

**General Topics :: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin****Gay Doesn't Equal Sin - posted by BenBrockway, on: 2006/11/27 19:41**

So, I was looking up Revival links on iTunes and came across this title, and it being Jay Bakker's church, I thought it was a sarcastic title, but I was wrong. Personally I am horrified by the disgusting filth, but does anyone else want to take a list en and share their reaction on it?

How we need a revival!

link: <http://www.revolutionnyc.com/media.htm>

Ben :-o :-(- :-?

Re: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/11/27 21:21

"But be ye **doers** of the word, and not hearers only **decieving** your own selves." - James 1:22

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that **work** iniquity." - Matthew 7:23

Re: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin - posted by enid, on: 2006/11/28 7:23

Listened to it. I have comments to make, not in favour of it, but I'll try not to sound biased, such as the speaker of the message was.

1 Tim 4v1-3, 'Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

verse 2, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

vers 3, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

It was sad to listen to. It was obvious that satan so has these people deceived that truth has to be twisted to make them feel good about themselves.

To also make themselves feel good, they have to condemn those who don't agree with them.

As for the sermon, the 'theology' in it had holes the size of cannon balls.

Hebrews 4v13, 'And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Sadly, they are headed for hell, unless God Himself reaches these people. How He will do it, only He knows, but the time is short.

That's it, for now!

God bless.

Re:, on: 2006/11/28 7:43

When the Word of God specifically calls something sin, who are we to say it isn't so? Do we dare call God a liar? That's not something that I want to be held accountable for before the Judgement Seat...

Krispy

Re: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin - posted by enid, on: 2006/11/28 7:54

As an aside, did he say something in the message about he's glad he's got his beer with him, but he hopes the people won't notice?

Did I hear wrong, or not?

Strong delusion.

God bless.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/11/28 7:57

I read through the 'Idea' of Revolution (the site hosting this clip). It reads:

"To show all people the unconditional love and grace of Jesus without any reservations because of their lifestyle or religious background, past or future. This love has no agenda behind it (1 Cor. 13:5). This grace sets no timeline on personal change or standards for spiritual growth (Romans 4:4-5). The idea is to be a part of people's lives because we truly care for them rather than to fulfill a religious duty; to walk with them through all their struggles as a part of their life, not as a religious outsider.

This is evidently Jim Bakkar's son whom I understand started out in 'ministry' in Phoenix at a very well known church that in no way would hold these views. My pastor was in attendance at the meeting when this young man gave his testimony and he was reunited with his father Jim. It is a very moving thing to watch or listen to. However, there has been some further collateral damage from all of the goings on back then.

It is important that we find a way to confront some of the misguided folk who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. I have heard ministries that are dedicated to reaching the youth that absolutely believe in no repentance, no sin preaching and 15 second sinners prayers. They believe they are doing God a service.

Generally, I don't like saying it, but it seems that the ministries directed at youth seem to 'get by' with just about anything doctrinally or morally. And I'm a youth pastor. The older folk seem to just want to thank God they are doing something for God- so DON'T discourage them! Let them minister with blatant sin in their life and maybe- just maybe they'll repent. But whatever you do- don't run them off. I have seen youth destroyed almost beyond hope of recovery. Their consciences are all but seared from standing as a priest to do the work of God with every intention of going back out to a life of fornication or some other blatant sin. Their minds end up in a confusion you won't believe.

And while we're on the subject we ought not be surprised when we look for the most RADICAL looking folk on earth to minister to, that when they do 'get saved' what they will sometimes bring to the table. I have heard preachers from these radical; street backgrounds that would CUSS a blue streak and preach Sunday Morning. I have witnessed this in the streets and have been a victim of their volatile and unpredictable behavior. I don't care how radically in sin a person is- they still need to be born again in a way that yields a Christ like life. I'm not impressed because some guy who has been to prison for 50 years is totting a bible- I want to see evidence of such a radical change that their life gets in step with God's word and they stop using 'excuses' that to do so would be to side with the 'religious' folk or to become pharisees. That is a cut-out. God can save a person from the lowest gutter- but that's what He does- He saves them.

We renounce who we used to be- we don't take it on as a means of ministry. That is taking Jesus' name onto whatever your pleasure. I want to be who I am and I want to 'add' Jesus to it? That is what we're talking about here. I can come to Jesus and be a Christian _____ (You fill in the blank). And in my experience it does NOT last. They are trying to hang on to what they were rather than DYING to what they were.

Re: - posted by preacherafla (), on: 2006/11/28 8:21

Col. 3:17

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

When God says something is sin we cannot do that very thing in the name of Jesus. This needs to be the key in all we do and say. So it better be done and said in Christ's perfect love.

In His service,
Preacheraflame

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/11/28 8:48

Quote:
-----When God says something is sin we cannot do that very thing in the name of Jesus. This needs to be the key in all we do and say.
So it better be done and said in Christ's perfect love.

This is a great point also. It is amazing to me as I read the New Testament how many *facets* there is to the expression of Christ's love. Sometimes that love was expressed with the most tender care as with the woman at the well or the woman taken in adultery and other times that love was ablaze in referring to the leaders of the times as vipers and hypocrites. I think the challenge in our times is not to call the women at the well a viper nor to treat the religious leaders who warrant a rebuke as the woman taken in adultery.

There was a man I came into contact with last week that was mocking our outreach ministry to the homeless as if he were demon possessed. I had taken all I could and turned to the man and rebuked the devil that was undoubtedly working in him. He suddenly came to his right mind and spoke a few more bizarre things. The Spirit of the Lord came upon me and I began to preach righteousness and judgment to come to this man. He then threatened to choke me to death and folk around we in fear he would. But, out of character for me as it was, I took a strong stand in love and the man's countenance changed. I gave him a bible and shook his hand. I found out later he had conspired to start a knife fight in our outreach in August and other things. The thing that stunned me is that a gal asked him as he was leaving WHY he took the bible. He said it was because it was the first time a Christian really challenged him and did not come off as goody goody (para). He could not receive love as I am used to giving it (hug, pat on back, God bless you, etc.). He needed challenged.

This week a gal came as we were loading up and was asked if she knew Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Lord came on her and she was utterly broken with little preaching. All soft spoken and in love. We prayed with her and she turned to Christ. Now, what is it? Was the one wrong and the other right? No. We have to be sensitive to God and allow the Lord to deal with us one by one and one person at a time. No cookie cutter methods. Sometimes things are said in love that are not all that lovely *sounding*. It is the 'spirit' behind what is said not the volume or tone or anything else. You can cut a person to the quick with a bad spirit and never raise your voice. And you can engage in a strong conversation with a person in utter seriousness that is in the right spirit and a person be changed. the question is, "what Spirit are we of?"

Re: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin, on: 2006/11/28 10:46

RobertW said

Quote:
-----Their minds end up in a confusion you won't believe.

Oh! Yes I do. It's mean. That's because it's Isaiah 5:20 - 23 in action, as much as bowing down to idols (Lev 18) in action.

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Re: - posted by GaryE (), on: 2006/11/28 11:32

{quote} Robert

Was the one wrong and the other right? No. We have to be sensitive to God and allow the Lord to deal with us one by one and one person at a time. No cookie cutter methods.

.....

Jud 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

Jud 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Jud 1:22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

Jud 1:23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

.....

I've always taken the last two verses to mean that there are people who are won over only by love and there are people who are won over by only hearing of their sin condition and destiny if they persist in that condition. A method that would work for the one wouldn't work for the other.

Re:, on: 2006/11/28 12:01

It amazes me how the modern Church deals with the sin of homosexuality.

God never has anything nice to say about homosexuality or homosexuals in the entire bible.

In Genesis He destroyed two entire cities full of Sodomites. (some preachers are ready to apologize for God's behavior)

In Leviticus He calls it an abomination. (Calling it gross is one of the last things a preacher might say.)

In Romans He calls it vile, unseemingly, inconvenient, unnatural, filthy. (this is too harsh of language for some congregations).

And 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says homosexuals and sodomites will not inherit the kingdom of God. (but some prefer the term "gay" and say that they certainly won't end up burning in hell)

We will never get anyone saved, if we tell people that they are already saved.

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2006/11/28 12:11

Quote:
-----I've always taken the last two verses to mean that there are people who are won over only by love and there are people who are won over by only hearing of their sin condition and destiny if they persist in that condition. A method that would work for the one wouldn't work for the other.

That's an excellent passage to cite Gary (Jude 22, 23). I am also finding this more and more.

Re:, on: 2006/11/28 12:26

Quote:
-----I`ve always taken the last two verses to mean that there are people who are won over only by love and there are people who are won over by only hearing of their sin condition and destiny if they persist in that condition. A method that would work for the one wouldn`t work for the other.

It's true. Back when I used to fight and sell drugs, I had local Christians who would "befriend" me and would "love" on me, and never once did it ever challenge me to change my life.

It was only when a hell-fire preacher came into the jail that I was in, and laid out our sin and told us we were heading for hell, that I finally was convicted by the Holy Ghost, became disgusted with sin, and fell in love with Jesus.

Re: - posted by BenBrockway, on: 2006/11/28 15:05

The responses have been excellent and insightful. It befuddles me sometimes as to how a preacher can drink beer at the pulpit, speak a gross misinterpretation of Scripture and not be convicted of these acts. Talk about a Shepherd feeding his sheep the wrong food while leading them down a path towards destruction and hell rather than towards Life and Christ...! It makes my stomach turn!

Re: - posted by GaryE (), on: 2006/11/28 22:22

{quote}
It was only when a hell-fire preacher came into the jail that I was in, and laid out our sin and told us we were heading for hell, that I finally was convicted by the Holy Ghost, became disgusted with sin, and fell in love with Jesus.

This reminds me of a man that came in the chapel a while back. He told me about a man that had lived a terrible life in his youth then later on became a pastor. He said one day he asked this now pastor about this and what had happened. The pastor said he heard about hell and he didn`t want any part of it.

The odd thing is that some really hard people are never won over by hell fire preaching. For some it is only the demonstration of love that will make a difference. The demonstration of love was what set me up. I was around people who loved on me even though it was obvious that I wasn`t living a Christian life.

On my special day I heard about hell. I had no doubts that it is a real place, but I knew I could do nothing about my sin condition. Up to that point I had tried to free myself of different sins but couldn`t stay free. The simple message of what Jesus has done to take away sin and set me free was given. For some reason I had never heard the words {born again} up to that time. What I heard was that the Lord wanted to do this {new birth} in my life and he wanted to set me free. There would be an all new beginning and the Lord would give me victory. Some of the Christians who had loved on me were the ones who invited me to this meeting.

Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2006/11/29 23:43

Robert,

As I read your post I get the feeling the older people share some of the blame for the sin that is allowed in churches among its youth....what would happen if the church would again require its members to make public confessions of sins that hurt others?

Quote:
-----Let them minister with blatant sin in their life and maybe- just maybe they'll repent. But whatever you do- don't run them off. I have seen youth destroyed almost beyond hope of recovery.

It puzzles me how older people can be so blind unless it is because they have unconfessed/unrepented sin in their own lives they do not want to face up to...what say, Robert?

ginnyrose

Re: - posted by IRONMAN (), on: 2006/12/3 12:56

bro Jesse

Quote:

-----It amazes me how the modern Church deals with the sin of homosexuality.

it amazes me too, we are tolerant of it and afraid to speak against it. it seems to me however we are even more tolerant of adultery, porn, fornication all of which have done more damage to the Church and the lives of those in the Church since those are by far much more prevalent sins. The homosexual is also aware that these things are wrong yet when they see us paying a blind eye to them, they have no incentive nor desire to repent because they see hypocrisy. We need to tackle both issues.

Quote:

-----God never has anything nice to say about homosexuality or homosexuals in the entire bible.

AMEN, indeed our Lord has not spoken well of fornicators, adulterers, liars, thieves etc.

Quote:

-----In Genesis He destroyed two entire cities full of Sodomites. (some preachers are ready to apologize for God's behavior)

actually bro Jesse, the other sins of Sodom and Gomorrah which warranted their destruction are mentioned in Exekiel 16

49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

Indeed homosexuality was something which sodom was guilty of but God was going to wipe them out anyway because they were prideful, gluttonous, lazy etc. of all the things which our Lord got angry with Israel about, idolatry and pride seem to come first, social injustices, then laziness. Those seem to be the things which get God the most and i think the sexual sins come forth as a result of all that. i suppose we assume homosexuality was the prevalent sin and the reason for the destruction of those 2 cities since it is the only one mentioned by name. sure it is one of them but let us not neglect the others.

Quote:

-----And 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says homosexuals and sodomites will not inherit the kingdom of God. (but some prefer the term "gay" and say that they certainly won't end up burning in hell)

the first sexual sin mentioned in that list is "fornicator", then "idolater" then "adulterer" perhaps Paul was aware that those sins were more prevalent in the Church than homosexuality. Not to excuse this sin but is the same not true today? i believe sometimes we focus a lot on homosexuality to keep us from dealing with our own adulteries and fornications to our detriment and the homosexual's detriment because they see our hypocrisy and last i checked, hypocrisy is something I

Israel was always accused and guilty of and punished for along with idolatry. those are things we are very guilty of and lest we repent, we will likewise perish.

God help us!

you know i used to think that the homosexual were lying when they said they were born that way. they are right you, perhaps they have the wrong perspective. nonetheless it ties into how we are all born with a sin nature and have propensity to sin and commit sins, which is what i mean when i say they were born with it, in the same way we were born with the propensity to sin and do so just as they do and we also need to repent.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/12/3 17:36

Quote:
-----...they were prideful, gluttonous, lazy etc. of all the things which our Lord got angry with Israel about, idolatry and pride seem to come first, social injustices, then laziness. Those seem to be the things which get God the most and i think the sexual sins come forth as a result of all that.

I would tend to agree with this progression and relationship. Idle and bored people are soon sensually indulgent people. If people allow themselves to become more wantonly piggish, sexuality is only one unabated appetite that is unleashed... gluttony, greed, jealousy, ambition, and other revelries begin to surface.

Base corruptions, such as sexual perversion, but also overeating, material greed, and laziness, accompany each other because at their core they are all the same selfish aphrodisia.

MC

Re: - posted by myfirstLove (), on: 2006/12/3 20:39

GaryE, i have the same testimony. i knew i was filled with evil, a drug addict whore. i needed to hear hope. i was desperate for a message of hope from anybody. no one gave me that message until i was lead by a friend to visit this small fellowship. the pastor preached a simple message of the cross, and how Jesus came to set us free from sin. i was raised hindu/bhuddist, and always knew since i was a little child that there was only one God, and knew that the living God was not made of stone. when i heard the simple gospel, it blew my mind! i was in awe that Jesus died for me so that i may have life! it broke me to tears that someone love me so much that He gave His life away so i may have life. i got down on my knees and cried out to God in the mist of all. i didn't care that i look like a fool. i wanted Jesus to be my God, and cried out to Him. right after that, i was so filled with His love and peace that consume me, and after that i never looked back!!!

its very important to be lead by the Spirit. i believe in preaching about hell and sin, but not all need to hear that message. i was one. i knew i was full of sin, and was going to hell. i needed to hear a message of hope.

Re: - posted by adamdawkins, on: 2006/12/4 10:24

It's interesting, I was thinking of posting on this very topic today.

I've noticed something in the evangelical church that we have to be careful of - that in standing up against the world's view on this (which I am wholeheartedly behind doing) that we don't let the enemy get in by us driving away people with same-sex attraction. I have known a couple of devoutly committed (one even married) Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction and yet deny the flesh every day and take up their cross and follow Christ.

The problem is that in speaking out against homosexuality without a combined explanation of the love of God we drive people with homosexual attraction who need the love of Christ away from Him - the only true solution.

I understand the frustration with the World and especially with false teaching on this issue in the Church but it is vital that homosexual people don't become the modern-day leper in the evangelical church, which I fear is what they have become.

Let us please not let the enemy push us too far in rubber-stamping what is sometimes homophobia with the Bible.

Homosexual actions are sin, detestable to God, but the cross provides the solution.

Adam.

Re: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin, on: 2006/12/6 7:23

adam said

Quote:

-----but the cross provides the solution.

I would like to temper this statement.

The cross provides the solution to the nature of sin (mentioned in previous posts) and to the sins committed.

It may also be a way of thinking which some who used to practise homosexual acts, can embrace.

Overall, though, it may be helpful to think of *living free from sin*, as a matter of *being willing to live in God*, and to cling to one's freedom from sin as an ongoing and growing territory one is reclaiming for oneself. There is healing here.

This *is* the application of the cross.

I suppose I feel that some people refer to the cross as a solution to the persistent desires in the flesh towards sin, in a way which suggests sin has not really been dealt with..... that every day, the believer wakes up, they are facing the same magnitude of temptation as they were before they were saved.

While it may *feel* like that, I don't believe it's true, and it is helpful - very helpful - for a believer to **believe** that the axe has been laid to the root of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, (sin) and they are **already living in the power of the tree of life**.

Re: - posted by adamdawkins, on: 2006/12/6 16:43

Dorcas,

I totally agree - thank you for clearing that up. I actually know a Godly man in a marriage of over 25 years that every day has to put on the willingness to live in God in this specific area.

If we accept Christ's cross without turning and carrying our own, we have missed the whole point.

Thank you for your reply, it was necessary.

Adam.

Re:, on: 2006/12/6 17:13

MC wrote:

"I would tend to agree with this progression and relationship. Idle and bored people are soon sensually indulgent people. If people allow themselves to become more wantonly piggish, sexuality is only one unabated appetite that is unleashed.. .gluttony, greed, jealousy, ambition, and other revelries begin to surface.

Base corruptions, such as sexual perversion, but also overeating, material greed, and laziness, accompany each other because at their core they are all the same selfish aphrodisia. "

Compton, I would tend to agree, as long as you don't include chocolate or coffee :)

General Topics :: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin

but seriously, i have great difficulty condemning people of sexual sins who in many cases are acting upon completely natural, human motivations and feelings. They tell us that "God made us this way." Moreover Jesus tells us that those without sin should cast the first stones. get me to the back of the line here. sometimes it is best to convey the unconditional love of Jesus and let the conviction of sin come on its own to each believer through the Holy Ghost.

Bub

PS. I've been absent and hope to be more regular again. glad to see so many familiar voices engaging God's love

bubbaguy

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/12/6 19:51

Bubbaguy!

A blast from the past :-P

Quote:
-----Compton, I would tend to agree, as long as you don't include chocolate or coffee :)

Well of course...that goes without saying. I would also exclude McDonald's french fries, and freshly baked donuts with a glass of whole milk.

Quote:
-----i have great difficulty condemning people of sexual sins who in many cases are acting upon completely natural, human motivations and feelings.

I'm afraid I would be completely predictable in my response to this one. Natural" is hardly a virtue when it comes to the heart of man. Furthermore, I think we can agree that something that was unnatural to a person can be learned to be viewed as natural. However, I think you noticed that I was careful to not show prejudice for one type of sexual perversion over another...

Quote:
----- Jesus tells us that those without sin should cast the first stones. get me to the back of the line here.

Definitely. Yet there is a difference between condemning a person in particular and maintaining in general that some acts or behaviors or attitudes are still sins. When Jesus challenged those men who were standing over that woman, He wasn't challenging their understanding of the sin...only their position in judging the woman. Adultery was still a sin.

Quote:
-----sometimes it is best to convey the unconditional love of Jesus and let the conviction of sin come on its own to each believer through the Holy Ghost.

I feel you on this...and I would hope to represent the hope and love of Jesus who is the likeness of God...and not just my own hurtful preferences. (I lack in many areas here.)

Recently our little daughter told us, while at a friends house overnight, that the father walked through the house in nothing but a towel. (Briefly I'm sure.) Well, we kindly but firmly addressed the situation, and let them know that our daughter won't be spending the night over there anymore. (We did keep the door open for their little girl to spend time at our house.

)

The mother was surprised, and hurt,...she cried in our living room. It was very regrettable and makes me sad even mentioning it. Yet for the sake of our little girl we had to pass a judgement...yea even legislate a new law: adults will dress properly in front of my children.

My point is risking this sensitive story is to convey that my love...which I hope is growing in the love of God, doesn't like to see my children influenced by careless or indifferent sin. In fact my love hates it.

I'm not taking the point any further than that...just offered it for what it was; another day as an imperfect dad trying to show love to his family, though not everyone will understand my judgements on how to do this. These are choppy waters we find ourselves in.

Good to see you back Bubbaguy...

MC

Re: Gay Doesn't Equal Sin - posted by freedbyjc (), on: 2006/12/7 9:01

The truth and nothing but the Truth of the person and the Word of Christ shall free us from the chains of bondage that our sins have forged for us....

Opening the Closed American Mind

In a relativistic culture hostile toward notions of unchanging, ultimate truth, the gospel can be an offense.
By Ed Dobson

The audience at our Saturday night outreach service is one-third unchurched individuals, one-third church dropouts, and one-third church adherents, so the majority come from a secular viewpoint. At the end of the service, I respond to their written questions; I have no idea beforehand what they will be. Questions range from predestination to masturbation, from abortion to suicide, and my answers aren't always what people want to hear.

One evening someone wrote, "I'm gay, and I've always been gay. Is that okay?"

"What you're really asking," I responded, "is 'What does the Bible say about human sexuality?' The Bible teaches that sexuality is a gift from God to be experienced within the commitment of heterosexual marriage. My understanding of the Bible is that all expressions of our sexuality outside of those boundaries are not within God's creative intent.

"Are you asking me if it's okay to have homosexual feelings? Yes, it is. But Scripture does not permit you to follow through with those feelings as a legitimate expression of sexuality. If you try to ignore that fact, there are consequences, one of which is displeasing God."

Answers like that can irritate people who don't accept an absolute standard of truth. One man said to me, "I really like Saturday night, but when you answer those questions, I wish you would quit referring to the Bible and tell me what you really think."

I congratulated the man on being so perceptive. The point of our seeker-sensitive service is not to tell people what I think but to help connect them with biblical truth. In a culture committed to relativism, hostile toward notions of unchanging, ultimate truth, the gospel can be an offense, no matter how positive my presentation. Sometimes that can't be avoided.

But sometimes it can. I've found that I can gain a hearing for the truth of the gospel, even in a relativistic culture. As I've conducted seeker-sensitive services and befriended non-Christians, I've gathered several principles for reaching skeptics with the truth.

Explain Why

The spirit of individualism, rather than community, dominates our culture, giving relativism a strong appeal. "You believe what you want, and I'll believe what I want" is the spirit of the times.

If a couple on Donahue says, "We've been married 60 years, and we're still happy," the audience applauds. But if they say, "We believe everyone should remain married for a lifetime," they'll get booed off the set.

Pervasive individualism has a positive side. People want what enhances their lifestyles, so I can reach them if I demonstrate that the values I teach are truths beneficial to anyone. I must show the modern skeptic the practical wisdom of biblical principles, particularly those principles that appear rigid or intolerant.

Appeal to Curiosity About the Bible

While many secular people reject the notion of absolute values, they are curious to know what the Bible says. And if they have come to church, I assume they have at least some interest in biblical teachings or they wouldn't be there in the first place.

When answering the questions of seekers and skeptics, I nearly always preface my remarks with, "If you're asking me what the Bible says, here is the answer." If I dodge and weave around the Bible, my audience won't respect me.

Sometimes I must frankly say, "I may not like the Bible's answer, you may not like it, but this is what it says."

One Saturday evening a questioner wrote, "I'm a Christian. My brother was not a believer when he committed suicide. I still believe he'll be in heaven. What do you think?"

"What you're asking is whether the Bible gives several options on how to get to heaven," I responded. "I have to be honest with you. Scripture says Christ is the only way to heaven, and there are no other options. You are probably thinking, So what does that mean for my brother? Since you are a Christian, you undoubtedly had some influence on him; perhaps before he made this horrible choice he did turn and commit his life to Christ."

I would have loved to assure him that his brother was waiting for him in heaven, but I couldn't. I concluded, "If you're asking whether people can go to heaven without accepting Christ, no, they cannot. I'd like to tell you it doesn't matter, but if I did, I would be dishonest about the Bible." People respect that level of integrity.

Sometimes people are surprised by what the Scriptures say. People often ask me, "Will I go to heaven if I'm gay?"

"Whether you're gay or not has nothing to do with whether you will go to heaven," I say. "The relevant issue is the nature of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Have you placed your faith in him as your Savior? That's the sole criteria by which God will judge every human being."

I try to satisfy natural curiosity about the Bible in two ways. I preach verse by verse on Sunday mornings, and on Saturday nights I use the Bible to answer topical questions. By going through a book one verse at a time, I'm eventually going to bump into the issue that concerns an individual. The questions on Saturday night force me to deal with listeners' urgent concerns.

Know Your Essentials

We gain a hearing with a secular audience when we don't confuse essentials with nonessentials.

One summer night, we held our Saturday service downtown, outdoors. We had just started when a ruckus broke out at the back of the crowd. It turned out to be a group of angry Christians staging a protest; they hoisted signs proclaiming that Christian rock music was of the devil. They became so disruptive that police patrolling the event arrested them.

Meanwhile 80 punk rockers, attracted by the music in our service, were sitting on a wall nearby, listening to my message.

No doubt the protesters were sincere in their beliefs about rock music, but they failed to see their preferences about music were not on the same level of truth as biblical absolutes. (No one has yet shown me where Scripture explicitly condemns rock music.) I believe that will prevent them from effectively reaching unbelievers.

This not only affects how we go about evangelizing but what and how we preach and teach. When preaching or answering questions on Saturday night, I periodically make a distinction: What someone believes about Christ and the nature of salvation is far more important than what he or she believes, let's say, about women's ordination. I lose respect with outsiders if I treat both topics with the same level of authority.

Actually, I try to distinguish between three types of truth: absolutes are truths essential to the faith, truths that never change; convictions are beliefs about which orthodox Christians may differ; preferences are traditions or customs, like musical tastes, that may be compatible with the Bible but aren't biblically based, and they may change with the culture and over time.

Naturally, sometimes people will differ about which category a subject belongs to, but most issues seem to fall into one or another.

Don't Skip the Tough Topics

I was flying back from California one day, sitting in an aisle seat across from some businessmen. One of them happened to notice I was reading my Greek New Testament and asked, "What language is that?"

"Greek," I replied.

"What kind of Greek?"

"New Testament Greek."

"That's amazing," he said. "I studied Greek when I attended a religious college in the Midwest. Why are you studying it?"

"I'm preparing for my sermon on Sunday."

"Really? What are you speaking on?"

I paused at that point. I looked at his buddies sitting next to him who were half-listening to our conversation. Did I really want to break the news to him in front of all his friends? But I knew I had to be honest with him.

"Well, Sunday morning my subject is hell," I said.

That was the end of the conversation for the rest of the flight.

When you're trying to gain a hearing from a secular audience, it's tempting to water down demanding Scriptures or avoid them altogether. We're afraid people will tune out the sermon.

But I've discovered that's a mistake. Just when I think I know what the culture wants to hear and what it doesn't, I'm surprised all over again. Our most popular Saturday night series was, "What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?" By any measure—attendance, audience response, or follow-up—it was the most successful four evenings in our Saturday history. Until then, I had dealt with subjects such as depression, bitterness, and forgiving your parents. The last thing I expected was an overwhelming response to such a simple, straightforward topic.

I learned a valuable lesson: I don't need to trade away forthright, biblical messages for something faddish or trendy. People have a basic spiritual hunger that only faithful biblical preaching can satisfy.

I've found that I can preach even about the most sticky subject, as long as I balance it with good news. We did a two-part Saturday night series, one on heaven and the other on hell.

We introduced the subject of the afterlife by relating near-death experiences from popular literature. I wasn't prepared to say these experiences were real, but I pointed out they often paralleled the biblical teachings on death and the afterlife. The evening on heaven was well received.

But the next week, I said, "What I didn't tell you last week was there are other near-death experiences described in the literature that are not so pleasant. In fact, it's incredible how much these experiences parallel what the Scriptures say about hell."

I could tell people were uncomfortable in that second session, but they listened intently.

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Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2006/12/7 10:27

Quote:
-----They tell us that "God made us this way."

Plainly said, if they think they were born that way they need to be born again.

Re: bubbawho? - posted by IRONMAN (), on: 2006/12/7 12:35

bro Bub
welcome back bro.

Quote:
-----but seriously, i have great difficulty condemning people of sexual sins who in many cases are acting upon completely natural, human motivations and feelings. They tell us that "God made us this way." Moreover Jesus tells us that those without sin should cast the first stones. get me to the back of the line here. sometimes it is best to convey the unconditional love of Jesus and let the conviction of sin come on its own to each believer through the Holy Ghost.

bro, i agree with you to some degree about people acting on their natural desires as it pertains to sexuality. i would not say God made them/us that way but we became that way as a result of the fall of man. We have become depraved. Sigmund Freud i once thought was full of it. He had issues but one thing he said was that we are driven by these base urges, and we need to clamp down on them. he is right. we are depraved and hence we act crazy sometimes. the homosexual is in a sense born that way inasmuch as he/she is born depraved and thus predisposed to sin. the same goes for all of us and the propensity to sin which we all have. we were born that way, not made that way and like Preach P said we need to be born again. i'm not throwing stones here but simply saying that we need to also remember we ourselves have our own issues and sins to deal with also.

also some people need to get confronted with their sin in a John the baptist or Jesse Morrell sort of way and others don't need to be compelled as much like Zaccheus or nicodemus. either way the Love of our Lord is shown forth.

Re: - posted by adamdawkins, on: 2006/12/7 12:39

Quote:
-----Plainly said, if they think they were born that way they need to be born again.

I also heard it said that "Mother nature is just your sister in a fallen world" - I like that.

If anyone's interested, "Will He be the Lord over our sexuality" is a sermon by Sy Rogers on iTunes, you can find it under "Lighthouse Teaching Podcast".

Re:, on: 2006/12/7 13:50

compton, ironman, and all

thanks for your comments. one problem i have with this issue is that homosexuality occurs throughout the animal kingdom. it is somehow instinctual or genetic for some percentage.

why? who knows. should it be encouraged? certainly not. but i know God don't make no junk, and some people are being made this way.

bub

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2006/12/7 16:02

Hi Bubbaguy,

Quote:

-----homosexuality occurs throughout the animal kingdom

True, but then again animals are also engaging in infanticide and even cannibalism of their young. The animal kingdom is not an acceptable benchmark for morality even by humanist standards.

MC

Re: - posted by strngrmon (), on: 2006/12/7 16:23

hi. first poster here. I came to this site because someone recommended some Paul Walker audio. I registered to post because I wanted to respond to Lazarus1719's comment but then found that Ironman already had addressed my concerns for the most part and did so very well. So, im just voicing my agreement with him. :)

I know this has all been said before and more eloquently by others, but it makes me sad to hear any who love and worship Jesus demonize homosexuals as if they were some kind of "worst" sinner. I want to hear "abomination" from the lips of those same Christians about dishonesty, lies, sowing discord, arrogance, greed, oppressing the poor, and even eating lobster (if you want to strictly apply the law of Moses.) All those things and more Scripture calls abomination.

Thank you Ironman from bringing up that Ezekiel 16 passage. Its surprising how many proclaim God destroyed Sodom because of homosexuality and ignore or are ignorant of the very plain direct explanation of Ezekiel 16 which incriminates much of the American church as much or more than it does the homosexual for our abominable ways. God help us all.. I cant agree more.

If there were such thing as a "worst" sinner it would be someone who is unrepentant, and granted, there are many homosexuals who are unrepentant, but the same could be said for many many church-goers. I would be so bold to suggest the church is partly responsible for the militancy of the homosexual camp. We have treated homosexuals as abominations and attacked them with such ferocity that I believe that many backed into a polarizing stance defending their desires, rather than feeling the invitation to grapple with them and turn to Jesus or His church for answers. We have not extended to them the grace we are so indebted to Jesus for, the gracious hospitality that offers them room at the cross with us, to fight, to struggle, to nail our ugly desires to the cross, and receive the dispensation of new desire. I know more than a few homosexuals who are honestly struggling with their sexual desires and who want to embrace the truth at any cost.

What I find most amazing is that they want it so bad they are even willing to humble themselves to actually listen to Christians who spew judgement and condemnation. That is almost proof in itself of the Holy Spirit's power to call and convict.

What a different place the American church would be if we were filled with the kind of desperate humility where we would actually listen to those who say hateful things about us.