

DHBC Summer Core Class:
The Christian Response to Homosexuals
“Someone I know is gay – how should I respond?”

John 1:14; John 8:1-11

~ Delivered at DHBC on September 27, 2009 (Soli Deo Gloria)

INTRODUCTION

- Adrian’s¹ voice on the other end of the phone trembled slightly in apprehension of how I would respond to his statement. I paused for a moment letting the words he had just said sink in and then responded.
- I met Adrian at a conference centre that offers awakening seminars where people go deep into meditation, receive spirit guides, and study the writings a woman who claimed to receive revelations from God and put them into a book called *A Course in Miracles*.
 - During the summer we began to develop a friendship with Adrian. We talked around the pool of the conference centre. He shared about the pain of his recent divorce and his two girls showed Heather the 6 foot tall dollhouse they loved to play in.
- One thing that Adrian was always interested in talking about was spiritual things. He would share passionately about his experience with Native American spiritualism and was very excited about the day when he was deep in meditation and a man dressed in white came to him telling him that he was going to be his spirit guide. The man in white said his name was Jesus.
- Heather and I decided to invite him over for supper one evening. It was that day that he phoned me in my office. As I leaned back into my chair he said,
 - ***“Barton, I really appreciate the fact that you have invited me over to your house but as a Christian you may want to reconsider when you hear what I am about to tell you”***. He said, ***“As I have been going through these awakening courses it has become clear to me that I am attracted to men. Barton, I am a homosexual. I thought you should know that before you had me into your house”***
- How would you respond in that situation? I know that many of you face similar situations:
 - You may be invited to the wedding of your two lesbian friends.
 - At work you wonder how to talk with your colleague who is unashamedly homosexual and likes to talk about their partner.
 - At UBC you are given an exercise to promote homosexual relationships in the elementary school classroom.
 - How do you respond? How do we respond culturally? What should be our response?
- I want to give you an umbrella response which will cover all situations. I am going to call it ‘the jesus principle.’ I will break my message into three parts. First we will see the jesus principle explained in Jesus. Second, we will see it illustrated by Jesus and third, we will apply it to ourselves.

¹ Name changed.

THE JESUS PRINCIPLE EXPLAINED

- This is that familiar passage that teaches that the God became a man. That Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. However, that is not going to be our focus this morning. What I want you to see here is the “5 word description” that sums up how Jesus lived his life.
- **READ 1:14** - Jesus Christ was the full of grace and truth. He was not 50% of each but 100% of each.
- The word “**grace.**”
 - Greek word for grace is the equivalent to the Hebrew word for “loving kindness”. In the OT loving kindness signifies “good will”, “kindness” and “undeserved favour”. So Jesus life can be summed up first of all by saying that he was filled with love, kindness, and goodwill even to those who never deserved it. But it was not just love it was also truth.
- The word “**truth.**”
 - John uses this word 25 times in his gospel and 20 times in his other epistles. We usually think of truth as the opposite of falsehood but here truth is much larger than that. When Jesus said, “I am the truth” in John 14:6 he was making a claim that he is the ultimate reality, that only in him is revelation of all that is true. Jesus is the divine revelation of truth.
- Jesus was the perfect balance of both grace and truth. Love and truth were never at odds in his life, they were allies. Grace and truth were as inseparable as the links a mighty chain. In his life they mixed together more perfectly than pouring a glass of water into another glass of water.
 - Never was love emphasized at the expense of truth and never was truth spoken that was devoid of love.
- How should Christians respond? The Christian response to homosexuality must be full of grace and truth.
 - So now let’s watch the Master live this out for us in one story:

THE JESUS PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATED

- As you come to this passage you will notice that in almost all Bibles there is something written above it. It says, “*The earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11*”. It is true that this was probably not a part of John’s original gospel but as scholar Leon Morris says,
 - “*[even] if we cannot feel that this is part of John’s gospel we can feel that he story is true to the character of Jesus. Throughout the history of the church, it has been held that, whoever wrote it, this little story is authentic...it is thus worth our while to study it, though not as an authentic part of John’s writings.*”²
- So having said that, let’s pick up this fantastic story.
- **READ 2** – Imagine the scene: In the middle of Jesus’ lecture there is a disturbance in the back of the crowd.
 - A group of religious authorities push their way through the crowd and it seems they are pulling someone along with them. As they make their way to the front they bring their trembling prisoner to stand in front of the entire crowd.

² Leon Morris, “The Gospel According to John” NICNT, pg 883.

predisposed toward men.” No, Jesus called a spade a spade and told her to leave her life of sin.

- But secondly notice also that he shows extreme love and compassion to the woman. He never said, ***“You vile woman. You are going to hell for your sin.”*** No he showed her love and transformed her life. What an example to us: when faced with sexual immorality, Jesus neither condones nor condemns. What perfect balance of grace and truth. He never sacrifices one at the cost of the other.
 - So let’s break this down and first talk about grace and then about truth and how they apply to us responding to people who struggle with homosexuality.

THE JESUS PRINCIPLE APPLIED - GRACE

- First, Christians must respond with grace to the person living a homosexual lifestyle. I am sure that many of you followed the story of Matthew Shepherd. On October 6, 1998, two young men named Aaron and Russell entered a bar in Wyoming that was known to cater to homosexuals. The two men left with a 22 year old named Matthew Shepherd.
- They drove to an open field, robbed him, tied him to a fence, beat him to within an inch of his life and left him in the near freezing temperatures.
 - Eighteen hours later, he was found by two passing motorcyclists who thought at first that Shepherd was a scarecrow because of the way he was positioned on the fence. Shepherd was flown via helicopter to a local hospital but succumbed to his injuries a few days later. Both Aaron and Russell were sentenced to back-to-back life imprisonments.
 - The story is awful enough in and of itself but it is the how one particular church responded that really brings out my anger.
- Reverend Fred Phelps is the Pastor of Wesboro Baptist Church in Kansas (no connection whatsoever to us). He organized an anti-gay protest at Shepherd’s funeral. The protestors arrived at the funeral with signs that read, ***“No tears for queers”, “Fag Matt in hell”, and “God hates fags.”***³
 - Sadly the approach of this church is not totally uncommon. Christians have been known to speak demeaningly and harshly towards homosexuals condemning them for their lifestyle. In their zealotry for truth they completely disregarded any need for love...but what a contrast to Jesus.
- The truly scandalous nature of Jesus’ ministry was that he maintained such close contact with the sinners and outcasts of his day. He not only ate with them, he befriended and cared for them. Think of just a few examples beyond the woman caught in adultery:
 - Jesus’ disciples were shocked to find him talking to a Samaritan woman who had had 5 husbands and was now living with another man.
 - He allows a prostitute to anoint his feet with oil and he forgives her sins.
 - Not only does he not hate them, he seeks after them as lost people. In Luke 15 we read of three parables where Jesus is shown as seeking after the sinner – the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.
- As Christians we should be the first ones to vigorously oppose any violence or hatred that is aimed at homosexuals. Not only that but we must seek out relationships with people who live a homosexual lifestyle.

³ <http://www.geocities.com/corkymcg/crime/proj005.html>

- If you tend more on the truth side and this feels uncomfortable to you, one of the biggest things that we must learn as Christians is how to be comfortable being uncomfortable.
 - Think of Jesus. He is the God Almighty, the one who is three times holy, the one whom no sin has ever tainted, who is so holy that even holy angels have to cover themselves from looking upon him. And yet this thrice holy God walked and talked and show love to people whose hearts were black with sin and blasphemed God by their lives.
- How hypocritical it would be for you to shun someone who sins in a homosexual manner when Jesus stooped down to save you from your sins. Just like our Master who was so full of grace, we too must love without condition the person who lives a homosexual lifestyle.

THE JESUS PRINCIPLE APPLIED - TRUTH

- Second, Christians must speak and live the truth. Listen now, Jesus never sacrificed truth on the altar of love. Jesus called a spade a spade and fearlessly called people to leave their lives of sin and follow kingdom values.
 - Many people have this view of Jesus that he just lets people do whatever. He was scathing in his response to the Pharisees. He called people out of their sin.
- Look at all the examples of this in his life and ministry:
 - With the woman at the well, he told her plainly that she was sinning by living with her present boyfriend and called her away from it
 - When Jesus showed love to the paralytic and healed him in John 5 he told him to “stop sinning”.
 - As we saw with the woman caught in adultery, Jesus never forsook the truth in an effort to love. He calls it a sin and commands the woman to change her ways.
 - Jesus entire message can be summed up with his words, **“repent and be baptized.”**
- But as you speak truth people will not always like it. In fact, you can expect that if you share what the scriptures teach concerning homosexuality people will not be impressed with you. But remember it was the same with him who was the perfect balance of grace and truth.
 - In Luke 4 Jesus lovingly spoke the truth of the gospel to the people in Nazareth but the scriptures say, **“All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff”**
 - In the same way if no one is ever offended by your Christianity it is more than likely because you are not speaking and living the truth.
- But someone will say, **“the Bible is so blatant on what it teaches about homosexuality that if I speak about it, no one will ever become a Christian.”**
 - It is actually quite the opposite. The stories that come from those who have given up homosexuality to follow Jesus show that it is the clarity of the biblical truth that has cause them to make the decision.
 - Exodus International ministers to those coming out of the gay lifestyle. They report that, **“Many former homosexuals tell us that there is only**

*one genuine reason that they have been successful: they have abandoned homosexuality in obedience to God's Word.*⁴

WATCH OUT FOR EXTREMES

- So are you seeing the balance here? Do you see how humans are creatures of extremes? By our personalities, temperaments, and backgrounds we always overbalance on one side of grace or truth.
 - We watch the so many of the Anglican and United churches around us forsaking the truth in order to love the homosexual. They never preach that it is a sin that must be forsaken.
 - My dear brothers and sisters, like Jesus we must always emphasize truth. Jesus never went against the scriptures, he never lowered his moral standards, and he did not adopt more liberal positions to accommodate culture. Jesus never confused love with toleration of all behaviours and neither should we.
 - On the other hand we have the hyper conservatives who think that upholding holiness means complete separation from anyone who lives a homosexual lifestyle. They yell and scream that it is wrong but they show no love.
 - We show unconditional love even to those who blatantly defy God. God did this for you, how can you not do it for others. Listen to this quote: ***“What is distinctive about Jesus’ ministry was not that he refused to make judgments about the conduct of others, or even that he lowered his moral standards. On the contrary, in many areas he elevates those standards. What was distinctive was his incredibly generous spirit even toward those who had lived in gross disobedience to God for years. He expended enormous effort and exhibited great compassion in the search for the lost.”***⁵

⁴ Bob Davies, “Portraits of Freedom – 14 people who came out of homosexuality”, pg 17.

⁵ Robert A.J. Gagnon, “*The Bible and Homosexual Practice – Text and Hermeneutics*”, pg 212.