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SHOULD GAY MARRIAGE BE AN ISSUE FOR THE CHURCH?

As you know, a few weeks ago the Supreme Court came down with a landmark decision that opened the door to gay marriage in California. This was another step in the march toward making it the law of the land. This validates what a majority of Americans now feel is right and fair. The latest polls show that by a 55%-40% margin Americans say marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages. A Harvard Law School professor said, "It is the moral message from the court that these unions are entitled to equal respect that is probably the lasting legacy of this decision." The June issue of The Atlantic magazine featured an article titled: "What Straights Can Learn From Same-Sex Couples, Why Gay Marriages Tend to be Happier and More Intimate."

The article pointed out the problems that heterosexual marriages are having in our society: that far more people are living together without marriage, that 58 percent of first-time mothers are unmarried, the big number of divorces, and so forth. A number of Christian denominations have agreed with the Court and with society that times have changed, knowledge of human sexuality has increased, and that the compassionate thing, the moral thing – as the professor said – is for the church to move with the tide.

But the God of the Bible, the One who created man and woman, said, "Do not move the ancient boundaries." I mentioned the God of the Bible, because there are a lot of other gods who disagree. I saw a debate on TV between a pastor and another man. When the pastor said that God had clear prohibitions against homosexuality, the other man said, "Oh, no, you don't! You are not going to claim that God is on your side. My God is a God of love, and he loves homosexuals and feels it is wonderful if they want to marry!"

This makes the issue pretty clear. If the church is going to take a Biblical stand on this issue, we are going to be branded as immoral, unloving, legalistic, and ignorant. Remember that the early church was branded by the people of mighty Rome as being "atheists," (because they did not believe in the Roman gods), and as "haters of mankind." So the Romans burned them at the stake or threw them into the arena with lions. Even now, there are nations such as Canada and Sweden where if you preach that homosexuality is a sin you can be charged with a hate crime and be subject to a prison sentence. That time is surely coming in our country.

Let me state clearly that our God is truly the God of love. He is the God who loves those entrapped in homosexual sin, or heterosexual sin, or any other kind of sin. He loved us when we were still sinners and in rebellion against Him, and He sent His Son to die for our sins and provide a way to escape the bonds of sin so that we can be set free of our addictions and destructive paths. Praise the Lord! But the God who authored the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is clear that as followers of Christ we must turn away from all sin, as He defines sin, and turn to the Savior who can make our lives new.

Let me review what the Bible says about the subject of homosexual behavior:

Genesis 18 & 19 – the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. God told Abraham that because the sin of those cities had become so flagrant he was going to destroy them. When two angels in the form of men were sent to deliver Lot and his family from Sodom, the men of the city tried to have sex with the angels, and God sent fire and brimstone. Note: Chuck Missler writes: "Historically, one of the symptoms of cultural decay is the rise and condoning of homosexuality (e.g. the Roman Empire). We see it here in Sodom and Gomorrah and we see it in other great empires as they decayed and, of course, we see it today. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not homosexuality; it was the open, public condoning of homosexuality. And God dealt with it."

Leviticus 18 lists sexual relations that are forbidden by God: sexual relations with a close relative; with a mother-in-law; with a sister or half-sister; with a granddaughter; with an aunt or uncle; with a daughter-in-law or sister-in-law; with your neighbor's wife; do not practice homosexuality; do not have sex with an animal. (The Bible is graphic and clear lest there be

any misunderstanding, and I have probably ministered to different people who have been guilty of every one of the sins in this list. I recall that in cases where people were involved with bestiality that there were always strong demonic manifestations.)

Romans 1 says that every human being knows there is a holy God because of the creation, and it seems to imply that everyone also has an intuitive knowledge of God. But it says that instead of worshiping the true God, they worshiped idols (they worshiped themselves or money or some object or person or habit that became all-important to them). The text continues: *Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved. Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking...and their lives became full of every kind of wickedness.....Worse yet, they encouraged others to do them, too.* (Ro. 1:26-32)

1 Cor. 6:9-10, NLT, reads: *Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin (the Greek word is porneo, which includes pornography) or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people – none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.*

I don't know how God could be any clearer. Those who continue to willfully practice the sins listed above will not inherit the Kingdom of God....they will not go to heaven. But God graciously adds another verse to the warning above. Verse 11 reads: *Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed, you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* I would remind you that Jesus said that He came to save, not to condemn. And Paul writes in Romans 7 that even he found himself - *doing the very things I hate* - - until God finally brought him deliverance and freedom. My personal experience of 56 years of walking with God, and not walking with God, has been that He has been incredibly kind and patient. Someone has said, "Mercy is not getting the judgment we deserve; and Grace is getting the blessings we don't deserve." God has certainly given me mercy and grace, and mercy and grace, and mercy and grace.

One of the claims made by the supporters of homosexuality is that "They were born like that, they did not choose homosexuality but it chose them. Therefore, they should accept their situation as a gift from God." I agree that in some cases men and women are born with a same-sex orientation. But as made clear by the verses above and by the total lack of any statements to the contrary, their orientation was certainly not chosen by God. A normal heterosexual man is born with a strong orientation toward fornication, but it is not a gift from God, it is an aspect of man's fallenness. It is not something to be celebrated, but something to be overcome. But what if a homosexual becomes a Christian and wants to obey God but cannot seem to overcome his same-sex desires? He is to do exactly the same as an unmarried heterosexual, he is to live a celibate life. Paul writes forcefully to the Corinthians, and to us: *Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* (1 Cor. 6:13)

Do homosexuals deserve to be treated with respect? Of course, with respect, kindness, and love. And if the government chooses to provide "civil unions" for them, that is within the authority of government. But the church cannot bless such unions as "marriages," as that would not be loving or Scriptural. If someone claims that their God approves of the homosexual lifestyle and says it is OK to marry, then that is obviously a god they made up in their minds. That is not the God before whom we will all stand in judgment on that Day.

I believe that homosexuality is a "bad fruit," and that bad fruits invariably spring from "bad roots." So what are the possible bad roots that prepare the ground in a person for the bad fruit of homosexuality? Following are some bad roots that I have learned about in the course of ministering for many years to men and women struggling with homosexuality. (And let me add that many people have had homosexual impulses or dreams that scared them badly. The thought may have come: "You were born to be a homosexual and you may as well surrender to it." That is a dart, a lie, from the devil. Resist it, renounce it, and refuse to dwell on it, and it will go away like any other temptation.)

Possible roots:

- Having a brutal, rejecting father. Of course, everyone who has this kind of father is not going to become homosexual, but it is one of the possible roots.
- Having a passive father and a dominating mother. This is wounding and confusing to a son or daughter. It can confuse their sexuality. A child in this situation would probably judge both father and mother, and the judgments have a strong spiritual effect.
- Being molested as a child. This is a strong and common root. Being molested or incested is one of the most devastating things that can happen to a child or young person, and it has awful impacts spiritually, emotionally, mentally and

physically. When a child is victimized in this way, there is a transference of spirits, so that the long-term effect is that the child may grow up and repeat these same terrible sins. (See my teaching, Overcoming Ungodly Soul-Ties.) God wants to heal us and help us overcome these deep wounds.

- Having parents who strongly want a child of the other sex. One year at Pepe's bible school in Tlalmanalco we ministered to a young man who had been working as a male prostitute on the streets of Mexico City. Collagen had been pumped into his lips, breasts and buttocks to make him look more feminine, and he was utterly repulsive. He had a dominating mother and a passive father. His mother wanted a girl, gave him a girl's name and dolls to play with. When he was six or seven years old he was molested by a neighbor. He was molested again by another man. He was set up by the devil to be a homosexual! We led him to Christ and started ministering to him. We left the bible school to minister in other cities. When we passed back through in three weeks we saw the young man again. He had had the collagen removed, and he had set his heart on being a normal Christian man. He looked totally different. Glory to God! This is an example of what Christ wants to do for wounded, confused men and women who are trapped in a sinful lifestyle. Would it have been loving and compassionate to tell that young man that he was born like that and should celebrate his perversion? I think not.
- Generational sin and generational curses. I have ministered to people who were enmeshed in heterosexual or homosexual sin and learned that they came out of a family where there were generations of every kind of sexual sin. When they forgave their parents and family, repented of their own sins, and renounced and broke the generational curses, they felt something break inside that had been controlling them and they were free to start pursuing a different life. Am I saying that sometimes people are victims of the sins of others and this is the major root of their sexual deviancy or other sinful practices? Absolutely! I believe that Jesus consistently looked on people more as victims than as sinners. He saw lost people as "sheep without a shepherd." We don't have to tell people they are sinners. They know it and hate it. We need to tell them they are loved by God and He has come to set them free.
- Witchcraft curses, and Word curses. (These are also examples of people being victimized by the sins of others.) Between two Sunday morning services in the "City of Flowers," about an hour from Mexico City, a mother brought her 16-year old son. He was looking at the floor, obviously in distress. The mother said, "My son is tormented with homosexuality. He can't stop thinking about it, he dreams about it, and men are always hitting on him. He has never committed this sin." As I talked to her and the boy about possible roots, she said, "His father abandoned us two years ago, but he always taunted our son by saying, 'You're going to be a homosexual!'" Ah ha! I led the boy in a prayer and a declaration. I had him forgive his father, and then say, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I renounce the curses my father spoke over me. I renounce the spirit of homosexuality and command it to come out of me!" Instantly he started coughing and vomiting. I continued to command that vile spirit to come out of him. In a few moments, he looked up and was smiling. He said, "I felt it come out of me! I feel different!" Glory to God!
- Demonization. Demons are certainly involved in sexual sin of all kinds, but demons are never the sole cause of sin problems. You will note in the case of the boy in the above story that it was again a combination of factors: A brutal, rejecting father; generational sin and curses; witchcraft (control) curses; word curses; and demonization. Note: The casting out of demons is normal Christian ministry and is desperately needed in American churches.
- Idol worship. If you will look at stories of homosexual behavior in Scripture; for instance, in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in Romans 1, you will see a close connection between idolatry and homosexuality. I challenge you to figure out the connections between these two.

Friends, study the times when Jesus dealt with sinners: the woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the tax collector, and so forth. He was so kind and loving. He did not come to condemn but to save. His last words to the woman taken in adultery were: *Go and sin no more*. I believe that his tone was not critical and commanding but accepting and liberating. He was saying, "I love you, I have forgiven you, and I am now empowering you to leave the futile life that brought you to this place. From this moment you will have the gift of a new life!" That is Jesus' attitude. That is the way He has treated you and me. That is the spirit He wants us to have in ministering to all. Let us go and set the prisoners free.

FAITH IS SPELLED R-I-S-K

This is a memorable aphorism that John Wimber repeated many times. John was all about "doing the stuff" that Jesus did: healing the sick, casting out demons, setting the captives free, feeding the hungry, raising the dead. None of these things are done without stepping out of our comfort zones and risking our reputations, our relationships, and in some situations our very lives. In his book, Do What Jesus Did, Robby Dawkins epitomizes stepping out and taking a chance for Jesus. Following is one of his stories:

“When I was first beginning to step out in prophetic evangelism, I went to the music store to buy something for the church. I was in a hurry, but as I was leaving I noticed this guy playing keyboards in the corner of the store. He looked like a rock’n’roll guy, with cool hair and sunglasses. I felt God wanted to say something to him, but I had no idea what. I walked over to him and said, “Man, you’re really mean on keyboards.” He didn’t respond. Then I said, “Hey, do you have a minute? Sometimes the Lord speaks to me about people, and I feel there’s something God wants you to know.”

Even then, I had no clue what God wanted to say to him. The guy continued playing, but said, “What is it?” Without having any idea what I would say, I started out, “The Lord wants you to know....” And then the words I felt come were “...that He didn’t do this to you. It was the result of sin in the world. God wants you to know that He loves you and wants you to have eternal life. He wants you to know that He didn’t do this to you.”

He turned his head away for a second, and as he looked back, a tear slid down from under his sunglasses. He asked slowly, “Do you know who I am? Did anyone tell you anything about me? Not that anyone here would know me.”

I shook my head, “No I don’t know who you are.”

“Nobody told you anything about me?” He asked again. His chin started quivering. He told me. “Six months ago, my father died in his sleep. They did an autopsy, and they couldn’t find any reason for his death. Then two months later, the night before my fiancée and I were supposed to get married, she died in her sleep. I was called at three in the morning the day of my wedding and was told that she died. I thought God hated me and took my father and my fiancée the night before my wedding.”

I said, “No, the Lord loves you! His gift is life, and He doesn’t want anybody to die. It’s a result of sin in the world.” He asked, “Who are you?” I said, “I’m, a youth pastor at a church here in town.” He invited me to come and meet with his band and his friends that same night.”

This story touched my heart. I know a lot of people who are sure that God hates them because of some traumatic experience in their life – a stillborn infant, the accidental death of a child, the loss of a job or loss of retirement, etc. Maybe God is speaking to you and saying, “I didn’t do it! It’s because of sin in the world. I love you so much and want to draw you close to me and heal your heart.”

WHEN GOOD HOMES DON'T PRODUCE GOOD CHILDREN

Think a Second Time is a book by Dennis Prager, a Jewish theologian, author and talk show host. One of the questions he raises in the book is, Why don’t good homes always produce good children? His first answer to this question is that “Goodness is rarely put first.” To test this thesis, he challenges parents to ask themselves these questions:

- Would I rather have a kind child with average intelligence and grades or a brilliant child who wasn’t kind?
- What is the ration of time that I devote to developing my child’s ethics relative to developing other achievements?
- Do I reward my child’s acts of kindness as much as I reward good grades or making the football team? And do I react less severely to character deficiencies than to scholastic or other deficiencies?
- If my child needed to cheat just ten points on one exam to get into an elite college, would I be very unhappy if he did? And would my child be certain than I was unhappy over the cheating?
- Do I monitor my child’s behavior toward other children and show strong disapproval when she mistreats another child? For example, if my child invites a friend to the house, and is then invited to the home of a friend she would rather be with, would I allow her to cancel the first appointment?
- Do I insist repeatedly that my child thank people

“I have also suggested to parents that they ask their child, whether the child is ten or fifty years old, “What do you think I most want (or wanted if the child has left home) you to be: happy, smart, successful, or good?” On my radio show, parents have repeatedly called to tell me how surprised and saddened they were to learn that their child placed “good” low on this list.

It is difficult to raise a good student, but it is much more difficult to raise a good person. It is a relentless job. In the long run, however, the parents of good children who are moderately successful are far happier than the parents of highly successful children who are moderately good.”

God Bless

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