

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 Eight: Should the Church Adopt the Gay Agenda?

(page 95) "As we have seen in the last chapter, there is a concerted effort to force Christian churches to adopt the gay agenda....Pastors who adopt the assumptions that God has created some to be homosexuals, that this orientation is irreversible for some, and that it should be viewed as normal would need to find a rationale for adopting as truth something which has not been established as true. The strongest evidence available today indicates that these assumptions are false."

(pages 96-97) "In its discussions of homosexuality, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America so far has muted two basic considerations. One is that of making provision for those who wish to change their orientation. The other is giving ex-gays a chance to voice their opinions when the issue of homosexuality is being discussed in the church."

(page 97) "I believe the church should have a special concern for adolescents who think they are homosexual. Faced with fears, bewilderment, and puzzlement regarding their future, they find little help in most churches....My concern is for the young adolescent male, because the issue of homosexuality is raised at a relatively early age" (14 years old)

(pages 98-99) Adolescent males need to hear that 1) they are not necessarily gay; or, 2) if they are predominately gay, they can change...Those who are especially 'at risk' are those showing these characteristics at an early age: alienation from same sex peers; loneliness, anxiety, depression, gender-identity confusion; and a poor relationship with their father." (Appendix A on Gender-identity Disorder, page 109: "little boys who have a fascination and preoccupation with feminine activities have at least a 75 percent chance of growing up to be homosexual, bisexual, or transsexual. The good news is that GID children can change.")

(pages 100-101) "To develop a strong gender identity and heterosexual orientation, a boy needs strong, positive heterosexual role models...The pastor's unique position of power and influence has an unconscious shaping influence on an adolescent's life. For this reason I am opposed to the ordination of noncelibate homosexuals."

(page 102) "Without question, the stand of a faith community can be important in deterring the development of homosexuality in young adolescents. The modeling by a pastor can be an important factor."

(page 102) "My secondary objective in writing this book is to deter as many adolescents as possible from a life of homosexuality...Efforts need to be made to reduce rather than increase the environmental pressures

that encourage youth towards homosexuality...I believe there are sound, compassionate reasons for insisting that the church should not uncritically and wholly accept the gay agenda.”

Chapter Nine: Searching For a Middle Ground

(page 103) “In the dialectic I propose, one polarity centers in the overwhelming call of God to love one another, to welcome the homosexual person as Christ would do. The other polarity centers in the conviction that homosexuality does not represent God’s will for humankind, that it cannot be regarded as part of God’s continuing creation. This dialectical position is faithful both to the Scriptures and God’s call to love one another as God loves us.”

(page 105) “Sin always separates. The far right and far left justify their positions by judgment not ministry. They remain separate and accuse one another of being at fault.”

(page 105) “First, the church at all levels should continue to clearly and forcefully reject condemnation of homosexuals and acts of discrimination and injustice. Instead, we should be a welcoming church, inviting homosexuals to be a part of the fellowship of believers—both homosexuals who are dissatisfied with their orientation and those who are satisfied with it as is”

What is your reaction to that last phrase? It has been said that “God accepts us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us that way.” Might this saying apply to those who are living a homosexual lifestyle?

(page 105) “Second, on the basis of the research summarized in this book, we should reject the gay agenda that maintains that all homosexuals are born that way, that they can never change, that a gay lifestyle should be affirmed and encouraged as normal and desirable. Third, free discussion of the issues relating to homosexuality should be encouraged throughout the churches...This means, among other things, that the best research regarding the causes of homosexuality and the possibility of a change in orientation should be widely disseminated.”

(page 106) “Fourth, as people bound by the Word of God, we should continue to study the Bible together, making every effort to hear what God is saying to us through that Word. No matter what our present position, we should be open to change our minds when we have been wrong. It is imperative that we as the church of Jesus Christ do not acquiesce into adopting moral values of our culture that conflict with the Bible.”

(page 106) “Fifth, the church continue to hold up committed, heterosexual marriage as God’s ideal (recognizing that singleness is also a God-pleasing calling). Seen from the point of view of the Christian faith, marriage and the family are the social models for the cohabitation of people as far as sexuality and generative activities are concerned.”

Conclusion (page 107) “The solution lies in being a loving church that does not shun those who are satisfied with their orientation, which at the same time developing compassionate ministries for those who are dissatisfied. Such ministries are not only possible but can be effective while remaining true to the authority of Scripture.”

Epilogue

(page 107) “One purpose of this book is to draw attention to the issues that should be freely discussed regarding the issue of homosexuality in the church. These discussions should take place in an atmosphere of freedom without fear of intimidation or ridicule. One should be free to take differing positions on this issue without being labeled a bigot. Differences should be freely discussed knowing that the love of God is inclusive, God’s forgiveness is redemptive, and life in a spiritual community is empowering.”