

Homosexuality and the Church

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It was 1988. I just finished leading my first worship service at the Corona Presbyterian Church in downtown Denver. After the service a young man approached me. He wanted to share something with me in private. We went to my office and with tears in his eyes he told me he was just diagnosed with AIDS.

Three weeks later I had an appointment with two men in their mid-thirties. I thought they wanted to talk with me about how they could become members of the church. After some introductory conversation they asked me, "Will you marry us?"

Within the first month of my ministry at the Corona Presbyterian Church I knew I was in over my head. I was a somewhat naive suburban pastor from the northeast.

The church that I was now pastoring is located in the heart of Denver's gay and singles population. Most of the restaurants and businesses are gay owned and operated. The major supermarket chain in Colorado is called King Soopers. There is a King Soopers located across the street from Corona. The neighborhood renamed it, Queen Soopers. Gays, lesbians, transsexuals, transvestites, bi-sexuals, and straights frequent this supermarket.

Two blocks away from the church is Cheeseman Park where male homosexuals will cruise through the park and solicit other homosexuals. Needless to say, this is not the kind of neighborhood that we see outside the windows of most Presbyterian churches.

After I had been at Corona for a year a middle aged couple, members of the church, came to me and asked if Corona would allow a ministry called Where Grace Abounds to use the facility.

Where Grace Abounds is a para-ministry directed by a Godly woman named Mary Heathman. WGA helps men and woman leave homosexuality. They wanted to use the building on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Jack and Gloria came to the elders meeting to make a proposal. Gloria pulled out of her wallet a picture of her oldest son Stephen. She said, "Isn't he a good looking young man?" Gloria shared how the ministry of Where Grace Abounds helped him to deal with his same-sex feelings and gave him the support of to leave homosexuality. After some healthy debate and prayer the elders voted unanimously to allow WGA to use the building. The Corona elders felt that since the church was smack dab in the middle of the Denver gay community it needed to do something to help those who struggle with homosexuality. WGA began to meet weekly at the church. Before too long, I began to see through the power of prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit and a whole lot of grace....men and women leaving homosexuality. God's Spirit was working. Experiencing the ministry of Where Grace Abounds changed how I did ministry, forever.

A couple of years later, Terry Schlossberg, the Director of Presbyterian Pro Life, called me. She expressed that the PCUSA has several pro-homosexual organizations but no organization that equipped the local church to reach out to the person who struggled with homosexuality. Terry asked me if I could somehow

start a national organization that would address the homosexual issue. I told her I had no idea how to do that. She said she'd help me. Terry, along with other renewal leaders in the PCUSA, invited a number of Presbyterians to a brainstorming session in Louisville, KY. Seventeen of us met. I led the meeting. Within twenty-four hours we started a ministry called OnebyOne. We formed a board and Kathy Moore from Rochester, NY became our first Executive Director.

This morning, in the time that I have, I want to share with you some of the things I have learned about homosexuality in the last 15 years.

Before I begin, I want to ask how many of you know someone personally or at least no someone that calls themselves gay, lesbian or bisexual? Thank you for raising your hand.

These are the things I have learned about homosexuality.

SCRIPTURE SPEAKS OUT AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY

Lev. 18:22 "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."

Lev. 20:13 "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable."

Romans 1:25-27 "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts.

Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another.

Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

Scripture is clear....Homosexuality is not of God....in fact it's sin

It is interesting to me that Jesus says nothing about homosexuality. Then again, he says nothing about bestiality, child abuse and incest. We would say that those things are very wrong.

What Jesus does affirm is what is expressed in Mark 10. Some Pharisees had come to Jesus and asked him about divorce and Jesus answers them by saying "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife....and they shall become one flesh." Jesus is affirming marriage between a man and a woman. Not a man and a man or a woman and a woman; but one man with one woman.

Jesus quotes from Genesis, the first book of Bible...."A man shall leave his mother and father and cleave unto his wife and they will become one flesh." The theme of one man with one woman is repeated throughout the Scripture.

One of the most important reasons why God created male and female is for the purpose of procreation; for having children. Scripture says clearly...."Be fruitful and multiply." Homosexuals cannot be fruitful

and they cannot multiply. Homosexuality goes against the very design of creation. Jesus didn't have to say anything specific about homosexuality because the people in his culture knew that same sex sexual relationships were wrong.

Here are some other important points you need to think about as it relates to Scripture and homosexuality.

NO HERO OF THE FAITH EVER ENGAGED IN HOMOSEXUALITY

No patriarch or matriarch

No prophet

No king

No priest, apostle or disciple ever practiced homosexuality

Think about the Song of Solomon. This book talks about the love and sexual expression between a man and a woman. Every proverb talks about the love between a man and a woman. All the Old Testament laws that regulate sexuality (virginity, mate selection, engagement, marital fidelity) are about a man and a woman.

What about the 10 Commandments?

5th Commandment Honor your Mother and Father

10th Commandment You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. This speaks to a husband about his relationship with his wife.

These commandments make sense only if it is taken for granted that marriage has to do with one man with one woman.

Furthermore, the relationship that Jesus Christ has with his church has always had the image Christ and His bride, the bride being his church. It is not Christ and His groom. It is his bride.

There is not a single shred of evidence anywhere in the Bible that would remotely suggest that homosexuality is acceptable in the eyes of God.

I want to tell you some other things I have learned.

GOD DOES NOT CREATE HOMOSEXUALS. He creates only heterosexuals. We hear so much about homosexuality, in the news, on TV, in the media. And the way homosexuality is portrayed, the media wants us to believe that some people are created gay or lesbian.

Friends, no one is created by God to be a homosexual. God does not create some to be heterosexual and some to be homosexual. Everyone is created a heterosexual. However, there are some people, I would say between 2-4% of our population, that have same-sex attraction. A small minority of people

are sexually attracted to the same sex. Listen, just because a person is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex doesn't make her/him a homosexual.

No scientific study has proven that a person is born a homosexual. The media wants us to believe that scientific studies have proven that some people are indeed gay. They are born that way. No study has proven that. No study has conclusively shown that a gay gene exists and because a person has this gene they are gay.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS SIN. It is not God's best. According to Scripture, sexual relationships are to be expressed in the context of marriage; one man with one woman. Any sexual expression outside of marriage according to Scripture is sin.

I must share with you that it is very difficult to tell someone who is expressing themselves as a homosexual that they are sinning. They might say, "How can you say I am a sinner. I am a homosexual. That's who I am. That's how I was created."

HOMOSEXUALITY IS NO WORSE A SIN THAN ANY OTHER SIN. Do you know what Christians do a lot? We grade sins. When it comes to sexual sins we put child abuse right up there at the top. What could be worse than an adult taking advantage of a child? Pedophilia rates up there.....at the top. Then, people place the sexual abuse of another adult right under child abuse on the list. Under sexual abuse we put homosexuality. Homosexual expression is not as bad as sexual abuse but it rates pretty high on list of sexual sins. Then comes adultery and pornography. Underneath pornography comes premarital sex. Premarital sex is readily accepted today in our culture. Then down here on the list we put lust. No one can see us lusting. We tend to grade homosexuality near the top of the list.

Please hear me. Homosexuality is no worse a sin in the eyes of a holy God than any other sin. All sin...separates us from God.

I want to tell you what makes me angry. I get angry at people who say, "Look at those homos or look at those fags," when they won't even look at the log in their own eye. They won't give a passing glance at their own sexual sin. I get angry when people point the finger at homosexuality in the church and not say anything about heterosexual adultery, premarital sex, sexual abuse and the rampant use of pornography.

In my pastoral ministry I have had to deal with much more heterosexual sin than homosexual disobedience. And so, I get angry when I see people pointing their finger at those homosexuals when they should dealing with the sin in their own life.

ONE CAN BE A CHRISTIAN AND STILL BE IN A HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP. Just like a Christian can commit adultery or any other sin, a committed believer can find himself/herself in a homosexual relationship. Never think that a person is not a Christian if they consider themselves a homosexual.

THERE IS MUCH PROMISCUITY IN THE HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY. I am talking particularly about men. Very few homosexual men live in a monogamous relationship. For a lot of homosexual men, it's about sex. Many homosexual men are addicted to sex

HOMOSEXUALITY IS A DISASTER FOR CHILDREN. I predict that in the near future public sex education will lift up homosexuality, not as just another lifestyle, but as an expression of one's sexuality that is just as viable as heterosexuality. Personally, I don't want any of the children in this church or my grandchildren being taught that it's okay to be gay. I don't want any public educator to teach that some people are born homosexuality. Do you realize the confusion children will feel when school authorities say that homosexuality is fine and you, as a parent, are saying it isn't.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS WINNING OVER THE CULTURE. In the last few months the homosexual agenda has picked up a lot steam. Canada has legalized same sex marriages. The Supreme Court has revoked all sodomy laws in America thereby saying that homosexual sex is a viable as heterosexual sex. The Supreme Court of Massachusetts has legalized homosexual marriages. 20% of sitcoms on TV portray homosexuality as a viable lifestyle. The newest homosexual show, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, is supposedly a rather funny show. If a TV show can make you laugh then you will be more accepting of homosexuality. A few weeks ago the Philadelphia Phillies had Gay Community Day. They join a number of other major league baseball parks that celebrate homosexuality.

It is very evident that homosexuality is being more and more accepted by people across this country. The gay community has done a remarkable job of getting main stream America to accept homosexuality to be as viable as heterosexuality.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH TO DO? Church people, especially Presbyterians, do a great job in debating, dialoguing and establishing task forces to look at the issue of homosexuality. I have been served on these task forces. I have been involved in Presbytery debates. I suppose they have their place.

This is what I have found. As we debate this issue and write papers that address the issue of homosexuality, there are people sitting in Presbyterian pews across this country who have same- sex feelings. There are people who are struggling with their homosexuality and they have no safe place to go in order to get help. For the most part, the local church doesn't know what to do with the issue of sexual brokenness.

It seems to me that many conservative churches will either condemn people who are in the homosexual lifestyle or the church will say, "Don't be homosexual anymore. Just say No."

On the other hand, churches that lean to the left will be very welcoming and say, "It doesn't matter if you are gay or straight, God loves you, and you don't have to change"

WHAT IS THE CHURCH TO DO? WHAT DO YOU AND I DO?

WE NEED TO LOVE THE HOMOSEXUAL PERSON WITH 100% TRUTH AND 100% GRACE.

Like any other person who struggles with sin, we need to lovingly say to this person “I don’t accept your homosexuality, but, I love you. I care for you.” This is so difficult because most people who express that they are gay or lesbian want you to say, “I love you and I accept your homosexuality.” Biblical Christians, who stand firm believing in the entire counsel of God, can’t say this. One of the hardest things to do as a believer is balance truth, with grace. Saying to a homosexual friend, “I love you, but what you are doing is wrong” is so hard to express.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT TO WORK WITH THOSE WHO STRUGGLE. Someone has said that “People coming for help aren’t initially concerned about how much you know about their specific problem, as they are, with how much you care about them in the midst of their pain.” I have found that when I work with people who struggle with their homosexuality the best thing I can do for this person is to be a friend, ask good questions, and listen with loving ears.

MINISTER FROM A PLATFORM OF GRACE. Many persons who struggle with homosexuality already suffer from guilt. You don’t have to share with them a Bible verse that says homosexuality is wrong. They know it’s wrong. Show them grace. One of the worst things you can do to a person struggling with their homosexuality is to beat them up with the Bible.

CHANGE IS ALWAYS THE RESULT OF FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST. All of us struggle with different things this morning. Homosexuality may not be an issue for you. But something else is an issue. Maybe you are addicted to something, alcohol, sex, donuts, whatever. Maybe you have a real anger problem. Maybe you have a hard time committing to something. Maybe your marriage is falling apart. Maybe you are struggling in raising your kids. Maybe you have a self-confidence problem. We all struggle with something.

If you are going to change, really change, that change is the result of following Christ. If a person struggles with homosexuality real change occurs over a period of time as a direct result of that person growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ. If you are really going to deal with the issue in your life that is affecting you in a negative way, remember, change is the result of deepening your relationship with Jesus Christ. Only God can change you.

Listen to the words of Scripture from I Cor. 6:9-11. “Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, not thieves, not the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.”

Jesus Christ is still in the business of transforming lives.