

Executive Summary: A Report from “Love Won Out: Addressing, Understanding, and Preventing Homosexuality”

Introduction

On September 18, 2004, a “Love Won Out” conference sponsored by the national conservative evangelical Christian organization Focus on the Family was convened in Minneapolis, Minnesota. According to Focus on the Family, “The Love Won Out ministry provides Christ-centered, comprehensive conferences enlightening, empowering, and equipping families, church and youth leaders, educators, counselors, policy-makers, and the gay community on the truth about homosexuality and its impact on our culture.”

This report details the authors’ first-hand account of the conference and describes the frames and world view put forth by ex-gay leaders. It also provides information and analysis about Love Won Out and concludes with some political implications of the ex-gay movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

Alan Chambers argued that even if a biological basis for homosexuality were discovered, it would remain a violation of God’s will.

Observations of the Conference

- Speakers said that homosexuality is caused by family dysfunction, suggesting that it results from lack of appropriate or fulfilling relationships between parents and children.
- Speakers portrayed lesbians and gay men who do not attempt to resist their sexual orientation, as, “unhappy, in pain, defensive, broken, and enraged.”
- Alongside discussions of family dynamics and healing relationships speakers presented strategies for resisting the gay community’s attempts at recognition and full civil rights.
- The authors of the report observed a number of people who appeared to be parents who were bringing their teenage children to the conference in an attempt to change their children’s sexual orientation.

Speakers frequently compared gay rights activists to Nazis, warning that the success of the gay rights movement would lead to Nazism or totalitarianism.

Contradictory Arguments

- Speakers said that attendees should express compassion toward those who “struggle” with same-sex attraction and wish to change, and “outrage” toward those who do not conform to a conservative Christian political and moral agenda.
- Speakers said that Parents should not blame themselves for their children’s sexual orientation, but that homosexuality is always the result of a dysfunctional family background, and possibly child sexual abuse.
- Speakers declared that homosexuality is not greater than any other sin, but, as the authors note, Focus on the Family does not hold conferences for – much less dedicate a massive political machinery to – adultery, divorce, or any other number of common relationship “sins.”

About the Authors

- Cynthia Burack, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies at Ohio State University.
- Jyl Josephson, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies at Rutgers University-Newark.