membership has dropped quite a bit but the number of churches has dropped much more significantly.

Now compare these trends with that of our own

denomination. The strong upward trend is at least a possible indication of spiritual health. But even if it meant losing members in a church, taking a stand on vital issues is always worth it in the end.

Last month, the Governor Christie of New Jersey abandoned his fight against gay marriage in the state.<sup>1</sup> The guy is a Republican so it made sense that he was trying to stop



gay marriage but it doesn't make sense that he abandoned the fight. What makes even less sense is that he is on record as saying that that people are born gay and therefore being gay is not a sin. Moreover, he signed a bill in August prohibiting any counselors or psychiatrists from attempting to help gay teenagers to change and try to become heterosexual.<sup>2</sup> So if people are born gay and being gay is not a sin, why was he fighting against gay marriage in the first place? Pure political posturing is the only logical reason.

But this horribly mixed up governor raises several questions that percolate into the news and sometimes directly assault us in our daily lives. Is homosexual behavior a sin? Are people born gay? Can Gay people ever change? If you do not have good and ready answers to these questions, you really should.

I raise this topic with a little trepidation because most people think that evangelical pastors and churches are constantly railing against homosexuality. We get quickly lumped into the same category as Westboro Baptist Church, which is not a church at all, but nothing but a hate-filled cult. But if you haven't been listening to my sermons for the past thirteen years, let me explain why I am preaching on this topic. I am preaching on this controversial topic for the same reason I preach on other difficult topics—because they are in the text. This issue literally jumps off of the page of this chapter. In fact, this passage is considered to be the most clear of all passages in the Bible on this issue. Therefore, since this issue figures so prominently in the text and since it continues to play a prominent role in our culture, I think all believers need to be better equipped to understand and respond to this important issue.

*24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 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 themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

Let me give you the four questions in my outline for this morning.

1. Is homosexual behavior a sin?
2. Are people born gay?
3. Can people change?
4. How do we respond?

Believe it or not, I had this outline set before I thought about Governor Christie. It just so happens that his mixed up views fit perfectly into my outline.

## 1. Is homosexual behavior a sin?

This is by far the most important of our questions and everything else hinges on this point. I think I have shared this before but at my former church I had an interesting experience. On two different occasions, I was part of a 2 person panel presenting “What the Bible says about Homosexuality” for the Madison School District. So imagine a group of teachers in Madison asking this question. To this day I still don’t know why this was even a relevant topic or why they wanted to discuss this. The first time, my “opponent” was a former Presbyterian pastor who had been living as an openly gay man for a long time. Both he and the teachers were very kind and considerate. It was a good experience. But in the second inservice, my “opponent” was also a Presbyterian minister and happened to be the man who replaced my first opponent at the same church. This man relentlessly attacked me and allowed the teachers to attack me. It was a horrible experience. I share this experience for two reasons. One, I have been studying this topic for more than fifteen years and two, I know what it is like to be hated and verbally attacked over this topic.

I am going to give you a brief overview of the Bible’s position on homosexual behavior. I want to show that Moses, Jesus and Paul all clearly taught that homosexual behavior is a sin. Let’s start with Moses in the book of Leviticus 18:22. *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.* That seems about as clear as the nose on your face but let me tell you how most people respond to this verse. They attempt to dismiss it with a simple, “But this doesn’t apply anymore.” The claim is that if we have to follow this Old Testament command from Leviticus, we also have to follow all of the other strange ones about not combining two kinds of cloth and not eating pork.

Here are two reasons why this verse is still valid for us today. First, if you read Leviticus chapter 18, you will see that this verse is contained within a list of other sexual sins. These are sins like adultery, incest and bestiality. hardly anyone would say that these are morally defensible behaviors. This is a good way to answer all questions like this one. The Old Testament has a legal code and a moral code. The legal code--or the sacrificial part of the law--was fulfilled in Christ and is therefore no longer valid. But the moral codes, like this one, are permanently valid.

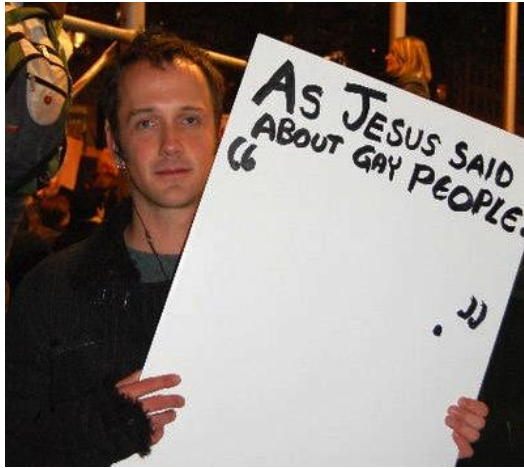
Second, in the New Testament, Paul used this very same verse to create the word homosexuality. In Paul’s day there was no exact word for homosexuality so he coined one of his own. The Greek word that is translated as homosexuality is the word *arsenokoites*. Paul took two ,separate Greek words and combined them into one. *Arsen* means “male” and *koites* means “bed,” or more specifically “marriage bed” and is where we get our English word *coitus*.

Now here is where it becomes interesting and relevant. The Greek translation of the Leviticus 18:22 has these two words for bed and man and looks like this:

*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.*

You shall not ***koites*** with an ***arsen*** as with a woman it is an abomination.

So what Paul did was to take these two words and combine it into a brand new word, *arsenokoites*, which literally means “man-bed.” This is the exact word that Paul used in 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10. So do you see what Paul has done? He has taken the prohibition in Leviticus 18:22 and created a new word from this verse. Moreover, just as it is in Leviticus, this new word is contained within a list of sexual sins in both 1 Cor 6 and 1 Tim 1. Clearly, this verse in Leviticus remains valid for us today.



Next we'll examine what Jesus said about the topic. Let me start with what the opposition will try to tell you. They hold up blank signs to communicate the point that Jesus never actually condemned homosexuality. While this is true in a technical sense—Jesus never used the word *arsenokoites*—it is clear that he did condemn homosexual behavior. We see this in Mathew 19.

*When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. <sup>2</sup> Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.*

<sup>3</sup> *Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”*

<sup>4</sup> *“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ <sup>5</sup> 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?’ <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Matt 19:1-6)*

Strictly speaking, Jesus was answering a question about divorce and remarriage, but the principles apply to our topic because he is giving a clear definition of marriage. Please notice that the foundation for Jesus' answer about marriage uses two Scriptures: Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24. God created mankind in two variations—male and female. God divinely designed



that the image of God would reside within the complementary roles of male and female and that only a male and female could be married. As Jesus said, it was this way “at the beginning.” So while he never condemned same sex relationships, Jesus did establish that marriage is founded in creation itself and it is only intended to be between a man and a woman.

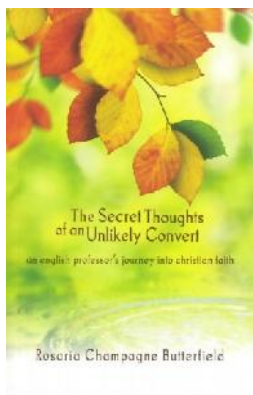
Let me give you an illustration from this 1929 photo of the construction of the Empire State Building. You can get sweaty palms just from just looking at

this, can't you? It takes nerves of steel—pun intended—to do this sort of thing. Whether it was written down as rules or not, every worker knew that you needed to walk on the center of the steel girders. Walking on the center of the steel girders is analogous to marriage being between a man and a woman. In 1929, no one had to actually write down a rule stating “Do not walk to the right or to the left of the steel girders” because everyone knew that this would mean certain death. To know the correct view of marriage, as established by Jesus, is to know all other incorrect views of marriage.

So Moses as Jesus both condemned homosexual behavior and then there's Paul. As we have already seen, he coined a new term for homosexuality taken from Leviticus 18 and we also have this crystal clear passage in Romans 1.

*26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 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 themselves the due penalty for their error.*

Notice, that similar to Leviticus 18, there is no word for homosexuality but so as not to be misunderstood, what Paul did as to clearly describe homosexual behavior. Paul wrote Corinthians before the book of Romans so he could have used the word *arsenokoites* but he chose instead to clearly describe the behavior. Liberal scholars and pro-gay theologians still debate this passage but they also know that their own arguments are resting on thin ice.



The [following video](#) is a part of a testimony from Rosaria Butterfield, who at one time was a professor of English and women's Studies at Syracuse University and a practicing lesbian. (See this footnote for a transcript of the video.<sup>3</sup>) I shared a brief illustration about Rosaria a few months back. Because she was befriended by a pastor and his wife, she began to voraciously read the Bible, was miraculously converted and today she is a pastor's wife. Her book is titled, “Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith.” Among other things, this video demonstrates that Romans 1 is so clear that even if it can be wished away, it cannot be explained away.<sup>4</sup>

This brings us to our second question.

## **2. Are people born gay?**

I think that after examining the Biblical evidence what the answer to this question will be, but allow me to give you some facts from so-called science. In the early 90's there were two studies that alleged to show a genetic marker for homosexuality. As they often do, the mainstream media got a hold of the news and proclaimed it as the “gay gene.” Ever since this time, your average man on the street thinks that it is true. Let me show you why it is not nor ever will be proven true.

Listen to the words of the author of the original gene study<sup>5</sup>, Dean Hamer. “The pedigree study failed to produce what we originally hoped to find: simple Mendelian inheritance. In fact, we

never found a single family in which homosexuality was distributed in the obvious sort of pattern that Mendel observed in his pea plants."<sup>6</sup>

First, Dean Hamer is himself a gay man and by his own admission, he was hoping to find genetic proof of homosexuality. This is really bad science because it begins with an obvious bias. Second, he admits that the evidence did not prove his theory. There was no evidence that homosexuality is determined by a person's genes.

Thirdly, his study was based on an extremely small sample of people, which again is always bad science. Even though his study claimed to have shown a genetic marker for homosexuality, his results have never been duplicated by anyone...ever. In fact, several years later, Science magazine, the same journal who published the original study, also published these findings.

"Because our study was larger than the original one, we certainly had adequate power to detect a genetic effect as large as was reported in that study. Nonetheless, our data does not support the presence of a gene of large effect influencing sexual orientation."<sup>7</sup>

Even more convincing evidence comes from the originator of the study, who reported this to a gay newspaper, The Washington Blade. "There is not a single master gene that makes people gay. ... I don't think we will ever be able to predict who will be gay"<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the extreme pro-gay organization, PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays), wrote this in one of their own brochures. "To date, no researcher has claimed that genes can determine sexual orientation. At best, researchers believe that there may be a genetic component. No human behavior, let alone sexual behavior, has been connected to genetic markers to date...sexuality, like every other behavior, is undoubtedly influenced by both biological and societal factors."<sup>9</sup>

Genes will never proven to determine behavior—and that's the key word—*determine* behavior. The pro-gay researchers set out to prove that genetics can prove that homosexual behavior is determined, that being gay is exactly the same as having blue eyes or blonde hair. By their own admission, this has never been proven nor will it ever be proven.<sup>10</sup> No one denies that there may be some kinds of genetic tendencies toward homosexual behavior, just as can be the case with other behaviors. But even if there are "tendencies" toward certain behaviors, the Bible still calls us to turn away from our sin. Because of nature--our genes, nurture--the way we were raised, and because of our own choices, we each have certain things which are more likely to tempt us. Some people are much more tempted to be angry or violent, some are tempted by addictive behaviors such as alcoholism, drug abuse and pornography. We are all uniquely tempted in some way and our genes and the way we were raised probably play parts in this temptation, but God still calls us to turn from our sin and he gives us the power to do so.

### **3. Can people change?**

The best Scripture to answer this question is 1 Cor. 6.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, **10** nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers

will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such *were* some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

As I said a moment ago, whatever the sin, God both wants us to change and gives us the power of a redeemed life and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to change. Trinity professor D.A. Carson has a [helpful viewpoint](#) on the topic of change.

#### 4. How do we respond?

Finally, how should we respond to all of these truths?

- Always make a clear distinction between homosexual temptations and homosexual behavior.

We have established that homosexual behavior is a sin and so is homosexual lust, as verse 27 makes clear: *the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another*. These are sins but homosexual temptation is not a sin. I realize it is often a very short step from temptation to sin, but this distinction does need to be made, as it does with any temptation or sin.

- It is right to want to help someone who is struggling.

Many people struggling with this sin want help. I have spoken in the past about a family member who left this sin behind after several years of giving into it. Afterward she said to me, “Why didn’t you tell me to stop? You knew it was wrong. Why didn’t you say anything to me?” She wasn’t blaming me but she was sharing the cry of her heart. She has been happily married for a long time with several children and no same sex temptations. So she represents people who not only want to change but who can successfully change. Like in a lot of situations, it is not loving to say nothing.

- It is right to want to “legislate morality.”

Listen to what Albert Mohler recently said about this topic. “The moral revolution we are now witnessing on the issue of homosexuality is without precedent in human history in terms of its scale and velocity. We are not looking at a span of centuries, or even the length of one century. This revolution is taking place within a single human generation.”<sup>11</sup> He later wrote that he is willing to go to jail over this issue.

Homosexual behavior is listed in Romans 1 along with many other sins, so in that sense, it is just like these other sins. It is no worse than gossip, slander or pride. But as Mohler so rightly pointed out, it is also not like other sins. No other sin has as much broad legislative support as this one. Immorality has been written into our state’s and nation’s laws like never before. The pro-gay movement has lobbyists, marketing campaigns. They are in the public schools, they virtually rule the universities. They constantly win court battles against businesses by claiming discrimination. This radical agenda is seeking to tear down our culture and society as we know it.

The other side of this problem is that some Christians buy into the lie that we are not supposed to legislate morality. This is utter nonsense because every law is a legislation of someone’s morality. Why do we have laws against drunk driving? Because the legislators wisely decided

that it is immoral to allow drunk drivers to kill people with their cars. Every law on the books is a legislation of someone's morality so the only decision that is left is whose morality will be legislated? Will the pro-gay agenda continue to rule the legislative, judicial and executive branches of our government or will we be allowed to have a say in it? Just because you want moral, Biblical laws passed does not mean you are hateful or unloving. so in the future if someone tells you that you cannot legislate morality simply ask them, "Then why are you doing it?"

The law that Governor Christie passed is especially troubling. Even if gay or lesbian teens want to change, a counselor is forbidden by law from helping them. Right now the law is limited to licensed counselors helping teens, so in theory, a pastor would be exempt from that law. But it wouldn't take much of a push at all for the law to be widened to include anyone wanting to help anyone else of any age. So if this spreads, if a 40 year old male comes to me and desperately wants help to change, I would be forbidden to offer any help whatsoever. So you see why I say it is good and right to want to legislate morality, because everyone else is already doing it.

- Have compassion on people who struggle in this area.

So what I am saying is that we must speak the truth but we must also speak it in love. Don't lead with a sign. If all you do is carry signs—in other words, if all you are is against homosexuals, how will they ever know that you care for them?

What this means is that if a person—and it could be even be one or more people in this very room—have homosexual temptations and urges, you are not a freak. You are a human being created in the image of God. If you have trusted Christ alone for your salvation you are a child of God. The only difference between you and most other people is that you have unique temptations. It is like every other sin in that it can be fought and forgiven. Maybe God will miraculously and instantaneously take it from you and maybe he will not, but as Don Carson said, this is not your identity. This is not who you are. Your identity is in Christ.

And this is true of every person in this room who continually struggles with sin. This Jesus who bore your sin; who gave you his perfect righteousness; who sealed you with the promised Holy Spirit; Who seated you in the heavenlies with himself; who is ruling over every atom in the universe at all times; who is your friend and who is coming again to take you to glory to be with him forever...this Jesus loves you with an everlasting love and he wants you to cling to him and not to your sinful behaviors.

Rich Maurer  
November 10, 2013

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/330007-gay-marriage-decision-hurts-christie-with-conservatives>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/08/chris-christie-gay-conversion-therapy-new-jersey-95666.html>

<sup>3</sup> At a dinner gathering that my partner and I were hosting, my trans-gendered friend, Jay, cornered me in the kitchen. She put her large hand around mine and said, "Rosaria, this Bible reading is changing you." I felt exposed. I felt like I was going to throw up. I collapsed in the chair and I exhaled, "But Jay, what if it's true? What if Jesus is a real and risen Lord? What of we are all in trouble?" Jay exhaled deeply and sat down in the chair across from me. Her eyes looked wise but her make-up made her look



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distorted to me for the first time. "Rosaria," she said, "I was a Presbyterian minister for fifteen years. I prayed that God would heal me, but he didn't. If you want, I'll pray for you." The next day when I returned home from work I found two large milk crates spilling over with theological books. Jay's books. She was giving them to me. In Calvin's Institutes, in the exposition of the book of Romans, in Jay's handwriting was a warning, "Watch Romans 1. This is where I will fall." Romans 1:21-26 suddenly looked like the table of contents of *my* life.

<sup>4</sup> If you need additional information on the Biblical case against homosexual behavior, I have loads of resources I can give to you, including a 5 hour audio program which takes all of the best pro-gay claims and critiques them in detail. I also have dozens of articles I could give you and books I could lend to you.

<sup>5</sup> [A linkage between DNA markers on the X chromosome and male sexual orientation.](#)

<sup>6</sup> Dean Hamer, (1994), *The Science of Desire*, published by Simon and Schuster, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> BBC World Service, April 23, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Dean Hamer quoted in Jan. 30, 1998 edition of the Washington Blade.

<sup>9</sup> PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays), "Why Ask Why: Addressing the Research on Homosexuality," 1995.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www2.nau.edu/~bio372-c/class/behavior/apbg.htm>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/10/21/a-clear-and-present-danger-religious-liberty-marriage-and-the-family-in-the-late-modern-age-an-address-at-brigham-young-university/>