



From a Same-Sex Attracted Muslim: Between Denial of Reality and Distortion of Religion

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MuslimMatters has carried a number of articles over the past few years related to the topic of homosexuality. Some of these have focused on the scriptural evidence ([here](#)) and moral justifications ([here](#) and [here](#)) for Islam's prohibition of same-sex acts and relationships, while others ([here](#) and [here](#)) have offered perspectives on the stance Muslims should take with respect to the larger gay rights movement. Yet other pieces ([here](#) and [here](#)) have dealt with the issue from a more pastoral angle.

While all these pieces deal admirably with the topic of homosexuality from an Islamic point of view, none of them seek to acquaint the reader with an “insider's perspective” on the issue, that is, the perspective of a faithful Muslim who actually experiences same-sex desires and attractions. This perspective is important, however, for two reasons. First, many Muslims today are seeking a way to respond to the question of homosexuality that is both principled and compassionate, particularly when it comes to fellow Muslims who may be dealing with same-sex inclinations. At the same time, Muslims, like all members of society, are constantly being bombarded from all quarters by a strident and increasingly aggressive “gay affirmative” public discourse that presents itself as the only reasonable, just, or even moral response to the phenomenon of human same-sex desires and attractions. It is no wonder, therefore, that Muslims – both those who experience same-sex attractions and those who do not – have recently begun ceding to this pressure at the expense of their religious integrity and Islamic moral commitments. With very few voices to counter the dominant narrative, many Muslims today have become sincerely confused, and troubled, over this issue.

In these circumstances, the voice of an insider to the same-sex struggle is perhaps uniquely qualified to put a human face on this issue and to tell us how we as a community can best be of help to our brothers and sisters who need it. When such a person is also a practicing Muslim committed to dealing with his or her same-sex attractions in light of the teachings of Islam, their witness can also provide perhaps the most credible, and nuanced, alternative to the one-sided, black-and-white public narrative currently shouting down all other considered and principled perspectives on this issue.

The essay below is written by Br. Yousef, a Muslim with same-sex attractions who, along with many other Muslims in his shoes, has committed to living his life on the basis of established Islamic moral and spiritual teachings. In addition, Br. Yousef has moderated an online support group for same-sex attracted Muslims (www.straightstruggle.com) for the past 13 years, giving him a wealth of experience and a unique perspective from which to address this topic. His essay is addressed to imams, chaplains, Muslim activists and community leaders, to the Muslim community at large, and to other fellow Muslims who find themselves dealing with same-sex desires and attractions.



In the late 1990s, one of North America's most prominent Muslim leaders was giving a lecture at a large convention. In that lecture, he described how disgusted he was that he had been sitting next to a gay man on his flight over to the lecture. An 18-year-old Muslim experiencing same-sex attractions was at that lecture, and the words like raining bullets are stuck in my head till this day.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Yousef and I write to you as a Muslim who has experienced same-sex attractions since adolescence. I am currently married with children, *al-hamdu li'Llah*, and have been working for many years now as a professional. My same-sex attractions, while still present, have diminished significantly over the years, and I have been blessed to enjoy a healthy relationship with my wife, whom I love. (As a side note, while marriage was definitely the right decision for me, it may not be right for every person who has same-sex attractions; no single rule applies to all situations.) I have also been the moderator of an online support group for Muslims with same-sex desires, called Straight Struggle, for about 13 years now. In that time, I have transformed, grown, and evolved in my thinking many times over, specifically with regard to the topic of homosexuality and Islam.

Critical Terms and Concepts

I will be using two main terms in this essay: same-sex attractions (SSA) and same-sex encounters (SSE). I believe these terms more accurately describe the relevant issues with respect to the topic of homosexuality, particularly for us as Muslims. The terms “homosexual,” “gay,” “LGBT,” “queer,” etc. in today's culture are labels that mean different things to different people, whereas there is no mistaking what is meant by “same-sex attractions / desires” and “same-sex encounters.”

It is also important for me to stress that I do not believe that my same-sex attractions are my identity. Same-sex desires are feelings that I, and others, have that I contend with in my daily journey towards Allah. They do not make me different in any essential way from any other Muslim. For this reason, I reject the idea that Muslims who experience same-sex attractions should be given a special label or that we should “self-identify” as “LGBT,” “gay,” “homosexual,” or “queer.” I believe these labels isolate people with such attractions and, from what I have seen, sometimes force them to conform to certain lifestyles even if they do not really want to. Also, these labels have the effect of elevating sexual desires – basically *shahawat* – and making them part of the “core of who I am” as a person. This seems arbitrary to me and something that I find hard to justify from an Islamic perspective, both legally and spiritually.

To be clear and upfront: there is absolutely nothing *haram* or to be ridiculed about anyone just having SSA (same-sex attractions). What is forbidden in Islam are SSEs (same-sex encounters and behaviors). No one that I have met over the years ever chose to be attracted to the same sex. Let me repeat: not one single person among the dozens and dozens that I have interacted with over the years ever wanted to have SSA or chose to have SSA. This needs to be understood and taken into account when thinking about your brothers and sisters

who are dealing with this issue.

It is also critical that people in the Muslim community understand that there is a very important difference between SSA and SSE, between *attractions* and *actions*. Practically all of our religion rides on this distinction, not just in the sexual realm but across the board. I am not judged for merely experiencing a desire (to the extent that it is beyond my control), but only for what I choose to do – or not to do – with it. A person is not cursed or diseased or a walking sin just because they experience SSA. Only an action can be *haram*, not a person. Rather, they are people just like anyone else who are dealing with a particular difficulty or test in life, and they are doing the best they can with their life and faith. They have failures and successes just like everyone else. Of course, if we apply the distinction between desires and actions consistently, then we who experience SSA also have to concede that just because we have these desires – which can be very strong, as sexual desires often are – this does not justify us acting on them in defiance of Allah's command.

Who Are Your Brothers and Sisters That Struggle with SSA?

I have thought long and hard about what to write in this essay and it has been something that, in some ways, has been years in the making. I thought I might proceed by giving you some examples of the brothers and sisters that I have encountered over the years. I could tell you about the brother who, from a very young age until he was a young adult, was sexually abused by his older neighbor. I could tell you about the guilt he had since the abuse “felt good” at the time, along with the attention. Or maybe I can tell you about the brother who attempted suicide twice since his family found out about his SSA. Or the sister who lost her job because of rumors about her SSA. Or the brothers who contracted HIV as a result of SSEs.

On the other hand, I could tell you about the imam who chose his faith over his desires and continues to preach, practice, and live as a pious Muslim on his path towards Allah even while keeping his desires in check. Or the community leader who chose a life of celibacy while learning and teaching the faith to others. Or the man who was living a homosexual lifestyle with his partner and who left it all for the sake of Allah when he converted to Islam. Or the number of university professors and doctors and other professionals who made the conscious decision to defeat their *nafs* and who chose Allah above all else in order to attain the ultimate reward. These brothers and sisters, myself included, firmly reject the idea of making religion conform to one's needs and desires and rather struggle against themselves in order to follow the teachings of our faith.

What Causes SSA and Can It Be Changed?

The question sometimes comes up as to what causes a person to have SSA. There has been a lot of discussion and research on this issue, and the fact is that no one really knows. It seems that it is most likely due to many convergent factors that are different for each person. Also, the exact nature and intensity of one's SSA can vary from person to person. I have learned through my long experience that no two people's profiles are exactly the same. Some people with SSA experience attraction to their own sex as a rule but are not positively repulsed by the other sex. Some of these might be able to see themselves with an opposite-gender spouse one day, if the right person and conditions came along and they had their SSA firmly under control, were confident they wouldn't fall into SSEs while married, etc. This, in fact, has been my experience and that of a number of others I have known. Other people have no attraction toward the opposite sex at all and may even

cringe at the thought of engaging them romantically. Conventional marriage, needless to say, would not be an advisable option for such a person, at least as long as this remains their state.

Also, some people really feel a need to “get to the bottom of” their SSA, to try to understand it and figure it out: what it is, where it came from, why it's there, what it “means.” Others don't care much how it got there or why they have it, but prefer just to focus instead on how to manage it effectively and get on with their lives. Personally, I have come to belong more to this second camp. When I was younger, I did spend time trying to figure out why I was this way or what “went wrong.” Eventually I stopped because I figured I didn't really need to know the “why” of it, but rather just the “how” of how to deal with it. And even this “how” is not something I can explain in any scientific way. It is just things that have worked out for me over the years – mostly through following the Sunna, learning how to outsmart my *nafs* through the practice of *tazkiya*, and a fair amount of good old trial and error.

All this raises another common question, namely, can SSA be “cured”? If “cure” means total elimination and 100% “heterosexuality,” then probably not. Statistically, it seems uncommon for someone who has experienced predominant or exclusive same-sex attractions consistently past the age of adolescence one day to have zero SSA susceptibilities and to become fully “heterosexual.” But this goal isn't just unattainable (for most); I also believe that it is unnecessary. Nothing in Islam says that I have to be “heterosexual” (in fact, we don't even have a word for that in our *deen*), but only that I must refrain from prohibited sexual *acts* (which *are* named and specified in our *deen*). Past scholars, for example, differed over whether it was blameworthy for a mature man to be enticed by the beauty of a younger male (typically a “beardless youth,” or *amrad*). Some thought that such susceptibilities were indeed blameworthy, but many apparently did not – as long as no *haram* actions were committed.

This last point about avoiding *haram* actions has been agreed upon by all Muslim scholars. This is why it is so important for us to keep in mind the distinction between desires and actions. As Muslims, we know that Allah ﷻ will ask us about what He has put under our control. This always includes our actions, as well as our thoughts and fantasies *to the extent that* we have control over them. *Taklif* (moral accountability) would be meaningless if Allah had not given us jurisdiction over our actions and made us fully responsible for them. Of course we will all mess up and make numerous mistakes along the way, whether we are people who happen to be tested with same-sex desires or not. This is exactly what Allah has made *tawba* (repentance) for. It is also why Allah refers to Himself eight times in the Qur'an as “*al-Tawwab al-Rahim*,” the Merciful One Who ever turns back to His repenting servant, and assures us no fewer than 72 times (!) that He is “*Ghafur(un) Rahim*,” the Ever Forgiving, Merciful One – *subhan Allah!* Therefore, no amount of sin should cause a person to lose hope in the Mercy of Allah. At the same time, our chances of receiving Allah's help, and earning His ultimate pleasure, are always greater when we minimize our sins as much as we can.

Coming back to the question of change, the fact remains that many people with SSA have experienced meaningful change over time in the intensity of their desires and the hold their same-sex attractions have over them, and/or in the role these desires and attractions play in their lives and their sense of who they are. Sometimes this may happen on its own. Sometimes it is the result of long-term spiritual discipline and self-control. Sometimes it's a question of changing how you conceive of and define yourself in relation to your

desires and to others, particularly those of your own sex. More often than not, any progress a person makes on the path of dealing with his or her SSA will usually come about through a combination of techniques and approaches. Some have benefited from professional, faith-friendly therapy in learning to understand and address their same-sex desires and related emotional and psychological issues that many people with SSA are often also struggling with. Others have reported benefiting greatly from books, programs, and resources meant specifically for addressing, comprehending, mastering, and reducing or minimizing one's SSA. (A wealth of useful, principled, and thought-provoking information – grounded in a Christian, but also a more generally religious, perspective that Muslims can derive benefit from as well – can be found, for example, at sites such as www.samesexattraction.or or www.peoplecanchange.com.) But again for me, the real goal is not “heterosexuality” per se, but rather contentment, fulfillment, and being at peace with Allah, myself, and others.

Islam as a Middle Path: Avoiding Extreme Narratives

“I Am a Walking Monstrosity and Allah Hates Me for Existing” vs. “Out and Proud: It's Okay to Be Gay!”

I believe a key step in reaching equilibrium in the process of dealing with SSA is learning to avoid two common extremes: the extreme of despising ourselves for mere desires and attractions we did not ask for and the extreme of “identifying with” these desires as somehow defining who we are as human beings and as Muslims. Islam, as always, is a Middle Way, and it can be very liberating when we learn to get beyond all the false scripts we've been fed by our modern culture and to conceive of our particular moral struggle as no different in essence from the moral struggle of any other Muslim. When we do this, we can then learn to see ourselves as no worse, no better, nor even different in any fundamental way from any other sincerely striving servant of God on this planet.

We also reject any attempt on the part of anyone to pressure or to bully Muslim communities, imams, leaders, mosques, schools, or other institutions into accepting what Allah has clearly made haram in the name of “tolerance,” “affirmation,” “acceptance,” “inclusion,” “diversity,” or any of the other buzz words that are normally used for this purpose.

This talk of extremes – which are always un-Islamic – brings me to another point. Many Muslims dealing with same-sex attractions find themselves stuck today between two sharply opposing forces. The first, which has been debated and now effectively refuted on the level of Islamic teachings (see M. Vaid, “Can Islam Accommodate Homosexual Acts? Qur'anic Revisionism and the Case of Scott Kugle”), are self-described “progressive Muslims” who have taken it upon themselves to offer distorted interpretations of the Qur'an and who reject or dismiss *ahadith* and the consensus of Muslim scholars, all in an attempt to make SSEs – same-sex acts, encounters, and relationships – permissible in Islam. This group, however, is appealing to some because it offers a “safe space” for Muslims with SSA and offers them a lifestyle that they can easily identify with. Of course, the biggest drawback is that the life such Muslims would be leading is likely to be sinful in many ways. I feel I have to say it clearly here once again: I and many other same-sex attracted Muslims

that I have encountered over the years completely reject such attempts to manipulate our religion in order to “accommodate” our (or anyone else's) “sexuality.” We also reject any attempt on the part of anyone to pressure or to bully Muslim communities, imams, leaders, mosques, schools, or other institutions into accepting what Allah has clearly made *haram* in the name of “tolerance,” “affirmation,” “acceptance,” “inclusion,” “diversity,” or any of the other buzz words that are normally used for this purpose. The meaning of Islam is “submission,” and my submission to Allah and my faith come above all else, including my own desires, sexual or otherwise. This is the test that Allah has chosen for me and I accept it from Him in hopes of attaining His pleasure and His reward, insha'Allah. Allah mentions in the Holy Qur'an in Surat al-Baqara (2), verses 155-157:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ
وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالْأَمْوَالِ وَالنَّسَبِ وَالْأَمْوَالِ وَالنَّسَبِ وَالْأَمْوَالِ
الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُهْتَدُونَ

And We shall surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when affliction strikes them, say, “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him will we return.” Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.

According to the tafsir of this verse, these tribulations from Allah come in many forms that we have no control over. It is only Allah that can choose what these tribulations look like. The only control that we have is how we respond to them. Will we give in to temptation? Will we give up? Or will we persevere with patience and remind ourselves of our ultimate goal in the journey towards Allah? Then Allah can count us among the muhtadeen, the rightly guided who deserve Allah's blessings and mercy.

So how do we know that we will be tested even if we believe, and that tests and trials are actually proof that we do believe? In the Qur'an in Surat al-'Ankabut (29), verses 2-7, Allah says:

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يَبْرُكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ
وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ
الْكَاذِبِينَ
أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن يَسْبِقُونَا سَاءَ مَا
يَحْكُمُونَ

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ

وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦﴾

Do people think they shall be left to say, “We believe” and they shall not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars. Or do those who do evil deeds think they can outrun Us? Evil is what they judge. Whoever hopes for the meeting with Allah – indeed, the term decreed by Allah is coming. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing. And whoever strives only strives for [the benefit of] himself. Indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds. And those who believe and do righteous deeds – We shall surely remove from them their misdeeds and shall surely reward them according to the best of what they were wont to do.

These verses are very clear in their message that belief will be met with trials. Accepting that these are trials and striving against them for the sake of Allah is what is of utmost importance as a statement and proof of our faith, because ultimately it is Allah's meeting that we seek in the Hereafter no matter what hardship we face in this life on our path towards Him.

So, on the one side are people who try to distort the *deen* by changing its clear teachings, but then on the other side there is often the culture of hate and stigma within the Muslim community with respect to people who experience SSA: whether it be the fact that this topic is hardly ever discussed – leading Muslims dealing with it to find themselves in bubbles where many young people think that they are literally the only people in the world that could be dealing with it – or the fact that if the topic ever is “discussed,” it is likely by imams who describe how “the punishment of homosexuality is death” and how evil the people of Lut ﷺ were. Other ways it is “discussed” are with groups of friends who seem to find it okay to make fun of, ridicule, and put down “gays.” (Even for many of us who don't act on our same-sex desires and reject the notion of self-identifying as “gay,” we still feel that people like us are being targeted by these kinds of comments.) In my many years, I can only recall twice when someone who spoke about the topic of homosexuality in Islam was actually compassionate and understanding enough to say that these are our brothers and sisters and they need our support and help. Twice is not enough. This needs to be the mainstream message that is presented the majority of the time to ensure that people get the correct understanding.

Our Responsibility as a Community

It is no longer – and really never should have been – acceptable that we sweep this issue under the rug. We are losing far too many of our brothers and sisters because of the ignorance of those in places of authority and the indifference and carelessness of the general community. Where are the *khutbas* and *durus* where this topic is properly addressed and correctly presented so that people have the proper understanding of the issue from an Islamic perspective? Where are the imams and scholars explaining that the presence of a spontaneous desire is not sinful in and of itself and unpacking the amorphous categories of “homosexuality” and “LGBT” into the more concrete – and religiously faithful – distinction between SSAs and SSEs? Where are the *khawatir* telling

people to watch their tongues when speaking about “gays and lesbians” and “homosexuals” so as not to hurt the feelings of their brothers and sisters who are suffering in silence (even as we reject these identity labels and caution the community against taking them over from secular culture)? Where is the research to allow parents properly to guide their children so they can come to them with such an issue? And where are the tools parents need to be able to help their children who do end up coming to them with the issue of SSA?

Until we, the mainstream Muslim community, find a way to offer a safe environment for people dealing with same-sex attractions to open up to caring and compassionate individuals among us, we will be losing many of our brothers and sisters to a falsified understanding of Islam, or to leaving the religion altogether, or even to suicide (*wa'l-'iyadhu bi'Llah*). Now, I certainly do not mean that people should start waving the rainbow flag, wearing pink triangles, and proclaiming their same-sex attractions publicly. What I do mean is that we need to end the isolation and the misinformation about SSA, on the one hand, and the twisting of the *deen*, on the other, by way of imams and leaders propagating the correct understanding presented above about same-sex attractions (SSA) versus same-sex encounters (SSE) in terms of *halal* and *haram*. I also mean that imams, leaders, and parents should acquire the tools necessary to be able to support their children if/when they disclose their SSA to them. If we cannot count on our leaders and our communities both to uphold the integrity of our faith and at the same time to support us – your brothers and sisters who are dealing with same-sex attractions – with wisdom, discretion, and compassion in this test that Allah has chosen for us, then who can we count on?

Please note that I am not asking for anyone's pity. What I am asking for is some compassion – true compassion rooted in proper Islamic teachings that ensure our welfare as Muslims both in this life and the next. When someone, especially a young person, hears things like “gays should be killed” or “gays are disgusting,” I don't think one can exaggerate the lasting effects such words can have on a confused and vulnerable soul. No wonder so many of our youth are leaving the *deen* over this issue or else going over to groups that “affirm” them – however misguidedly – in a gay identity and lifestyle. We as a community should feel sadness and a sense of culpability on both counts. But in addition to the true compassion of our Prophet ﷺ – who was the most merciful of all mankind yet never compromised in warning people against violating the command of Allah – I am also asking for respect. It is my right as your brother in faith to have your full respect and support. This includes respect and support for brothers who might be effeminate in their behavior or sisters who might be masculine in theirs through no fault of their own. Imam al-Nawawi رحمته الله has stated, concerning a male with effeminate mannerisms (*mukhannath*):

“The scholars have said that the mukhannath is of two types. The first is one who was created like that; he did not deliberately take on the characteristics of women, their appearance, speech, and mannerisms. Rather, this is a disposition (khilqa) upon which Allah created him. For this [person], there is no blame, no rebuke, no sin, and no penalty, and he is excused as he has no hand in that. The second type of mukhannath is the one who was not created upon that disposition (khilqa). Rather, he deliberately takes on the characteristics of women, their mannerisms, appearance, and speech, and

adopts their dress. This is what is blameworthy and has been reported in authentic hadiths as cursed [behavior]. This accords with the meaning of another hadith: 'Allah has cursed men who (deliberately) imitate women, and women who (deliberately) imitate men.'"

imam al-Nawawi is clear here that there is no blame on a person for such tendencies as they have little or no control over. (Scholars agree that a person whose mannerisms mismatch their biological sex should try to recondition their mannerisms to the degree possible, but that they are not blameworthy for what lies beyond their capacity in this domain.) So long as someone is not committing *haram* acts – and really, even if they are – they are still your brother or sister in faith and there is absolutely no justification for disrespecting or bullying them. As long as they are not trying to justify or to normalize any *haram* behaviors – like same-sex acts – or calling to them publicly, they should be accepted and treated just like anyone else.

Words of Advice to Fellow Muslims Dealing with SSA

In closing, I would like to offer some *nasihah* to my many brothers and sisters who read this that also deal, as I do, with unrequested same-sex desires. First of all, you should know that you are not alone. There are many of us out there just like you, who know exactly what you are going through – the confusion, the pain, the isolation. We are here to lean on and to support each other with helpful words of advice, an ear to listen, and brotherly/sisterly encouragement along what we know through experience can be a very difficult path.

Secondly, as all help and support ultimately come from Allah ﷻ, I cannot stress how critical it is to maintain one's relationship with the One Who created us, to trust in Him, and to remain as close to Him as possible – no matter how many times one may have messed up or fallen flat on one's face in managing one's sexual desires. Many factors are necessary in dealing effectively with SSA, as I have mentioned, but in my experience, the single most important overriding factor for me has been my faith in Allah ﷻ, and my unwavering faith in and commitment to His *deen*. Without this critical element, I do not believe I would be anywhere near where I am today in all of this, *wa'l-hamdu li'Llah*. Finally, I would like to point out that there is no “one path” on the struggle with same-sex desires, no single place that every individual will end up in this life. Every person will walk his or her own path, and every person will have to live with his or her own choices.

The truth of the matter is that neither I nor anyone else has a complete and total solution for SSA. But the good news is, based on what I have seen and experienced, we really don't need one in order to carry out our lives and to fulfill our mission as God's *khalifa* on this earth. All we need to have are the key facts. And the key facts are that Allah has created us to worship Him, that He tests each of us with something unique to him or her, that He has concern for us and wants to see us succeed in our path to Him, that He has made certain actions *halal* and others *haram*, that He has given us the gift of moral agency and has made us responsible for our actions, and that, as He has promised us in the Qur'an in numerous verses, He “never burdens a soul with more than it can bear.” We can and we should use whatever means are available out there that work for each of us to help us control our actions and behavior first and foremost, as this is what Allah has made us responsible for in front of Him, and to address and work through our various issues as best we can. How our individual lives end up after that, what Allah ultimately has in store for each of us here below (not to mention “there above”) when we struggle patiently in His Way, with faith and trust in Him – all of this is in the hands

of Allah, our Master, Who says in the Qur'an: "No soul knows what joy is kept hidden for it as a reward for that which they used to do" (Surat al-Sajda, v. 17).

Walking the Straight Path

I think, in sum, that this is a way forward: self-control and self-discipline. And no, I am not saying that we "pray away the gay," but that we learn how to tame and control our *nafs* such that it doesn't govern our actions. This is what Allah has asked of us – no more, but also no less. What happens beyond that is open and is different for each person according to what Allah has decreed. Some may one day find marriage a viable option and go down that path. Others will remain celibate and continue on that path. Some will use their time and their talents to pursue Islamic knowledge and community work and go down that path. Each person's road to Allah is unique and specific to him or her, but we believe firmly in the words of our Lord when He says: "Those who struggle (*jaahadu*) for Our sake, We shall surely guide them to Our ways. Truly God is with those who practice virtue (*al-muhsineen*)" (Surat al-'Ankabut, v. 69).

As we all affirm as Muslims, Allah's path – which we ask Him to guide us to a minimum of 17 times a day in our daily prayers – is none other than the Straight Path (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*). It is for this reason that we Muslims who have been given the test of same-sex attractions refer to our struggle as the Straight Struggle. In reality, we as Muslims are all engaged in the Straight Struggle – the struggle to remain on the Straight Path of our Lord and Maker. We each have our own challenges to deal with and our own hurdles to overcome along the way, but our road in the end is one, just as our Goal is One.

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To the Muslim community as a whole I would like to say: the time to act on this issue was yesterday. Let us catch up now, because I might be the person standing next to you in the masjid. I might be your coworker, your friend, your blood brother, or your spouse. I might be your child or your parent. Who knows? I might even be you.

gay

homosexuality

islam and

same sex

same sex attraction

92 RESPONSES
