

## Homosexuality and Transgenderism

### Activity: purpose

For this activity, the kids will have various items through which they will determine their purpose. Some items will be obvious and others will not. After they have figured out the purpose of each item, then they will find other uses for those items. How well did these items fit their purpose versus a secondary purpose?

### Understanding Homosexuality:

What is homosexuality? Someone who considers themselves homosexual means that they are sexually attracted to a person of the same sex. Men are attracted to men and women are attracted to women. The biggest challenge we face when we discuss same-sex attraction or homosexuality, is that we assume attraction is the same as identity. People can be attracted to someone of the same or opposite sex for a variety of reasons including psychological, social, emotional, and more. Many people experience attraction to the same sex at least once in their lifetime. We even have phrases to describe this like a man crush. Just because a person feels attracted to someone of the same sex doesn't mean that they are homosexual or need to live that attraction. We have the choice in how we respond to our attraction. Some people are more often attracted to people of the same sex or predominantly attracted to someone of the same sex. These people are usually considered homosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual. We must be careful with labels as we will get to in a moment.

The basics of the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality: each person is created in the image and likeness of God. As God's creation they are given the dignity due to them as human beings. Therefore, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, likes and dislikes, and other human characteristics, all people are to be treated with respect and dignity. We need to remember this point when we speak about homosexuality. The people who are experiencing an attraction to the same-sex are to be treated with the same respect as any other human being.

Although God has given everyone their dignity as human beings, not all actions, attractions, or feelings are good and moral. Some actions are bad, i.e. murder, stealing, cheating, and hurting people. Some actions are good, i.e. complimenting a person, bringing healing, love and care, showing appropriate affection, and respect. Some actions are moral in one context and not in another. It would be immoral to cut someone open unless you are a trained surgeon trying to heal someone. It would be immoral to kill a person unless you are a trained soldier fighting a war or defending yourself. In the same way, our sexual attractions have moral and immoral situations. It would be immoral to go and grab someone's genitals or to treat them as a sex object. In the same way, using our sexual attractions in appropriate ways gives everyone their dignity and respect. Our genitals were meant for a specific purpose. They help create new life through bearing children. They have a secondary purpose of creating a union of love between two consenting and committed adults. Everything outside of this context means that we are using the good of our sexuality for our own pleasure. The reason why homosexual actions are wrong is because they are using our sexuality in a way that God didn't want us to use it. He instead wanted us to use our sexuality to show committed love and to bring new life into the world through children. The

Church teaches that homosexual acts are immoral and intrinsically wrong since they break the natural law and use our sexuality against its purpose.

The most common criticism of this viewpoint is that people who are attracted to the same sex would then be less than human or never allowed to express their love. This is not true. We have many ways to express love without sex. We can kiss, hug, hold each other, live together, support each other, and many other ways. The Church teaches that those who experience same sex attraction can show mutual care and concern for someone of the same sex. They can live together, support each other, show signs of affection, and grow in mutual love for one another. Sex, however, is not an option. They cannot live out the ends and goals of sex and therefore it would be immoral for them. Similarly, those who experience same-sex attraction are not able to get married because part of marriage is children and the joining of man and woman in a special union. Same-sex couples can form a relationship and mutually support each other but this not marriage.

Discrimination and justice: a common concern, especially amongst the gay community, is the need for respect and justice. Both of these concepts can be tricky. Does respect mean believing everything they believe and accepting every decision that a person makes? I hope not. We must have boundaries on what is acceptable behavior and, consequently, the way we treat each other. We can have a respect for the person without accepting all their life choices. We can mutually support and care for a person without accepting their lifestyle. Herein lies the challenge. We need to accept gay people as people and come to care for and support them regardless of their sexual orientation or lifestyle choices. Justice is much more complicated. Some argue that we cannot have true justice until gay people can be married and live like everyone else. The challenge with this idea is the concept of justice. What is truly right? Should everyone have the same opportunities based on their attractions and life choices? Should all choices be acceptable in society? Which ones should society support? These are the central questions in this discussion. Justice is not an all-or-none idea. Justice applies to specific situations and governs right action and the care for the common good. We can support the rights of people to live free of discrimination, violent attacks, and laws that forbade basic human rights while also supporting a view of marriage between a man and a woman and a sexual morality that excludes same-sex sexual relationships.

Transgenderism:

Transgenderism is very different from homosexuality. Whereas homosexuality is a feeling or attraction to someone of the same sex, transgenderism is the feeling that your body doesn't match your perceived gender, i.e. a man feels like he should be a woman and a woman feels like she should be a man. The biggest problems we face in discussing transgenderism is a misunderstanding of the good of our genders and the perceived restrictiveness of gender roles. If a woman feels like she would rather plays with guns, be outside in the woods, and wear men's clothing, the dominant thought is that she should become a man to better match her identity. If a man would rather cook and clean, prefers to wear dresses and look pretty, and identifies with a woman's role, then he should be a woman. I hope you realize the challenges these ideologies cause for all of us. Women can like male-normative hobbies and activities without losing the

sense of her womanhood. Men can like the woman-normative hobbies and activities without losing the sense of his manhood. Our genders are not determined by our activities and hobbies, likes and dislikes, but by something at the core of our identity. Women are creators who have the gift of drawing the world into themselves and transforming into new life. Men are creators who give of themselves to transform the world around them. Men and women process the world and think differently. These differences are good and healthy.

The difference between feeling like you are in the wrong body to changing your body to reflect that change is huge. Many people today are going through sex change surgeries to change their body from male to female or female to male. This requires parts of the body to be removed and new parts attached, hormone treatment, and months of recovery and transition. The Church is clear on the morality of this action: it is immoral for us to hurt our bodies for the sake of our own wishes. Transgender surgery causes damage to the body for the sake of the feelings of the individual. We should not be hurting our bodies so that we can better reflect how we want to feel. Similarly, these surgeries are a disrespect towards God who made each of us unique and special. God had a plan for each of us and if we ruin it through our choices, then we lose some of the goodness that God gave us to be.