

I don't know how to respond when someone "explains away" their bad behavior by just saying, "God made me this way". Is that true?

That's an interesting question. I have come upon more and more people who will rationalize their sin by saying the same thing. Basically, the idea is, "This isn't my fault, God gave me this attraction to this particular sin". Even further, I have come across a few people who will take the next step: Since "it was God who made me this way", the thing I'm attracted to couldn't actually be bad. After all, God made me this way."

Now, the most obvious place where I hear this argument is when people are talking about their sexual attraction. This could be either homosexual desires or heterosexual desires ("God gave me this attraction/high libido! It's His fault!"). But let's be honest here: any one of us could say this about any other struggle we have. We could just as easily say, "God gave me this temper", "God made me this cocky", or "God just made me super talkative, that's why I have to gossip" (I'm not making that up, I've actually heard this come from people's mouths).

Now, there is something good in this. If someone recognizes an attraction toward something sinful within them, this is always good. There is no progress in the spiritual life until we acknowledge the truth...the reality of our present circumstances. If I happen to struggle with something, it is way better to admit it than hide from it. Sometimes we can be so shocked by our sins that we would rather bury that truth than bring it to the love and mercy of Jesus.

But where we can err is the next movement. When we start assigning blame to God, we have made a serious mis-step. First, because it gets God wrong. Second, because it gets us wrong.

God never causes anyone to be tempted. In the Letter of James, the author goes to some length to clarify this truth. He writes, "No one experiencing temptation should say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God is not subject to temptation to evil, and he himself tempts no one" (James 1:13). This teaching would be extended to God not "making" someone be attracted to sin. Hopefully, this clarifies that simply because a person feels this or that attraction does not mean that God implicitly approves of this attraction. To say this would not only be a misunderstanding of who God is, it would be a misunderstanding of human nature. James goes on to say, "...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (1:14).

As Catholic Christians, we believe that God made us good. We are created in His image and likeness and we will bear that image and likeness into eternity. But while we retain that intrinsic goodness and dignity, not everything in us is good.

There was a thing called The Fall. At some point, humanity chose to rebel against God and God's original plan for humanity was interrupted. This caused a thing called Original Sin (or as Father Benedict Groeschel calls it: the Original

Wound). The ten dollar word for it is “concupiscence”. It basically means that, while we are good and made for good, we all have an attraction to things that aren’t good for us (this explains the success of fast food chains and donut shops...among other things).

This affects all of us. This is not something God willed. If we experience an attraction to sin, the last thing we should do is believe the lie that “God made me this way”. This is the entire reason for Jesus Christ to come to this earth, suffer, die, and rise from the dead. This is the entire reason why He sent the Holy Spirit into our lives. This is the entire purpose of the Church. This is God’s plan to save and redeem us from the desires that can so often dominate our lives. Jesus came to “re-make” us according to the Father’s will.

While we are striving to allow God to do this work of healing our original wound, we must understand that often this takes time. While it is a work of grace (God’s free gift), it may be painful and difficult for us at times. So, be patient with yourself in your wounds. Be patient with the people around you in their own wounds. But also continue to tell the truth: God has more than this or that attraction or desire in store for you. His plan for your life is freedom. His plan for your life is redemption.