

*Excerpt from *Is God anti-gay? And other questions about homosexuality, the Bible and same-sex attraction*. Sam Allberry/The Good Book Company, 2015, p. 63-64.

Is it sinful to experience same-sex attraction?

Same-sex attraction is not a good thing. It is (along with many other things) a consequence of the fall. It did not exist before the fall in Genesis 3 and it will not exist in the new creation. This kind of attraction is not something God designed for us, and it contradicts his design.

We know from the Scriptures that temptation comes from our own fallen hearts. James is very clear on this:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. James 1 v 13-14

We cannot blame temptation on anyone else, certainly not God. Homosexual temptations reflect our own fallenness.

But this is not the same as saying *the presence of temptation itself* is a sin to be repented of. Christians have always made a distinction between temptation and sin. After all, Jesus himself taught his followers to pray:

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Matthew 6 v 12-13

In other words, we seek forgiveness for sin and deliverance from temptation. We are not asked to seek forgiveness for being tempted, but only for any sin committed when we succumb to it. Instead, we are called to stand up under temptation, to endure it faithfully (1 Corinthians 10 v 13).

At the very moment we experience inappropriate attraction toward someone of the same sex, then we are to resist impure thoughts and emotions that we may be encountering, acknowledge that we want to flee from such things and not embrace them, and seek his help and strength to do so. We remember that such experiences are not God's design for us and therefore not good for us. We fight to honor God, trusting that he is faithful and will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.

To say that the very experience of SSA is a sin seems to suggest that even having the capacity to be tempted is itself a sin, something that I do not believe Scripture says.

And as we would expect, saying something that is unscriptural can cause significant pastoral damage. Many Christians experiencing SSA feel intense shame as a result. They know these feelings are not part of God's design, they long not to have them, and they strive to be obedient to Christ. In my experience, Christians with SSA typically feel deeper shame over their sexual temptations than their opposite-sex-attracted counterparts. To hear that the very presence of this temptation (irrespective of the extent to which they have endured faithfully under it) is *itself* a sin to be repented of might easily crush an already very tender believer.