

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Red Bud, Illinois**  
**Adult Bible Class**

Book: "The Church & Homosexuality: Searching for a Middle Ground" (Kirk House Publishers, 2002)

Author: Dr. Merton Strommen is ELCA pastor and research psychologist. His book has nine chapters. Each chapter contains evidence from social science that reflects negatively upon homosexual practice but then the author ends the chapter trying to soften that view in an attempt to look for balance.

Chapter Three: Should Homosexuality be Considered Normal?

(page 39) "Today psychologists and psychiatrists sharply disagree as to whether homosexuality should be regarded normal behavior."

Up until 1973 homosexuality was included in the American Psychiatric Association's list of psychiatric illnesses in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM). Its removal was confrontational and controversial. (The same thing is now being attempted with pedophilia, now aka "minor-attracted people.")

(page 39) "One reason (for current disagreement) is that some believe that the decision made in 1973 was a political decision and not a scientific one."

(page 41) "A survey conducted by the American Psychiatric Association's Office of International Affairs showed that the majority of psychiatrists, world-wide, continue to view same-sex behavior as signaling pathology."

(page 43) "Values become evident in what an organization chooses to publish or to withhold from publication...The APA seemingly has closed its doors on information that contradicts its position. It is this politicization of APA, an organization that makes a Ph.D a requirement of membership and prides itself in seeking truth through objective research, that many psychologists find disturbing."

(page 44) "In a tolerant society it is essential that one tolerates views different from one's own. But in academia, where tolerance should be championed, dissent from the gay agenda is often not tolerated. It is dismissed with the accusation that the dissent is fomenting discrimination."

(pages 46-47) "Because social science data are imprecise, one needs to know how the studies were carried out...whoever uses research information must favor the findings of many studies. This means that on any given subject a person who claims that his conclusions are based on the results of research needs to identify many studies and not a few...more than 83 published studies have concluded that a homosexual orientation can be changed."

*Conclusion* (page 47) "All this points to the need for more open-ended research on homosexuality...For the sake of homosexuals, especially those dissatisfied with their orientation and wishing to change, and for the sake of young people, this debate should not be cut off or limited."

Chapter Four- Is Homosexuality a Healthy Lifestyle?

(pages 48-49) "Good health is not a part of the lifestyle of many homosexuals, particularly promiscuous gays who engage in high-risk sexual behavior in public places...In recent years it has been 'politically incorrect' in some circles to raise questions about homosexual promiscuity and its health implications."

(pages 50-51) "Some gays, however, are very willing to describe their culture as one where promiscuity is an important part of being gay...It is a culture foreign to people of the church. Promiscuity, a reality for many

gays, is a phenomenon well documented by several major studies....28 percent of homosexual males had sexual encounters with 1000 or more partners. Furthermore, 79 percent said the more than half of their sexual partners were strangers...homosexual relationships seldom last more than two years.”

(pages 52-53) “A report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention shows that for all years from 1985-1997, the chief contributor to AIDS in the United States has been men having sex with men...The health threatening aspect of the homosexual lifestyle, however, is often muted by gays...A contributing factor to their ill health is homosexuality’s association with alcoholism and drug use.”

(page 54) “Some respond to the topic of gay promiscuity with the argument that heterosexuals are a promiscuous as homosexuals.”

### **Has the church contributed to this argument by turning a blind eye to the sins of heterosexuals in regard to fornication, living together outside of marriage, and adultery?**

*Conclusion* (page 56) “Such risks cause us to question whether homosexuality should be endorsed without question. Out of concern for homosexuals and their families, and for the sake of young people, such threats should not be covered up, but openly discussed. At the same time, support should be given those homosexuals who are choosing to live a healthy, responsible lifestyle.”

### Chapter Five- Can a Homosexual Orientation Be Changed?

(pages 57-58) Reliable research evidence shows that a significant number of homosexuals have changed their orientation, totally or in part, through various forms of psychotherapy or through faith-based programs...Gay activists are adamant in claiming that homosexuality is not reversible. The possibility of change contradicts one of their basic premises, namely that one is born a homosexual. Allowing therapists to help people change their orientation contradicts the idea that homosexuality is a healthy, normal orientation.”

(pages 58-59) The strong opposition to reparative or re-orientation therapy is seen in the efforts of gay activists to prevent ex-gays from telling their story...Opponents of reparative or re-orientation therapy claim that it is ‘dangerous’ and ineffectual in bringing about lasting change...What is really harmful is the failure to provide help to persons who are dissatisfied with living as a homosexual.

(page 60) “Many homosexuals have made lifelong changes in the sexual orientation. These changes present compelling evidence that there are exceptions to the theory that a homosexual orientation is an immutable genetic predisposition.”

(page 69) “Many religiously-oriented organizations are involved in affecting sexual reorientation.”

(page 72) “It is important to note that most studies reporting a degree of success with conversion therapy appeared in professional journals during the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Following the big ‘chill’ in research that occurred after the decision of the American Psychiatric Association in 1973, the number of studies diminished rapidly due to a lack of funding and the reluctance of editors to publish articles contesting the position of the APA.”

*Conclusion* (page 76) “As we have seen, reliable studies show that lasting sexual reorientation is possible for some—but not all—homosexuals. For the sake of those who seek to change their orientation, information about both secular and religious therapies should be made available in our churches and communities. And those homosexuals who cannot change, or do not want to change, warrant our welcome and support.”