



First United Methodist Church

Points to Ponder

You Don't Get to Choose

Source: Lee, Justin, TORN: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-Vs.-Christians Debate, Jericho Books, 2013, p 53-54.

“Growing up, I firmly believed that gay people chose to be gay, but I learned by experience that this isn't the case. I most certainly did not want to be attracted to my own sex, and I would have done just about anything not to be. As a conservative Southern Baptist kid, I would never have chosen to be gay. Not in a million years.

Usually, when someone says that being gay is a choice, it's because they're defining “gay” to mean something other than “attracted to the same sex.” This is why definitions are so important. Most people can agree, though, that while we do choose our behaviors, we don't get to choose to whom we're attracted. In case you have doubts about that, let's briefly consider what it would mean if people could choose their attractions.

Whichever sex you're attracted to, you're not attracted to **all** people of that sex, are you? Some of them you find attractive, and others you don't. You don't get to choose which ones your brain sees as attractive.

If we could, we might all like to turn those attractions off sometimes! If you're married, for instance, you might choose to be attracted only to your spouse, and never attracted to anyone else. It would make married life a lot easier, wouldn't it? Unfortunately, you don't get to choose that. Those attractions come whether you like them or not, and then it's up to you how you'll respond to them.

Likewise, if you're single, there may be time when it would be nice to be able to turn **on** attractions to someone you just don't feel anything for, like that really nice person who likes you but whom you just don't find attractive. Unfortunately, while your attraction to someone might shift as you get to know them, it also might not. You can't make it happen by sheer force of will.

None of us can choose to whom we feel attracted. We just are.

Most people discover when they're young that they are involuntary attracted to people of the other sex. A minority of people, however, discover instead that they are involuntarily attracted to the same sex, and even a smaller minority discover that they're involuntarily attracted to both sexes. None of these people **choose** their attractions; they can only choose how they will respond to them.

I know a lot of kids who were horrified when they realized they were gay; either because of their moral beliefs or because of prejudice against gay people among their family and friends. Like me, they would never have chosen to be gay, but they were anyway.

So no, it's not something people choose.”