



Reaching Out

What if?

A genetic link to homosexuality: Would it matter?

There still is no scientific data to confirm it. But for years certain segments of the gay-identified community, and the media, have spoken of a genetic link to homosexuality as a proven fact.

Many friends of Prodigal Ministry have asked staff and board to state the ministry's position on this "hot topic." In response, we sat down with executive director Jerry Armelli and asked him to respond to their thoughtful and important questions. Following is a transcript of that recent Q&A session.

Editor – Many individuals in the gay-identified community regularly speak of a "gay gene." They use the "born that way" argument to justify measures that would force societal affirmation of their identity and behaviors. Recently activists in certain political subdivisions have even been campaigning to criminalize any effort to help persons find freedom from an unwanted same-gender attraction.

We know that at this point in time the scientific community simply has not isolated that "gay gene." But still there is the big "what if." What if they do find a genetic link to same-gender attraction? Would such a discovery alter Prodigal's ministry to those caught up in an unwanted same-gender attraction? What

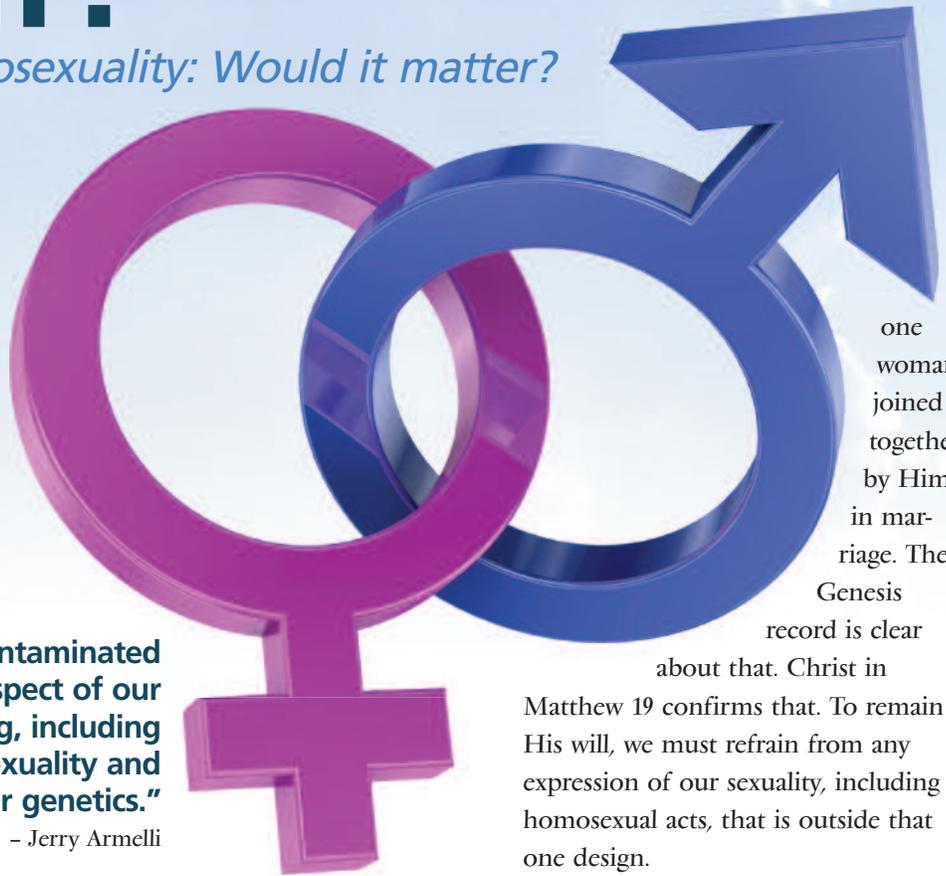
"Sin has contaminated every aspect of our being, including our sexuality and our genetics."

– Jerry Armelli

would be Prodigal's response?

JH – To answer the first part of that question, I'll say immediately that the discovery of a genetic predisposition to same-gender attraction would not alter our ministry approach. Before I can answer the second part, I need to back up and explain the foundational principles upon which our ministry was built.

To begin, let me say that God has but one design and intent for our sexuality, and that is that it be expressed only in the relationship between one man and



one woman joined together by Him in marriage. The Genesis record is clear

about that. Christ in

Matthew 19 confirms that. To remain in His will, we must refrain from any expression of our sexuality, including homosexual acts, that is outside that one design.

Note that I speak of homosexual **acts**. Homosexual **behaviors**. **Not** homosexual feelings. Homosexual feelings also are outside God's creative design. But it is when an individual acts on those feelings, hoping to find fulfillment in a human relationship that ultimately only can be fulfilled in God, that he removes himself from God's plan and will.

Ed. – If homosexual feelings are outside God's creative design, where do they come from? Why do people have such feelings?

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What if?

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Jerry Armelli, one of the founders and current executive director of Prodigal Ministries

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JH – Glad you asked! That’s getting to the point. Such feelings are a result of the fall of mankind. Sin has contaminated every aspect of our being, including our sexuality and our genetics. As a result of our fallen nature, we are all born with a predisposition to a multitude of sin options, including sexual sins. Homosexual behavior is just one of the many sin options to which we may be drawn as a result of our fallen nature.

The Good News is that through the love and grace of Jesus...through the atoning death of Jesus and our identification in His death and resurrection to new Spiritual life...God wants to empower all of us to overcome feelings, behaviors, and culturally-defined identities that are outside His design and will. He wants to empower us to live lives surrendered to His design and will.

Prodigal’s mission is to be used by Christ to bring those struggling in same-gender attraction into a relationship with Christ, with God the Father, and with the Holy Spirit so that He can enable them to walk in purity and wholeness according to His design. He, alone, can free us to be the complete person whom He designed us to be. Life as God designed it—that’s where we can find real joy in life.

Ed. – So what you are saying, in effect, is that even if a “gay gene” is discovered, that still doesn’t alter God’s only design for our sexuality in marriage or Prodigal’s approach to helping those who come seeking help.

JH – Right. Exactly right. We are all “born that way,” born, that is, with a predisposition to sin. There is a whole buffet of sin options out there enticing us. And unless we have a relationship to Christ through faith and repentance, we do not have enough strength or even the will to resist desires that pull us out of

His will. That’s why Jesus came and offered that supreme sacrifice in our place. Plus—His example shows us that in dying to our own desires and will we find true life. In and through Him, alone, we can access the power to overcome our sin and brokenness. The capacity to sin is still within us. But in Him we have the power to choose not to act on that capacity...to be made whole and to reflect His design and intent through our lives. In Him we have the power to overcome our self-centeredness and broken genetics. Hallelujah!

Ed. – If there would be a gene that predisposes some to same-gender attraction, doesn’t that put homosexuality in a different category than other sin?

JH – Again, sin has contaminated every aspect of our being, including our genetic makeup. A genetic marker would not put same-gender attraction in a sin category by itself. Researchers know—to use just one example—that there is a gene that predisposes some people to alcoholism. Would we encourage a person with such a predisposition to accept and celebrate his alcoholism, destroying his own life and relationships? Of course not! The development of homosexuality may stem from our sin orientation, choice, circumstances and/or from genetics. It is acting on homosexual desires or feelings that is contrary to His will for human relationships.

Ed. – If that “gay gene” is found some day, how do you think our culture in general would respond?

JH – Gay activists would be all over that discovery. They would be claiming loudly that since homosexuality is a part of one’s genetic make-up, helping them change is immoral. And unfortunately, many in the secular society—and even in the church—would buy into that mentality. Activists would point their fingers



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and cry, “See, we told you so! Case closed.” That’s why I warn Christians not to use the fact that no “gay gene” has been found at this point in time to justify our helping people find freedom from homosexuality through Christ.

I believe also that a specific segment of our culture would see dollar signs. If it were proven that there is a genetic or a bio-chemical link to same-gender attraction, pharmacists and/or geneticists would rush to discover and market a cure! And that would put the secular culture in a real tailspin. They still would be left with the moral debate as to whether or not it is appropriate to offer a correction or cure.

Ed. – And the Church? How do you think that the Church would—and should—respond?

JH – Compassion! That’s the answer to the **should** part of your question. I pray that such a discovery would make Christians even more compassionate toward those struggling in same-gender attraction, and especially toward fellow Christians in such struggles. We must not let them feel isolated, as if their tendency to sin is somehow greater than the sinful tendencies with which we all struggle. Our responsibility goes beyond just

encouraging those brothers and sisters to live chaste lives of obedience and surrender. We must be there for them and with them, providing the love, fellowship and community that we all desperately need.

How **would** churches respond? I’ll not conjecture. I pray that such a discovery would not change their mission to reach out to persons struggling in an unwanted same-gender attraction. I know that it would not change Prodigal’s approach. Those two foundational truths remain: Homosexual behavior is outside God’s creative design for us. And through Christ, we have the power to live joyfully in purity, wholeness and surrender to a loving Creator/Savior’s design and will.

Through Christ, God has given us everything that we need for life and Godliness.

In Christ, all things are possible! ☞



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hope for wholeness

New curriculum exceeds expectations

In the November, 2012 edition of *Reaching Out*, executive director Jerry Armelli announced that in January 2013 Prodigal Ministries would be launching a new, “first-of-its-kind” video and workbook curriculum in its group sessions.

In that issue Armelli expressed his expectation that “Hope for Wholeness” would take Prodigal’s critical group support ministry to a “higher level of effectiveness” by bringing into the session room 15 men and women recognized as the nation’s leading authorities on the complex issues relating to homosexuality and Christ-centered, Biblical counseling.

The response and the results have exceeded Armelli’s expectations!

He reports, “Enrollment has tripled both in our weekly group sessions for those actually struggling with homosexuality and in our bi-monthly sessions for loved ones of gay-identified persons.

“In fact—praise God!—we immediately outgrew the group session facilities that we have used for years. Graciously, our landlord, Peoples Church, has allowed us to use two larger meeting rooms and several break-out rooms in the education building adjacent to our offices. Praise God again! And thank you Peoples Church!”

The increase in enrollment has been wonderful, but even more amazing has been the level of engagement by group participants, according to group leaders Earl Stevens and Ruth Henn.

In addition to comprehensive, clear explanations and sound Biblical answers to the issues with which participants are struggling, the DVD lessons feature testimonials by individuals who formerly struggled with those same issues of sexual brokenness. That mix, both leaders

report, has resulted in a more immediate and higher level of sharing and transparency in the discussions that follow.

In addition to the 17 video lessons, “Hope for Wholeness” includes a workbook, which is the product of six authors, all of whom have years of experience in Christian counseling for men and women struggling with same-gender attraction or other forms of sexual brokenness. The workbooks reinforce the Biblical principles taught in the video sessions.

ABOVE EXPECTATIONS, BUT UNDER-UTILIZED

Whereas the effectiveness of the series and the response within Prodigal’s established groups has, indeed, exceeded expectations, Armelli feels that “Hope for Wholeness” could be having an even greater impact on greater Cincinnati.

“This is an excellent resource and tool,” he repeats, “for pastors and other church leaders desiring to better understand these complex issues and to help those under their care

seeking to walk away from homosexuality and become the men or women God designed them to be. We would love to see this excellent series being used in churches throughout the greater Cincinnati area.

To find out more about “Hope for Wholeness,” or to request help in hosting group sessions, church or group leaders should contact Jerry Armelli by phone, by email or through the Contact Form on Prodigal-Ministries.com. 

