

Such Were Some of You

I Corinthians 6:9-7:5

Hope Chapel, 2-24-13

Intro:

Opening story: Night when met Christ in powerful way—Eddie separated me from Bruce & Joe. I only had one question, “If I become a Christian, will I have to quit having sex?” Yes. End of discussion.

This is huge barrier in our culture. Christian church needs to own sex and talk about sex.

I like what I heard Tim Keller say in a sermon recently, “What God was not ashamed to create we shouldn’t be ashamed to talk about.”

Here’s the problem with my approach back then: Human beings are made in the image of God and for relationship with God. The word used to describe this core desire is not sex, but love. We are lovers first and foremost and we are called into a love relationship with God that is intimate, fulfilling, exclusive and, ultimately, glorious.

Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:21-32 that a self-giving relationship between a man and a woman in marriage that is sexually intimate, psychologically fulfilling and completely exclusive is the closest analogy in this world to the ultimate glory of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church.

God gave us first marriage and then sex in order to show us how in self-giving to serve another’s needs we can be deeply satisfied ourselves. This self-giving can spiral into ever-deepening intimacy and vulnerability which opens us to ever-greater self-giving. In some ways this is a glimpse into the Trinitarian nature of God.

The ‘catch’ is that there can be no true self-giving and thus no ever-deepening intimacy without absolute commitment legally and socially.

Christianity, then, has a high and glorious view of sex and marriage as an analog for the glory of our relationship with God.

Thus any deviation from this very exclusive definition of marriage as one woman and one man for a lifetime is sin.

Wow!! That means that the vast majority of us have failed to live up to the Bible's definition for human sexual relationships. Our failures have words: Adultery, co-habitation, divorce, fornication, homosexuality, masturbation, polygamy, pornography and prostitution. All are deviations. All are sin.

In fact, I think it is important to note that Jesus set this standard very high when he taught his followers that, **"...everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** (Matt 5:27, ESV) So a lustful glance can be added to the list, according to Jesus.

As promised, I am going to talk about homosexuality today. I thought it very necessary to set my remarks in the context of a brief look at the Bible's high view of sex and marriage. Next week Rick Reynolds will speak to God's purpose in sex and unfold these glories for us.

I'm here this morning to teach/coach followers of Christ. In this talk I'm not addressing so much the LGBT community as I am the Hope Chapel community.

5 questions:

1. What does the bible teach about homosexuality?
2. In light of this teaching, how should followers of Christ relate to their homosexual friends and family members?
3. How do we handle the statement, "But God made me this way." Or, "I was born this way."
4. What about homosexual 'marriage'?
5. What is the gospel's call?

1. What does the bible teach about homosexuality?

The Bible teaches that homosexual activity is wrong. I do not believe, however, that the Bible teaches the homosexual *orientation* is sinful.

Let's look at today's text (lengthy) where both homosexual and heterosexual acts outside of marriage are condemned and sex inside of marriage is encouraged. (TEXT) I Cor. 15:6:9-7:5 (*defraud*)

- 1) Such were some of you—people can be changed by Jesus
- 2) You are not your own, glorify God in your body—our responsibility
- 3) One man, one woman—Bible definition explicit

I believe this text teaches (among other things) that (regardless of orientation), sex outside of the marriage of one man to one woman is sin.

2. In light of this teaching, how should followers of Christ relate to their homosexual friends and family members?

With love. When the Bible says that God 'so loved the world that he gave,' it does not *exclude* adulterers, fornicators, homosexuals and prostitutes.

Jesus modeled this well in his interaction with the woman caught in adultery and in his conversation with Zacchaeus the tax collector.

In the first case he said, "I do not condemn you, go and sin no more." In the second he praised the repentance of Zacchaeus who sought to give back what he had stolen.

In neither case did he condemn them, while at the same time making it clear that he did not believe their actions were appropriate.

We must learn how to have a conversation with people who disagree with our worldview without becoming defensive and angry and afraid. We need to listen well without judging the one with whom we disagree.

This was modeled beautifully by Dan Cathy, the owner of Chick-fil-a, which was recently boycotted by the gay community because Cathy refused to extend benefits to gay couples in his company arguing for a Biblical definition of marriage.

Here's the catch. We did not learn about this model for Christian interaction from Dan Cathy. We learned about this from the founder and executive director of Campus Pride, 'the leading national organization for LGBT...college students' Shane L. Windmeyer. (read various paragraphs) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shane-l-windmeyer/dan-cathy-chick-fil-a_b_2564379.html

3. How do we handle the statement, "But God made me this way." Or, "I was born this way."

There are two underlying ideas here: a) that human sexual orientation is not a choice and b) to be true to our nature and thus psychologically healthy, we should follow the inclinations of our heart.

In the first place I think it is a mistake to argue the matter of choice with a homosexual. Instead, if I am having a dignified conversation with someone who makes this claim I ask to hear his/her story and listen to his/her pain, his/her struggle.

So I concentrate on the second idea and based on the Pauline, "Such were some of you" I offer that I believe that Jesus can set us free from our psychic pain.

I believe our true identity is to be found only in Christ, transcending the issue of broken and therefore corrupt human sexuality. To be found 'in Christ' is to also find a new love and a new loyalty. It means to bring all of my broken self to Jesus and submit to His way and follow His call.

For many this sounds like a prison sentence because of the Bible's high and restrictive view of sex and marriage. I hear that. But I know a couple in which the male partner has wrestled all his life with his sexual identity. He submitted his life to Jesus, laid his struggle down in fits and starts and today is well-loved by a woman who adores him, struggle and all.

I tell this story because I know it is possible to arrive at this place and be sustained in it. I also know that it is very hard and the option of life-long celibacy seems like no option at all. So I defer to John Stott and Henry Nouwen and others who have followed Christ Jesus well while never marrying.

4. What about homosexual ‘marriage’?

After announcing that I was going to address this topic I had several conversations by email and face-to-face with people who were interested in what I was going to say. After explaining my views I always tried to ask, “What do you think I should say? What should be addressed from the pulpit.”

A couple of young men whom I trust told me that I MUST address the matter of homosexual marriage that our society seems to be headed toward legalizing. I realize that anything I say on the subject will offend someone because of the highly-politicized nature of the discussion.

With that said, here is my response:

1. The current definition of marriage has served society well in providing a blueprint for a) community-sanctioned sexual conduct, b) the development of family systems and c) the raising of healthy children, *however badly it has been lived out in heterosexual relationships.*
2. There are other ways besides a redefinition of marriage that our society can provide a legitimate platform for the expression of one’s life-long loyalty to whomever, including necessary access to medical, legal and financial decisions.

5. What is the gospel’s call?

One of my email exchanges earlier this week included the following:

From the time I was born again in 1982 I have noticed a change in the atmosphere concerning this issue. Now the rhetoric is much more dominated by an anti-Christ spirit than I ever realized before. A spirit that hates God, fiercely hates the core of his creative genius, cares not one iota for human beings caught up in the debate, cares even less for those trapped in the lifestyle - the more the merrier, indeed. I have begun to fear the virulence of the pro-gay lobby, that the end product will be a spirit that brooks no dissent, no matter how kindly or meekly offered, even to the point of imprisonment (or death)? to the dissenters. A long way off, perhaps, but something different is in the air, for certain.

How do we deeply accept and love them when the gauntlet they throw down is that we affirm their orientation as God-ordained? Do you have practical experience or wisdom about this? The culture affirms them more and more, and we feel like creeps when we can't figure out how to love them but not deny God's truths.

Also, most of us have friends and acquaintances who are now changing their minds about homosexuality, publicly affirming that it is of God, with whole Facebook pages dedicated to it. How are we to take this? ...And are we going to be the only creeps who don't eventually come around?

Tony Campolo story? (Richard & shower & towels & urinating & suicide)

1. **Stop judging** and condemning homosexual people. Listen *to* and weep *with* people struggling with their orientation. We need to repent for our arrogant judgment because we also fail to follow God's design. We also need to repent for our unwillingness to stand with the outsider, the marginalized, and the oppressed. That's where Jesus would stand. That's where He will be found today.
2. **We need new eyes.** We need to see things differently—from God's perspective. Philip Yancey in his book *What's So Amazing About Grace* quotes Dostoevsky, "*To love a person means to see him as God intended him to be.*"

Earlier in the same chapter (13) Yancey notes what the theologian Helmut Thielicke wrote about Jesus being called a 'friend of sinners': "*Jesus gained the power to love harlots, bullies, and ruffians...he was able to do this only because he saw through the filth and crust of degeneration, because his eyes caught the divine original which is hidden in every way—in every man!...First and foremost he gives us new eyes...*"

3. **Walk in friendship** with people who disagree with the Bible. See the disagreement there and not something personal with you. Dan Cathy is a great example of this.

4. **Seek to share life.** Find places where you can honestly and appropriately share life and common cause with homosexual friends. Raising kids? Chronic illness? Life events like marriage? Standing against vitriolic attacks like the unchristian Westboro Baptist cult.
5. **Lead with weakness.** I first heard this a few weeks ago from a Hope Chapel participant. Thanks. We are ‘broken healers’—not judges. Confess that the Bible’s ethic for human sexuality is very high and that you have failed to walk in it. That’s why you follow Jesus—because he has made a way back to a holy God for you.

Conclusion:

My hope and prayer:

That God would raise up among us here at Hope Chapel many who would open their arms and hearts to walk with gay and lesbian folk seeking a different way.

I believe that every broken heart that yearns to be free can, in fact, be set free. I think this is Jesus’ promise, the in-breaking of God’s kingdom into our lives.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19, ESV)