

# **Ex-gay says: Treat homosexuality as temptation, not orientation**

December 18, 2006

Posted: 12/18/06

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**By Hannah Elliott**

*Associated Baptist Press*

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (ABP)—For Christians to love homosexuals like Jesus would, they should stop thinking of homosexuality as an orientation and start thinking of it as a temptation, says Tim Wilkins, himself “formerly gay.”

Wilkins, who founded a group that helps people who have “unwanted same-sex attractions,” offered his controversial view during a breakout session at Saddleback Church’s Global Summit on AIDS and the Church. The summit brought Christians and AIDS workers together to address prevention and treatment of the disease, which originally was associated with homosexuals.

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“In practical terms ... mankind is heterosexual—physiologically, anatomically and biologically,” Wilkins told his audience mostly of evangelicals. “The only part that is not heterosexual is the mind, and that is not a big deal because the Bible says we are transformed by the renewing of our mind.”

Wilkins knows what it’s like to be attracted to other men. For many of his developmental and early-adult years, he experienced and acted on those homosexual feelings.

But now, married for 13 years and with three daughters, Wilkins says he does not give in to the temptation to indulge in homosexual conduct. And his work at Cross Ministries is devoted to preaching the same message.

Wilkins told conference participants they must love people not only from their heart and gut but also from their head.

“We actually choose to love people. And you have not loved anybody unless you choose to love somebody that is completely different from you,” he said. “Sometimes, if not most of the time, our expressions of love ... are counterintuitive and counterproductive. No one has ever been argued out of homosexuality.”

For Christians to love homosexuals as Jesus would, one of the first steps is to stop thinking of homosexuality as an orientation and think of it as a temptation, Wilkins said.

His own experience with same-sex attraction, Wilkins said, was “not predominantly (about) homosexuality;” it was an issue with his own sin nature—something inside every human being. Everyone faces temptation, Wilkins said, and people are simply tempted by different things.

After they recognize the origin of the attraction, Christians can love homosexuals by showing them that homosexuality is not the opposite of

heterosexuality, but it's a "counterfeit" sexuality, he said.

With such a controversial message about homosexuality, Wilkins has plenty of critics. Mike Airhart, who contributes to the website [www.exgaywatch.com](http://www.exgaywatch.com), wrote that Wilkins offers no solid advice for gay people, choosing instead to speak against them.

"Wilkins dismisses the 'counterfeit love found in homosexuality,' offers no constructive reflections about gay people, and provides no trace of opposition to antigay discrimination," Airhart wrote.

Wilkins has also come under fire from some religious groups who are uncomfortable with his admissions that he may still struggle with "temptations" for same-sex attraction.

Last September, Wilkins told a North Carolina church group "he was not cured, but merely suppressing his sexuality," according to political activist Wayne Besen. Besen wrote [\*Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth\*](#).

Besen disagreed with Wilkins' alleged belief "that those who don't become straight or successfully celibate fail because they are not sufficiently obedient to God."

"From my experience this message is particularly dangerous," Besen wrote, adding that people who don't change after extraordinary effort often despair, falling into depression, low self-esteem or suicide.

Despite his detractors, Wilkins soldiers on with his message that turning from homosexuality comes from a relationship with God, which brings freedom. During the AIDS summit at Saddleback, none of his listeners spoke up to object to his ideas, even during the question-and-answer session.

Christians focus too much on talking about change for homosexuals instead of talking about the freedom that comes from knowing God, Wilkins said. The idea that Christians should try to “convert” homosexuals to heterosexuality “does not place the appropriate emphasis on Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

What’s more, to peddle heterosexuality to people attracted to those of the same sex just doesn’t make sense, Wilkins said. “If beautiful women were the remedy for male homosexuality, there would be no gay men.”

Further, he added, it’s not a sin to be attracted to the same sex—the attraction itself is a moot point. Instead, when Christians lead people to a relationship with Jesus, those with same-sex attractions will get a savior who fulfills their needs for love, acceptance and affirmation.

After he became spiritually intimate with God, Wilkins said, his needs for intimacy with men diminished.

“What I needed was a savior,” he said. “I needed Jesus Christ. The relationship which precedes every relationship in the world is the one with our heavenly father.”

Saddleback’s two-day summit was intended to motivate and equip Christians and churches to address the needs of people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS. Seminars addressed a number of medical and spiritual topics, including how to set up an HIV/AIDS ministry in a local church.

Although AIDS worldwide is primarily spread through heterosexual sex, it was first recognized in the United States as a disease of homosexual men. Because of how it first emerged in the public psyche, many people still think of HIV/AIDS as a homosexual disease.

In the United States, 42 percent of men first obtain the human immunodeficiency virus through homosexual contact, according to the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But a full 33 percent get it through heterosexual relationships. Many others (25 percent) get it through unsafe injection of drugs. Seventy-five percent of women in the United States obtain HIV through heterosexual contact, the center reports.

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