

Week One

1. FAITH & SEXUALITY INTRODUCTION

The sessions are being recorded for the sake of offering information to those unable to attend and as a ministry tool for Open Door Ministries, the church in Long Beach I serve as Pastor.

During the Q & A time, if for any reason you do not want your voice recorded, write your question down and I will respond.

The greatest part of my identity is Christian. It is the eternal part of who I am. Another part of my identity is my sexual identity – I am a gay man (temporary). I am a minister (licensed and ordained in 1981 & 1983 respectively). The basis of this study is the Bible.

In six weeks, I will be taking you on a journey that I have been traveling for over 35 years with the greatest concentration being the last 8. Nine hours isn't enough time to cover the full extent of where I have come to stand today on this subject of faith and sexuality. I will, however, be able to give you a fairly extensive view that I believe to be Christ-centered and Biblically based.

The Need: I can't tell you, nor do I likely need to, how much confusion, hostility, ignorance, prejudice, has muddied the waters surrounding the issue of Gays who love God.

The Debate: There are people, who think God hates men or women depending on their sexual identity; people who believe if you are gay, you are automatically expelled from any relationship with God.

The Course: This is not going to be a fight. Any questions will be given and addressed respectfully not with argument.

a. God and the Sexuality of His Human Creation

i. Before Sin

1. "It was good."

Genesis 1:²⁶God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself,...

²⁷God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and

*female. ²⁸God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!
And there it was. ³¹God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good! (MSG)*

Genesis 2: ²⁵The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame. (MSG)

ii. After the Fall

1. Naked and Hiding

Genesis 3: ⁸When they heard the sound of GOD strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from GOD.

⁹GOD called to the Man: "Where are you?"

¹⁰He said, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid."

¹¹GOD said, "Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?"(MSG)

The Fall distorted life for all time. Nothing in the perfect world remained the same after that day.

2. Perfect Creation vs. Living Flaws

The traditional mindset about the inappropriateness of same-sex Christian relationships begins here at the creation. God created man and woman so any other option must be inappropriate; so says those who dispute the idea of same-sex Christian partners.

If God didn't make allowance in His perfect creation for same-sex relationships it can't be His will now.

But to attempt to draw conclusions on how God feels about same-sex Christian relationships on the basis of original creation is to disregard an appropriate understanding of how sin effected God's perfect creation. Sin broke the human race. Men, women, life, have never been the same.

I'll get back to this in the coming weeks but let me just say for now, the remedy for the broken human race was Jesus. Grace has been extended to all who believe in God's love and provision through Jesus Christ. That's Christianity.

To say that somehow, the brokenness of gay people can't be addressed by God's provision of Jesus says something about the inadequacy of God's plan for saving broken people. I can't believe there is any brokenness God's love and power cannot reach.

iii. Abraham – The Father of our Faith

Who would you have chosen to be the founding father of our faith?

- Abraham?
 - Idolater (worshipped idols)
 - Liar (presented his wife as sister to spare his life)
 - Coward (hid behind wife)

I would have voted for Noah, Enoch, or Moses (all showed better potential).

Why do you think He chose Abraham? I have a theory...

Abraham and Sarah help God / Genesis 15 & 16

- The promise from God / Genesis 15
 - ⁵Then he took him outside and said, "Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Count your descendants! You're going to have a big family, Abram!"*
 - ⁶And he believed! Believed GOD! God declared him "Set-Right-with-God."(MSG)*
- The timing / Genesis 16
 - ¹Sarai, Abram's wife, hadn't yet produced a child.(MSG)*
- The maid / Genesis 16
 - She had an Egyptian maid named Hagar. ²Sarai said to Abram, "GOD has not seen fit to let me have a child. Sleep with my maid. Maybe I can get a family from her." Abram agreed to do what Sarai said.(MSG)*

If you've been around the stories of faith, this, at first glance seems within the realm of normalcy for Bible stories.

Another context: Ray and Marge & Rita the maid
What's normal about that?

But...God is silent

"Yeah but there were consequences!" you say.

Let's look at the consequences. Genesis 16

⁶Sarai was abusive to Hagar and she ran away.

⁷An angel of GOD found her... ⁸He said, "Hagar, maid of Sarai, what are you doing here?"

She said, "I'm running away from Sarai my mistress."

⁹The angel of GOD said, "Go back to your mistress. Put up with her abuse." ¹⁰He continued, "I'm going to give you a big family, children past counting. (MSG)

It sounds a whole lot like the promise God gave Abraham to me.

The point: Did Abraham & Sarah's actions change the promise of God?

Yes! God's promise just got bigger! Even when Abraham & Sarah took things into their own hands that included an extramarital affair, God not only still followed through with His promise but enlarged the promise to include the offspring of his maid, Hagar. Indisputable!

What would you have done if it were your choice?

- Lecture Abraham and Sarah
- Time out for you two!
- Maybe withdraw the promise altogether

But what did God do? He did what He promised He would do. And not only that, He gave the same blessing to Hagar he gave to Abraham.

No punitive measure, not even a single word.

What does this have to do with being Christian and Gay?

The Father of our Faith engaged in a sexual relationship with a woman that wasn't his wife and God's blessing, His promise wasn't affected, in fact the blessing became enlarged to include the offspring and mother, "the other woman."

In our culture today, when this happens a person's credibility is ruined. Right or wrong, it wasn't God's response to Abraham and Sarah.

God sees our sexuality different than we do, gay or straight.

iv. David – A Man After the Heart of God

1. David the King ~ *After the Heart of God*

1Kings 9:⁴ *...your father David lived, pure in heart and action, ...attentively obedient to my guidance and judgments,...*

1Kings 14:⁸ *...my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes.*

2. David the Adulterer~ *After the Heart of God*

2 Samuel 11:² *One late afternoon, David got up from taking his nap and was strolling on the roof of the palace. From his vantage point on the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was stunningly beautiful.* ³ *David sent to ask about her, and was told, "Isn't this Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hittite?"* ⁴ *David sent his agents to get her. After she arrived, he went to bed with her...Then she returned home.* ⁵ *Before long she realized she was pregnant. (MSG)*

3. David the Murderer~ *After the Heart of God*

2 Samuel 11:¹⁴ *In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.* ¹⁵ *In the letter he wrote, "Put Uriah in the front lines where the fighting is the fiercest. Then pull back and leave him exposed so that he's sure to be killed." (MSG)*

4. David the Polygamist~ *After the Heart of God*

2 Samuel 3 ~ David's 6 wives (not including Bathsheba)

Again, the point is that God must see human sexuality differently than we do. In our current culture we would have thrown David out with yesterday's news and declared him to be a hypocrite, a fake, not worthy to lead, let alone be a man after God's heart.

Whether straight or gay...

Whether reconciled or not...

Whether affirming or condemning...

...never stop being ~ *After the Heart of God*

v. David & Jonathan

1 Samuel 18:¹ *...Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself...* ³ *And Jonathan made a covenant with*

David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

1 Samuel 20: ⁴¹ David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together-but David wept the most.

1 Samuel 1: ²⁶ I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.

While David and Jonathan had a very uncommon, loving bond there is nothing in scripture to indicate their relationship was of a romantic nature.

- Covenants between men who love each other
- Men kissing in Middle Eastern culture not uncommon
- A love more wonderful than with women

These could be true of a loving brotherly relationship.

We simply have no ability to know what the feelings were.

CONCLUSION:

- My view (perspective) is not God's view (perspective). We're not looking from the same place.
- Your view (what you see) is not God's view (what He sees). You and God are looking from two different places.
- God's view is right, true, indisputable.

The problem isn't with God, it's with human beings, finite human beings who see life through a broken lens, observing incomplete information.

I try to be very careful about speaking for God. I know that just because I say it, doesn't make it so. I also know after hearing many human voices making many declarations that you can't always trust human voices. Whether political, pastoral, or priestly, people tend to put words in God's mouth favoring their particular view on a given subject. I am reminded of God's words to Job...

Job 38:¹ And now, finally, GOD answered Job from the eye of a violent storm. He said: ²"Why do you confuse the issue? Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about? ³Pull yourself together, Job! Up on your feet! Stand tall! I have some questions for you, and I want some straight answers. ⁴Where were you when I created the earth? Tell me, since you know so much! ⁵Who decided on its size? Certainly you'll know that! Who came up with the

blueprints and measurements? ⁶How was its foundation poured, and who set the cornerstone, ⁷While the morning stars sang in chorus and all the angels shouted praise?

And then for four more chapters God speaks and Job listens, after which he replies to God:

Job 42:¹Job answered GOD: ²"I'm convinced: You can do anything and everything. Nothing and no one can upset your plans. ³You asked, "Who is this muddying the water, ignorantly confusing the issue, second-guessing my purposes?" I admit it. I was the one. I babbled on about things far beyond me, made small talk about wonders way over my head. ⁴You told me, "Listen, and let me do the talking. Let me ask the questions. You give the answers." ⁵I admit I once lived by rumors of you; now I have it all firsthand--from my own eyes and ears! ⁶I'm sorry--forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise! I'll never again live on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor."

The problem isn't with God, it's with human beings, finite human beings *"living on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor."*

And God is keeping His promise.

- Through our failure to see Truth
- Through our failure to live obediently

And God continues to keep His promise.

An expectant mother and father hear the news of their baby who is a downs syndrome child...

- Abort?
- How can we handle this?

They have the child.

They love their child.

Life isn't what they had expected when first they heard of the pregnancy.

But they love their baby.

They couldn't possibly love her more.

They have to care for her in ways they would not if she was not a Downs child.

The child will be dependant her entire life time.

God created a perfect world, a perfect man, a perfect woman. When their disobedience left them ashamed of their broken condition, God didn't stop loving them. In fact He loved them so much, even in their broken state of being that He figured out a way, through enormous personal cost to restore His loved, yet broken creation.

And God continues to love you and me and keep His promise.