

INTRODUCTION:

This is the practical application session, where the rubber meets the road.

And there is so much to be said about “How Then Shall We Live?”

My presentation tonight is an attempt to look honestly, deal truthfully, without judgment at an appropriate Christian response to the question, “How shall we, as Christian gay men and women, live?”

- There’s a bold effort to help the “straight” world see the gay world as something more than what they’ve observed in the past aired by the media, i.e.,
 - Dancing almost naked in the streets
 - drag queens, bigger than life, that would put Jan Crouch to shame
 - wild & passionate, public displays of affection
(Carla’s brochure on unsafe sexual practices in the gay world...)

Gays being parents, gays wanting the right to marry are means through which people hope to educate the world at large that our community includes responsible, well-adjusted, trustworthy people with morals and integrity.

Issues of morality are not gay issues alone, but heterosexual issues multiplied by at least 10 times the volume (if 10% of the population is gay). By sheer volume, heterosexual immorality is a much larger problem in our society.

If the gay community wants to be accepted in marriage as the heterosexual community is can we be held to any less expectation in standards of behavior than those married, notwithstanding any Christian influence?

1. How Then Shall We Live?

2 Peter 3: ⁹God isn't late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change.

¹⁰But when the Day of God's Judgment does come, it will be unannounced, like a thief. The sky will collapse with a thunderous bang, everything disintegrating in a huge conflagration, earth and all its works exposed to the scrutiny of Judgment.

¹¹Since everything here today might well be gone tomorrow, do you see how essential it is to live a holy life? ¹²Daily expect the Day of God, eager for its arrival. The galaxies will burn up and the elements melt down that day-- ¹³but we'll hardly notice. We'll be looking the other way, ready for the promised new heavens and the promised new earth, all landscaped with righteousness.

a. **Promiscuity** (6 pages, Partnership & Celibacy less than one page)

i. 1 Timothy 1:9-10 (formerly...”Our Responsibility to the Law”)
⁹It's obvious, isn't it, that the law code isn't primarily for people who live responsibly, but for the irresponsible, who defy all authority, riding roughshod over God, life, ¹⁰sex, truth, whatever! (MSG)

⁸We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. ⁹We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.(NIV)

Verse 9 (NIV – the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers) amplifies "proper use":

Improper use would include the belief that:

- The OT Law has no use
- “God did away with the OT Law”
- It’s fulfillment by Jesus means I can disregard it altogether

The purpose of the law was not to approve the conduct of righteous people, but to expose and condemn the conduct of sinners. Against God's ethical standard revealed in the law, human sin stands out in bold contrast. The point of the contrast is to direct people to the genuine gospel.

NT scripture refers to the “OT Law” as the schoolmaster, tutor, trainer, guardian.

Galatians 3:²⁴*The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for.*

²⁵But now you have arrived at your destination: (MSG)

The list of sins in verses 10-11 is all-encompassing.

In that final phrase Paul completes the statement of the purpose of the law: it reveals sins and sinners for what they are and points in the direction of the gospel.

ii. 1 Corinthians 6: (Dr. Roy Clements article)

¹² Just because something is technically legal doesn't mean that it's spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I'd be a slave to my whims.

¹³ You know the old saying, "First you eat to live, and then you live to eat"? Well, it may be true that the body is only a temporary thing, but that's no excuse for stuffing your body with food, or indulging it with sex. Since the Master honors you with a body, honor him with your body! (MSG)

¹² 'Everything is permissible for me' – but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me' – but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food' – but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for porneia, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. (NIV)

(Quotation marks ~ indicate Paul is responding to a letter he received.)

About Corinth...

Corinth was a port city, one of the most important commercial cities of the day. The city was infamous for its sensuality and sacred prostitution. Even its name became a notorious proverb: "to Corinthianize" meant to practice prostitution. There were typical Greek cultural problems of Paul's day including "gross sexual immorality."

A Corinthian argument for freedom in sexual expression (?): according to Dr. Clements...(an excerpt from Roy's article...)

'Sure, Paul, I quite agree with what you've just said – as Christians we are committed to an ethic based on loving our neighbor, so it would be completely inconsistent for us to exploit or abuse other people sexually or indeed in any other way. But you surely have no objection to our participating in a bit of, shall we call it, 'recreational' sex? 'You know here in Corinth we like to have a good time – Saturday night is sex orgy night. Now what's wrong with that?

- Provided the only participants are consenting adults
- provided no humiliating practices are involved
- provided there is no commercial exploitation
- provided safe-sex is conscientiously practiced

...where's the harm in a bit of fun?

'Think about it Paul; you yourself said when you were with us, that Christians are not under the law. Well, if we aren't under the law, then presumably everything is permissible for us, provided of course we don't harm anyone else in the process. Sex is a natural physical drive after all. If

God has designed us with a sexual appetite, it can't be wrong to want to have it satisfied, can it?

What is Paul doesn't say.

- He doesn't dismiss it out of hand as complete nonsense.
- He gives it a qualified endorsement, simply adding a 'but' to the Corinthian's sweepingly permissive generalization
 - Everything is permissible for me – but ...
 - Everything is permissible for me – but ...
 - Food for the stomach and the stomach for food – but ...

“In other words, he seems to be saying: ‘OK, up to a point you’re right. We Christians should not think of ourselves as tied hand and foot to a boring list of “thou shalt nots”. Christ has liberated us from bondage to a legalistic straitjacket.”

Dr. Roy Clements

Paul could have taken the easy way out, dismissing the argument altogether, but didn't.

He said, you're right...

- Christians are to think of themselves as free from the cramping restrictions of pharisaical morality
- and that sex is a God-given physical appetite which can be rightly enjoyed.

But ...not everything that is technically 'permitted' is 'helpful'.

In other words, even though something may not be legally or morally wrong in the sense that it hurts someone else, it may still be unwise because in some way it hurts you.

If exploitative sex is out for the Christian because it abuses my neighbour, then casual sex is out for the Christian too, because it is an abuse of my own body. Why exactly?

Paul takes 2 approaches to answering this question:

First: Practicality

‘Everything is permissible for me’ – but I will not be mastered by anything.

Sex can become addictive.

“Addiction” by definition is the absence of freedom. And if the whole point of the law is to enable Christians to live in freedom, any habit that takes us captive can't be the fulfillment of the law.

If you haven't been there yourself, you likely know someone who has.

A guy/girl at the bar, always there, looking for his/her next sexual conquest...

There are legitimate desires that can hold us hostage if we go down that path.

- Alcohol, drugs, other substances
- **Food**
- Sex
- Shopping
- Money

These and more have the potential to **derail** our spirituality.

This is perhaps most clearly seen in internet chatroom conversation.

Living in the freedom of Christian faith can never include being imprisoned by our appetites.

As Paul puts it, 'I will not be **mastered** by anything' – not even permitted things. Paul insists Christians should treat their bodies with more respect.

*Second: **Theology***

1 Corinthians 6:¹³ 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food' – but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for porneia, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a porne? Never!

The point Paul is making here is that the human body has an eternal value. Jesus' resurrection was the main point of his argument. Jesus' body was raised and glorified and ours will be too.

Reading from Dr. Roy Clements:

A day was coming when God would destroy the present physical order of things, including our sexual appetites. There will be no sexual intercourse in heaven – as Jesus himself once observed – but, says Paul, that doesn't mean that we will float around as disembodied spirits. No, we shall be given a new kind of bodily existence, constructed out of the bodies we have now. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so God will also raise us. In fact, because the Spirit of the risen Jesus lives inside us as Christians, we already

participate in that new creation. Our bodies are here and now like limbs or organs of his risen body – they are ‘members of Christ’. So Paul asks, his voice rising with indignation:

“Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a porne? Never!”

Paul is troubled here by the Corinthian’s casual, permissive view of prostitution.

Sex can never be ‘casual’ – sex is by definition a serious business, and this is why:

¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a porne is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’

¹⁷ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Paul is quoting here a verse from the book of Genesis that describes the mystical power of sex to bond two people together.

Dr. Clements speaks of the adhesive quality of sex that is brought into being even with “casual” sex. If a person makes a habit of such encounters the adhesive quality will dissipate.

Again, is this reality not evident to you in what you have seen and experienced in the GLBT community? It becomes about sex, not a relationship. And in a matter of time you come into contact with people who are incapable of adhering to one person, one relationship, one commitment.

As a single man, I see it everywhere I go in this community.

Dr. Clements puts it this way...

“The magic and mystery will have been permanently forfeited and he will be left with nothing but mechanical performance, invidious comparisons and a tantalizing quest for a deep and satisfying union with another human being, a union which now must permanently elude his grasp.”

Paul says; ¹⁸ ***Flee from porneia. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but the porneion sins against his own body.***

Even though the word ‘*porneia*,’ rendered rather unhelpfully ‘sexual immorality’ by the NIV, comes from the same root as ‘*pornoi*’. In this context it clearly means ‘prostitution’ primarily, and ‘*porneion*’ means the person who goes with a prostitute. But Paul’s logic

suggests that other forms of sexual **encounter** which have the same goal of short-term physical satisfaction may be included in his ban too.

Another quote from Dr. Clements

“He [Paul] observes that there is something unique about irresponsible sexual behavior. Almost any other ‘sin’ can be committed in cold blood: it is ‘outside the body’. In other words, you can maintain a psychological and emotional distance between yourself and the act. But when you have casual sex with someone, you are binding yourself to that person, whether you intend to do so or not, and if that bonding is not honored and fulfilled in a lasting covenant of love and mutual fidelity in the way God designed it to be, then you’ll suffer consequences.

Simply as a human being you will suffer a sense of physical loss and emotional pain; you will find you have ‘sinned against your own body’. But if you are a Christian, your suffering will be enhanced by a sense of profound spiritual betrayal as well. For as we’ve already said, God has long-term plans for your body. Indeed it doesn’t belong to you anymore; it is already wedded to the risen Christ by his indwelling Spirit. Can you imagine how he, your heavenly Master, feels to have part of his body used for casual sex?”

Enjoy sex by all means, but if you are wise you will enjoy it only within the boundaries of responsible behavior. And that means remembering that when you share sex with someone, you are using an inter-personal cement which God your creator has specifically designed to form a permanent and exclusive bond. There is no way you can escape the adhesive properties of that divine super-glue. Treat sex casually and not only are you potentially using another human being in a cruel and selfish way – you are also likely to be damaging yourself – psychologically and spiritually.

¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

b. **Partnership** / Marriage

Matthew 19: ⁸ Jesus said, “Moses provided for divorce as a concession to your hardheartedness, but it is not part of God's original plan. ⁹I'm holding you to the original plan, and holding you liable for adultery if you divorce your faithful wife and then marry someone else. I make an exception in cases where the spouse has committed adultery.”

¹⁰ *Jesus' disciples objected, "If those are the terms of marriage, we're stuck. Why get married?"*

¹¹ *But Jesus said, "Not everyone is mature enough to live a married life. It requires a certain aptitude and grace. Marriage isn't for everyone. ¹²Some, from birth seemingly, never give marriage a thought. Others never get asked--or accepted. And some decide not to get married for kingdom reasons. But if you're capable of growing into the largeness of marriage, do it."(MSG)*

This passage speaks of a variety of situations...

- Marriage isn't for everyone
- Some never consider it
- Some aren't asked or accepted
- Some decide not to get married for Kingdom reasons

(this scripture repeated under "c" below)

1Cor. 7: ⁸I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. ⁹But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.

In my journey I have come to be able to say that being in a same-sex relationship, living in God's grace, is better by far than living "*a sexually tortured life as a single.*"

There is no precedent in scripture concerning same-sex marriage or partnership. If in our faith we choose to live in a covenanted union, I believe we should do so reaching for the same ideal Jesus presents here.

c. Celibacy

1 Cor. 7: ⁷Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me--a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

⁸I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. ⁹But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.

Celibacy is a viable option but Paul here states it's a "gift" from God. By and large, Evangelical fundamentalists believe that being gay requires celibacy. One's taking a rather huge leap to say that "God's gift of celibacy or God's gift of traditional marriage" must be imposed upon gay men and women. I have never received the gift of celibacy, I tried to take

on the “gift” of marriage but God has taken me down a different path than these two options.

CONCLUSION:

These following scriptures emphasize the more important matters of the Kingdom.

Matthew 23: ²³...But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former (tithing).

*Micah 6: ⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.*

Zech. 7: ⁹ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.

James 1: ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

A reminder of the beginning of our session tonight...we discovered that the Law was given to enable us to identify ourselves as law breakers – 1Tim 1:9...*riding roughshod over God, life, ¹⁰sex, truth, whatever! (MSG)*
so that we would *conform to the glorious gospel of the blessed God...*

We should be living through the words of 2Peter 3: ¹²*Daily expect the Day of God, eager for its arrival.*

If we are... *riding roughshod over God, life, ¹⁰sex, truth, whatever!* ...we won't be ¹²*Daily expect[ing] the Day of God, eager for its arrival.*

Questions?