

Genesis: 10 Big Questions – Homosexuality

Pastor Jim Essian : March 29, 2015

THE PARADOX CHURCH

Genesis 2:18-25

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,
“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

About two years ago, after a sermon I preached that was on how God has loved us before time. The whole sermon was about God’s love. It was, God loves you before things existed, before he spoke galaxies into existence, before waters were formed on the earth, before anything—in love, God predestined you for adoption, that he loved you. So I preached that sermon, like this huge cosmic, epic sermon on God’s love--it was pretty good, if you ask me. After that sermon, a young man walked across the street, he climbed up to the top of the parking garage and his only thought was, "I need to jump." He couldn’t reconcile the love of God--this overwhelming love of God that he believed to be true that morning--the

overwhelming love of God and his homosexual desires, and his same-sex attraction and his homosexual relationship that he was in. He just couldn't reconcile it, he didn't know what to do. He didn't know what to do with it. And so his only recourse in his mind, his only option was to die. God loved him and he knew it, but he loved this man, and it seemed natural, and it seemed actual, and it seemed real, and he didn't know what to do.

I tell you that story to say when what we talk about this issue, we're not talking about an "issue." We're not talking about some political thing, we're not talking about some concept or this idea of homosexuality--we're talking about real people. Real people that are in our church, real people that are our family members, our friends, they're our neighbors, our coworkers or classmates--we're talking about real people. This isn't us saying, "Hey, let's be controversial just to be controversial." This isn't us saying as a church, "Let's be political." This is not a political sermon, this is not a controversial sermon for the sake of that. It is a sermon about people, and people that we know and love. I just want to make we're sure clear right off the bat that we're talking about actual, real people, and not just some idea, okay? We are not going to be the church that just social media-bombs people about stuff like this, or just talks about it like it's not an actual real thing that people are wrestling with, hurting from, or walking in, and they're our family members and friends. Okay?

Now, I want to set the table and talk about a few things before we get into this text. The first is this, and some have already asked this: why even talk about this? And my answer is just that we have to. We have to talk about it because they're our family members and friends and neighbors. We have to talk about it because we were put into a time like this, in a culture like this, in a place like this, where this has become a watershed discussion. And we as the church must be equipped to speak about these issues. We have to talk about this because usually the voices that are talking about it, we would rather just shut up. To be honest, we'd just rather them not talk. Because the voices that are talking about this issue are either the really like hyper-conservative, freakishly-fundamentalist, right-wing crazy who doesn't know a non-Christian, let alone is befriending homosexuals in their life at all. You have that guy, he just talks about homosexuality as some sort of thing, some sort of political ideal or idea. And on the other side, you have your way, way, way left-wing gays and lesbians who tell us that we should just rip out parts of our Bible and disregard something that the God of the universe has said. We don't want those voices talking about this. There's got to be another voice. God has spoken, and we should, as a church, be equipped to say all that God says about

homosexuality. And about how to relate to the homosexual community, how to love those in our church that are same-sex attraction. We need to talk about this.

Second: we believe that the Bible is God's actual words. We believe what the Bible says, we believe it to be true, and we cling to it with everything. We believe that God is so beautiful and glorious and holy and great that we could not know him apart from him revealing himself to us. That apart from God communicating to us--"hey, here's what I am, and here's what I'm like, here's what I'm doing, here's what I've done"--we would not know him. He is too other, he is too great, he is too different than us. So he must communicate to us. We believe that he has, through the scriptures; that the Bible is God's word and is primarily God communicating himself to us that we might know him. The Bible is not primarily a list of rules. It's not primarily some sort of way of life or roadmap to life. It's not the journal entries of Godly men and women that we can look at, like, "that's a good idea." It's God's words to us, revealing himself to us that we might know him. It's a love letter. And so we believe it to be true. We want to cling to it with all that we have, because it's revealing who God is and his love for us.

But because it's God's words and not ours, sometimes it will offend us. Sometimes it will disagree with us. The Bible is not meant for us to interpret; the Bible interprets you. And if God is this God who crosses over all time, place, and culture, we should expect that at some point in a particular time, place, or culture, he would offend you. In some place, in somewhere, in some realm of your life, we could probably expect that this cross-cultural cross-time, grand, beautiful God is going to, at times in his communication to us, disagree.

And so the Bible can be painful to read sometimes. It's honest, it's beautiful, its overarching message is that God loves you and has pursued you and come after you. But there are times where it's painful. Hebrews tells us that the Bible, it's like a knife. A surgical knife, not a mallet where we just beat people's heads over with it, like many of us try to do, but it's God's tool to cut us deep. And it lays open the human heart, it lays bare the human heart. That's what Hebrews tells us. So it's going to pierce deep into all of us this morning, and it's meant to bring about restoration and healing, but it's painful.

Second, or third, I think--I forget, I'm not counting anymore--this will be an uncomfortable sermon for everyone. It will be offensive and it will be painful.

Thirdly, the gospel, the message of the Bible, changes everything. Changes everything. So we have to talk about this, and the Bible talks about it. And we believe the Bible is God's word, but God's overarching message in the Bible is called the gospel. It's the grand story in the Bible, it's what it's meaning to communicate, and it changes everything. So as your heart is laid bare for the scriptures--and I promise you, it will happen for all of us, homosexual, heterosexual, Christian, non-Christian--this will be a painful, offensive, uncomfortable sermon.

But as it lays the human heart bare, the gospel message always brings with it hope. That the love of God towards us in Christ can heal and can restore. So for all of us—homosexual, heterosexual, Christian, or non-Christian—the call this morning is for you to repent. To turn from whatever you're clinging to, to turn from whatever you're hoping in, to turn from whatever you're trusting in, and to turn to Jesus who is beautiful and holy, and good and glorious, and who loves you, and I know that because he told us. Even though there's still gonna be things you disagree with, even though you're going to be offended by some things, Jesus is beautiful and glorious and has called you his own. Repent, and believe on Jesus.

So. Stay with me to the end. Yes, you're gonna be offended by some things. Don't check out. Don't walk out. Stay with me to the end.

Genesis chapter 1. We'll start there, we'll get to Genesis 2. And then we're gonna go take a survey, look at the Bible and what it says about homosexuality. But I want to start in the beginning, in Genesis 1 and 2, where we've been. What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Genesis chapter 1. We'll start in verse 27:

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

So we've looked at this verse a bunch of times already in the series, so a lot of this will be review. But let's look at it from this angle, what does it mean towards the issue of homosexuality? And there's three things I want you to see just in this verse, and none of them should be new to us. The first is this: that all people are made in the image of God. This gives us dignity, value, this gives us worth. All people are made in the image of God. We were made unique and distinct from the animals. We are made to reflect God, we are made like

God, we were made to point out here's what God is like, here's a glimpse of what God is like. We were made in the image of God, yes?

Okay. So here's what this means to my Christian brothers and sisters: your homosexual neighbor, and friend, and family member was made in the image of God. And so to treat them any different than how we should treat someone made in the image of God with dignity, value, and worth, is to go against what God is saying in Genesis 1:27. So gay jokes should not be among us as God's people. Homophobia is a sin. Do you think other people's sin is more disgusting than yours? They were made in the image of God. And our posture towards people made in the image of God is one of love and humility, and service, and care. Not one of self-righteous judgment, or in a way in which, "well, their sin is dirtier than mine." Homophobia is a sin. And any time we demean another group of people, we put down, we minimize, we belittle them, I promise you, you will find yourself in opposition against the God of the universe who is described throughout the Bible as a defender of the weak and a protector of those who are oppressed. You will not win that fight. Be very careful about where your heart is towards the homosexual community. The whole "God hates fags" people? They will face the wrath of God if they do not repent. Just because you and I may not be bold enough to hold up a sign, if it's in our hearts, we will face it as well if we don't repent either. We should be very, very careful in talking about this issue before we examine our heart. Do you think other people's sins are more disgusting than yours? Have you treated the homosexual community with contempt? Perhaps you need to repent to them. They were made in the image and likeness of God.

Second thing I want you notice is that the creation of mankind in verse 27 is God creating them male and female. See, throughout the narrative in Genesis 1--the creation narrative in Genesis 1--you see God creating complements to things and then separating them. So in verse one, he creates the heavens and the earth. In verse four, he creates the light and the darkness; in verse five, the night and the day; in verse nine, water and dry lands. It's binary after binary, all the way up to him creating humanity in male and female. So he creates them male and female. This goes all the way to Revelation, these complements that are created for one another. All the way to Revelation, so from Genesis to Revelation you've got God doing this. Where Jesus comes back, he restores everything that's broken, and he sets up the new heavens and the new earth. New heaven, new earth; light, day; male, female.

So this leads me to the third point; these kind of go together. The third point is this: our sexuality, our gender matters. “Male and female, he created them.” Our sexuality is a part of the image of God. Not just our soul. Our bodies, too, are made in the image of God to reflect God, to bring God glory. Jesus came in bodily form. He put on flesh; he put on a body. Jesus rose on the third day--we’re going to celebrate it next week--in bodily form. When you and I will rise again when Jesus comes back, it will be with resurrected bodies, and we’ll participate in the new heavens and the new earth with Jesus. It’s gonna be awesome. The body matters. Sexuality matters. Your sexuality was made in the image and likeness of God.

Ok, keep going to Genesis 2. Just looking at creative order and how it speaks to this topic of homosexuality. Genesis 2:

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

One of the best verses in all the Bible right there.

So you have God saying Adam, it’s not good that’s he alone. “It’s not good that he’s alone. I’m not alone; I’m a Father who loves a Son, and I’ve always been in a Trinity, in a relationship. I have Adam here and I’ve created all this goodness for him, all these joys and all these pleasures have been created for him that he might enjoy all of creation to my

worship, but it's not good that he's alone. He needs a helper fit for him." And the helper fit for him, or what we said is his complement --that's what that word means--well, that becomes the woman. His complement was the woman. The helper fit for him was the woman. Jesus confirms this; in fact, he quotes verse 24 in Matthew 19 when he says this: "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

So you have Jesus in the New Testament citing Moses here in Genesis 2 and going back to creation, appealing to creation--not to our culture, not to what people desire, not to what people want, not to what the government says--but appeals to creation, to Genesis 2, and says here's what marriage is: it's one man, it's one woman, and they become one flesh. So this is the creative order; this is how God has wired the universe to be and to function.

Now, once Genesis 3 hits, everything goes bad. Sin comes into the world, everything is broken including sexuality, including marriage, everything gets broken. If you read the rest of the Bible, that's what you see. Everything is broken. Everything is broken. But Genesis 1 and 2, this is how God created things to be.

Now I want to look and see what else the Bible says about homosexuality. The first is Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13. You've heard these, I'm sure.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20, verse 13:

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

So if you've been a part of this debate at all, if you've heard it at all, those two verses were talked about. It's a difficult section of verses to read, isn't it? It's difficult to read, it's difficult to swallow, it's difficult to stomach. And the argument against it is, "Well, have you read Leviticus? Are we really going to hold to this Old Testament, archaic book that tells us that we can't eat shellfish and we can't do this...just some crazy rules in Leviticus. You should read them...there's some crazy ones in there. So, should we then obey this rule about homosexuality being an abomination, when just before it says I can't eat shrimp? Are we serious about this?"

So an elementary study and understanding of the Bible can fix this very easily. There are different laws in the book of Leviticus: ceremonial or purity laws, and moral laws. There are civic laws too, but I don't need to get into those now. Ceremonial laws and there's moral laws. The ceremonial law is God saying, "Here, you need to do this, you need to cleanse yourself, and you need to do this to prepare for worship, because I am beautiful and holy and glorious and clean, and you're not. And to worship me, you've got to come to me clean, and you're not clean." Really, all of Leviticus is saying you're not clean, and you can't get clean. You can try to do all these things, and it won't work.

In Jesus, the book of Hebrews tells us he did away with all those temple practices, with all those ceremonial washings. In Jesus, we can eat lobster to the glory of God. He got rid of all of that. All of that. In Jesus, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence. We've been washed clean, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus. And so the ceremonial stuff, that kind of ritualistic, religious functioning of presenting ourselves clean to God, that was done away with in Jesus.

But the moral stuff, the stuff that goes back to Genesis 1 and 2, the stuff that goes forward into the New Testament, those are moral laws. This is God saying, "I've wired the universe to function this way: you still can't murder. I've wired the universe to function this way: you still can't commit adultery. I've wired the world to function this way: you still can't worship another god." Those are moral laws, and they stick and they stay.

Now here's what's frustrating me about this, is you've got, remember this voice over here, kind of hyper-conservative, doesn't really know a non-Christian or love a non-Christian, let alone even know a gay man or a lesbian woman. And this guy over here, when he talks about homosexuality to be an abomination, he'll never say anything about the other things that are an abomination to the Lord that the Bible talks about. How about Proverbs chapter 6, verses 16 and 19:

¹⁶There are six things that the Lord hates,
seven that are an abomination to him:

¹⁷ haughty eyes—

[Anyone prideful? I'm the only one. Well, I'm an abomination to the Lord. Oh, this is for all of you—]

a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plan—
[Does anyone have a wicked heart?]
feet that make haste to run to evil,
¹⁹ a false witness who breathes out lies,
and one who sows discord among brothers...

...is an abomination to the Lord. You know what's an abomination? Causing division in a church, that's an abomination. Lying is an abomination; pride is an abomination to the Lord.

Proverbs 20, verse 10 says, "Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord." Oh, you want to judge someone but then not be judged by the same measures that you judge them? That's an abomination to the Lord. That's an abomination to the Lord. The whole point of Leviticus is basically to say we all deserve to die. That's what Leviticus is telling us. Not just homosexuals—all of us. In Leviticus, blasphemy deserves death, adultery deserves death, bestiality deserves death, murder deserves death, cursing your parents deserves death. All Leviticus is telling us that God is beautiful and glorious and holy and wonderful, and we have rejected his love for us. And a rejection of God's love for us is deserving of death, because to reject God is to reject all that is good, and all where life comes from. He's the fountain of all those things.

You and I are an abomination to the Lord apart from Jesus. And we deserve death. The whole gospel message is that Jesus came and died for us. Jesus came and died for us. And so now, in Christ, where before we rejected him and were an abomination to God, in Christ, you and I are now children, and we don't deserve to die because Jesus did. So that's Leviticus.

1 Corinthians 6. A very clear statement speaking towards homosexuality, as well as some other things. 1 Corinthians 6:9:

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Did anyone get out of that list guilt-free? If you said, “Yeah, I did,” you’re the self-righteous one Jesus talks about the most and doesn’t seem to like very well. Nobody gets out of that list guilt-free. The term here, “men who practice homosexuality,” Paul is coining a term here. It’s two Greek words that he combined—he probably got them from Leviticus, the Greek translation of Leviticus 18 and 20, the ones that we just read—he puts them together and coined the term, and it refers to, very explicitly, I may add, the passive partner in a homosexual act and the active partner in a homosexual act. It’s very clear. It’s very explicit. It’s very obvious, and it really covers any objection as to what this might mean. And there are some.

Very clearly the Bible talks about some homosexuality here in verse 9, but then look at verse 11: “and such were some of you. But you were washed. You were sanctified. You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of our God.” Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, and he is saying, “You used to be like this, but now Jesus has met you, now Jesus has saved you. You’re not defined by those things anymore. Now you’re defined by what Jesus is done. You don’t deserve death anymore, now Jesus died in your place. You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified.” This is beautiful.

He’ll spend the rest of chapter and he’ll say, “So flee sexual immorality, flee those things, turn from those things. Don’t even act like that’s a part of you anymore.” And what he’s speaking toward here is if we continue an unrepentant sin, if we continue in these things, whether it’s homosexuality or any of the other things that he mentions, then all that means is that we don’t actually know Jesus, that we’re not actually his. That we don’t actually love and put our faith in and cling to Jesus if we continue to walk in unrepentant sin. But if we hate our sin, if we’re walking away from it, if we believe that we were washed and justified and sanctified and that we’re his, we’ll no longer want to do those things.

People will ask all the time, “Can a gay man become a Christian, can a homosexual become a Christian?” I sure hope so. I’m not a Christian because I’m heterosexual. And if a gay man can’t become a Christian, who else on that list can? And so very clearly in 1 Corinthians 6, you have Paul speaking about homosexuality clearly as a sin.

Here's the one I want to land on for the rest of our time, and for the longest, is Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1. This is going to be hard for all of us, and good for all of us. Starting in verse 24:

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Three things here, very important. First thing is this: all sin is rooted, all sin—homosexuality, all sin—all sin is rooted in trading the Creator for creation. It's trading Creator God—glorious, big, beautiful God—for his creation. All sin is rooted in that; it's called idolatry. You have Genesis 1, where God gives us all these joys and pleasures and delights. He gives Adam and Eve all of these things. He asks them to participate in all of it, and experience all of it, and he wants them to enjoy all of these things. Paul would later write, "Whether you eat or drink, whatever you do"—we talked last week, sexual intimacy, even, is meant to point to the beauty and joy and pleasure and delight of knowing God. That when we enjoy creation, it's not meant to end with just the enjoyment of creation, it's meant to boomerang back to the beauty and glory and delight of knowing God. We're meant to worship God.

And what we are doing, what Romans 1 says that we do is, instead of experiencing creation to the glory of God, we take creation and we say, “God, we don’t need you.” It’s saying to God, “I want your stuff, I don’t want you.” That’s sin. That is cosmic treason. That is idolatry. The Old Testament will often call it adultery. It is cosmic betrayal, where we have rejected God’s beauty and his glory and all of his gifts that he’s given us. We’ve taken them and said, “Forget you.” That is the root of all sin. All sin is rooted in that.

God is not some killjoy. In Genesis 1 and 2, he gives them an unbelievable amount of things to experience and to enjoy, all of creation. And there is one thing he said they couldn’t, one tree they couldn’t eat from. So this isn’t God trying to rob you of joy or keep things from you or keep you from being happy. This is God saying, “True happiness, true joy, true fulfillment is found in you experiencing the things of creation to my glory, in worship of me. That when you have sex, it’s to my glory. When you eat, it’s to my glory. When you participate in all of creation, it’s to my glory. It’s for worship of me, to enjoy me, to give me thanks, to worship me because of it. And that anything outside of that, trading me for my stuff, you’re going to find yourself continually running into a ceiling where your joy is never satisfied and never fulfilled.” God’s commands aren’t meant to rob you of joy; they’re meant to keep you from the things that do. So all sin is rooted in this trading of Creator for creation.

Secondly: the result, then, of that sin, of trading creator for creation, is that God gives us over to what we desire. This is God’s passive wrath. We think of God’s wrath as lightning bolt strikes and fire and brimstone. This is the more common form of God’s wrath, at least now, and that’s God’s passive wrath. This is where God says, “Oh, you want my stuff and not me? Okay.” He gives them over, he gives us over to what we really want. This is God’s wrath.

Some of us, we think of grace as, “Well, this means that if I sin, God will forgive me, so I’ll just keep on sinning, because I know that God will forgive me.” That might not be grace; that might be God’s wrath. That might be God saying, “It looks like you actually want that more than you want me, so okay.” That’s not grace, that’s wrath. True grace, real grace, it compels us to not sin anymore—we don’t want to sin anymore. We’ve experienced true grace when we’ve experienced Jesus and all of his grace and his mercy, when we’ve tasted it and it’s so sweet that our sin tastes bitter and we don’t want it anymore.

You may not be under the grace of God; you might be under the passive wrath of God, if he's giving you what you want. Sometimes the most loving and gracious thing God can do for you is to not give you what you want, and sometimes the most frightening thing for him to do to you would be to give you over to exactly what you want. So the result of our sin, of our trading creator for creation, is that God gives us over to our sins and our desires.

Thirdly: homosexuality is not why God judged, but it is a result of that judgment. So when it says in verse 26, "for their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature," and verse 27, "men likewise gave up natural relations," here's what that's saying. It's not saying, not describing homosexuals that go against their natural orientation. That's not what it's talking about here. It's saying that contrary to nature is where all of us have found ourselves. That we are all born, because of sin, bent away from God, broken, contrary to our original natures. This is why we can't be really simplistic with homosexuality as a sin and pretend like we know why they're gay. You can't just pretend like, "Oh, you had a bad dad, or a bad childhood, or you were abused, so that's why." Maybe; maybe not. We're all born broken, we're all born contrary to nature. And the result of that is the various sins, including homosexuality. So, contrary to nature is how we're all born, how we're all bent away from God. So can someone be born gay? Absolutely. If they just come out and said, "There's a gay gene, and every person in the whole wide world that has ever been born gay, has been born with this gay gene," I would believe it, and I would have no problem believing it. It changes nothing. We were all born broken. Ephesians 2 says we were dead in our sins. But God made us alive. So the result, then, of God's judgment to give us over to our desires is, in part, homosexuality.

Now this text is saying something, and so I have to tell you what it's saying, and it's going to be the most offensive thing that I think I say. But I have to say it because the text is saying it. Romans 1 is basically an exposition of Genesis 1, 2, and 3. So all that we've been covering in Genesis 1 and 2, Paul here is saying, "Here is what happened now." From Genesis 3 on.

Homosexuality is a sin, and we're all sinners. But the reality of homosexuality points to and pictures a very distorted, broken reality of how far man has fallen apart from God.

Homosexuality is a sin, and we're all sinners, but the reality of homosexuality pictures, portraits a very distorted broken humanity. Let me explain.

In Genesis 1 and 2, we've been talking about this regarding marriage and sex, and manhood and womanhood. So you've got a man and he's meant to pursue a woman, right. So you have boys starting to do that, pursuing a woman. That doesn't stop, it never stops, a Godly man in marriage is still pursuing his wife, he's going after, he's pursuing, he's laying down his life for her. Ephesians 5 says he's sacrificing for her daily, giving up his life for her, loving her over and over and over again, washing her with the water of the Word, nourishing and cherishing her. And that whole story, the whole message of what marriage and sexuality is, from Genesis 1 to Genesis 2 to Ephesians 5, all of that, Ephesians 5 says, is meant to display God's loving pursuit of us. It's meant to be a picture that God loves us, and he's pursued us, and he's come after us, and he's gone to great lengths to be with you, to love you, to know you, to make you his own. So marriage is this beautiful picture, and marriage, sexuality is a beautiful picture of God's love for us and his pursuit of us in the gospel. It's beautiful.

But homosexuality is a man saying, "Forget the other; forget the woman. I want myself; I want another man." Lesbianism is saying, "Forget the other; forget the man. I want myself; I want a woman." It's the exaltation of man. Where Biblical marriage and sexual intimacy is a picture of Genesis 1 and 2, and God's love for us and pursuit of us in Christ Jesus, who dies for his bride the church, homosexuality is a picture of Genesis 3 and the rebellion of man to want to be his own God. And so it's a distortion of brokenness, a picture of what happens when man is apart from God.

The argument is often—and this speaks to the "What's wrong with a loving, committed relationship, a monogamous committed relationship of two people? It's not hurting anyone." The problem with that is that it assumes that the only thing that matters is, "Am I loving my neighbor, or am I hurting my neighbor? Am I harming people or am I loving people?" It disregards the first commandment: but does it love God? Is it obedient to God? Is it a display of God's goodness, and God's beauty? He loves you. He's come after you, he's pursued you, and there's grace, even for the homosexual.

But just because something doesn't hurt other people doesn't mean it's not offensive to God. You have sinful thoughts; they don't hurt anyone, but they're offensive to God, because we are to love the Lord our God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The whole Bible was written to communicate to you and to reveal himself to you that you might know him and love him.

In verse 29, we see homosexuality right alongside other sins as well. Again:

²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Anybody getting out of this one clean? See, anywhere in the Bible where it speaks about homosexuality, he calls it a sin but always puts it next to a bunch of other sins. And so we have to be really careful that we don't just talk about homosexuality as if it's the unforgivable sin. It's not. It's not. There is grace for the homosexual too. It's not the unforgivable sin. If it is, then all of us fall under that because we all find ourselves in this list.

We have to be really careful with talking about homosexuality and not talking about our own sexual brokenness. We can't call homosexuality a sin, then be okay with pornography and lust, broken marriages and adultery, and all those things. Far too often, the church will rail against homosexuality as an idea, not actually knowing any people or loving any of the people involved in the homosexual community, while at the same time in the church, those types of sins aren't pushed back against, aren't corrected, aren't called out, aren't repented of. That can't be. Homosexuality is not the unforgivable sin. It's not.

So in light of all that the Bible has said about homosexuality, let me just draw out some implications for us in how we should respond. First, to the homosexual community that is here that are not Christians, here's what I'll say. Christians do not go to heaven because they are heterosexual. I'm not firstly, I am not concerned with, I'm not asking you to convert to heterosexuality. I want you to meet Jesus. I want you to know the love of God towards you in Jesus. That's what I want. I want you to know that there's the grace for you, and I'm sorry that that conversation or that communication, that message has been lost to you throughout all the rhetoric and the hate and some of the things that you have heard. I'm sorry that that's been lost. There is grace for you. There's grace for you. I want you to meet Jesus. And I want to talk with you about this. If you want to go grab a cup of coffee or a beer, we can talk about these things. When we do, I probably don't need to talk to you about who you're sleeping with, for a while. I just need to tell you about Jesus more. I just need to talk to you about Jesus

more. That's all I care about; I just want you to meet Jesus. I'm not asking you to convert to heterosexuality; I'm asking you to convert to Jesus.

But if I don't get that chance, if I don't get a chance to sit down with you, I do need to tell you something. As beautiful and as glorious and as wonderful, and as unbelievably "worth it" Jesus is, he is unbelievably ruthless. And he comes after our heart like nothing else, and every Christian is going through it as Jesus comes after us and comes after us, and he cuts us deep, and he lays the human heart bare, and he doesn't stop until he has every bit of our heart.

And I want to tell you this because he said that you need to count the cost, and the cost for you will be great. You will lose, most likely, your homosexual community that has probably loved you, and probably loved you a lot better than the church has. And you will lose a huge part of your identity, and it will be difficult, and you may never be free from those desires. So I need you to count the cost. But I promise you it's worth it. I promise you that Jesus is worth it. I promise you it's worth it. I promise you that Jesus is all that you need, all that will satisfy. And all the other things you've been doing will never satisfy, I promise. And so, turn to Jesus. It's going to be difficult, it's going to be unbelievably hard. But every Christian has been called to pick up their cross and follow him. So repent, turn to Jesus, cling to Jesus. I want you to know him.

And then second, to our same-sex attraction brothers and sisters: here's what I would say, just a few things. One: your identity is not in who you are attracted to. You are not defined by who you are attracted to, you're defined by Jesus; you're his. That's what you're defined by. You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified. Your identity is not in who you're attracted to. Your identity is in whose you are, and you are God's.

Secondly, temptation is not sin. Temptation is not sin. And the Biblical promises about temptation, you should cling to, as we all have to. That where you're weak, he is strong, that your temptation is not uncommon, I promise. That he will always give you a way out, and sometimes the way out won't be that he takes away that desire. Sometimes the way out would just be him revealing himself to you as more beautiful and greater than what it is you're desiring. But temptation is not a sin. It's not a sin.

Thirdly, following Jesus for you is also costly. Instead of God giving you over to your desires in his passive wrath, he has given you a severe mercy that's painful. He's not letting you have what you desire, and that's his grace, but it hurts. Following Jesus is going to be costly.

Just a quick aside for those of us that don't struggle with these things: it should not be so that following Jesus is costly just for the same-sex attraction brother or the homosexual that converts to Christianity. We need to be a people and a place that counts the cost and that follows Jesus and picks up our cross as well, and takes seriously all the gospel demands. Not just the sexual ones, not just the one against homosexuality. But we talk about this amongst our groups, and our people and our families, so that everyone else and those that struggle with same-sex attraction see how difficult and how costly it is to follow Jesus and that they're not alone.

But following Jesus is costly. And listen, he may change you. He may heal you. You may never have a same-sex attraction again. And praise God for it, we'll pray for it, and I know you're praying for that. But he may not. It is not a promise that he will change your desires. It is not a promise that you will never struggle with it again. What is the promise is that he's with you. Our church has to be a safe place for people to struggle with these things in.

And finally, how should we relate with the homosexual community as heterosexual Christians? We need to engage our homosexual neighbor, coworker, your neighbor, your barista. It's Chesterton who said, "You make your friends and you make your enemies, but God makes your neighbors." It's not an accident that you're next door to who you're next door to, and you work with who you work with. It's not an accident. So we need to engage our homosexual neighbors, we need to engage the homosexual community as God's people. And we need to probably listen more than we speak, we need to know in love before we start to talk, so that we might understand them, and we might hear from them, so that they might know that we love them. We've got some ground to make up.

You share the gospel then when you're ready to speak with them, in the same way that you would share the gospel with a heterosexual person. Talk about God first. You don't need to talk about who they're sleeping with first. That's not of first concern. We shouldn't be expecting a dude who doesn't know and love Jesus to stop sleeping with his girlfriend; why would we expect that? Why would we expect some dude to stop loving money, or to stop

acting in a certain way, if he doesn't know and love Jesus? We shouldn't expect that. We shouldn't expect a homosexual man or a lesbian woman to stop doing those things if they don't know and love Jesus. And so we share Jesus with them, we talk to them, we love them, we know them. We hear their story and we talk about the love of God.

Our city groups, our gatherings at church and in our communities, they need to be open to the homosexual community. They need to be inviting to the homosexual community. So that means we talk about our stuff too. We're creating this culture of grace; we're not just preachers of grace, but we actually invite people in and extend grace. And we don't shrink back from the truth of what we believe, but we also don't do it in a self-righteous jerk way. Our homes and our city groups and our church gatherings should be welcoming to our homosexual neighbors to the point where we have so many homosexuals in this church that it's uncomfortable for some of you.

That's been my prayer this week, that there would be so many from the homosexual community in Fort Worth that start coming to our services and are in our city group gatherings and are hanging out with our little groups that meet around the city, that it gets uncomfortable for some of you. And that in that real uncomfortableness that you have, you either repent or go to another church. That's how welcoming we should be. We were put into this city, at this time, in this place, with this issue, at this point, that's being argued about in the ways that it is, so that we might be God's people as light in the darkness, loving our neighbor well. It should be really uncomfortable in here for some of you. And then you should probably leave.

We need to care more about winning people than about winning some sort of cultural or political war. Please stop talking about the "Christian values" that our nation was founded upon. Please, nobody cares. And the homosexual community, when they hear that, all they hear is "Oh, they don't want me in their church, and they also don't want me in their own country." This nation, I love it. It is falling away like every other nation in the history of the world is. What isn't going away is our homosexual brother and neighbor and friend who needs to know and love Jesus. Because when they die, they're going to stand before God, and I promise you, God's question isn't going to be "Who did you sleep with?" It's going to be, "Why didn't you love my Son?" So we need to engage them, we need to talk to them, and this

needs to be a welcoming place. We need to care more about winning people, not winning some sort of political war or argument.

The young man who went to the top of the parking garage, he didn't jump. He called one of our leaders, and Pastor Ryan went to the top of the garage and literally talked him down. I met with him and his parents that next week. It was really weird, I'd never done anything like that. His parents hadn't heard anything about his recent activity and all those things, and it was just strange. The dad was really focused on the homosexuality part of it, which I kind of get but then kind of don't, because I kept telling him, "That's not what's ultimate here. There's other things going on here." And it got to the point, because he kept talking about and I didn't want to talk about it, that I told him to shut up or leave.

And finally as we worked through all that emotion and all that kind of stuff, and got the dad to be quiet, we got some of the things that were actually underneath what was going on. I asked him, I said, "Why are you in this relationship? You know God loves you, you've experienced that, you believe that now. But then you're in this homosexual relationship. What are you gaining from that?" The first thing he said is, "It just doesn't feel as deviant to me." He had been describing like gay pornography and same-sex attraction, so he had been looking at pornography and lusting, and it just seemed really deviant, that seemed really broken to him. But then this gay relationship, it was a loving relationship, it was a committed relationship. It didn't feel as "bad" to him.

And when he said that, I just wrote down in my little notebook: guilt. And then he said, "I just feel more comfortable in my skin with him." I wrote down: shame. He was describing guilt and shame. I told him, "Man, you're describing guilt and shame. Guilt is that feeling of feeling weighed down and burdened by what you've done. Like, you feel bad about what you've done and your gay porn and your lusting after another man felt really broken and dark to you. And it felt less dark, less burdensome, less guilty by being in this loving relationship. And then you described shame. Shame is that feeling where you just feel gross. You feel like what you've done now has transformed you into something different. Like it is now who you are because of what you done. You kind of feel just gross, you feel naked, you feel exposed."

He said, "I feel more comfortable in my own skin with this man." I said, "You're describing shame. You're finding some cover of shame. You're feeling less ashamed in this relationship

because it's loving, it's monogamous, it's committed, it's not some sort of, you know, pornography or lusting after someone." I said, "Man, I don't want to minimize your desires; I know that they're real. There's just deeper desires in your heart, and they're the same desires that I have, the same desires that we all have, and that's to be rid of guilt and shame."

Sin has broken all that God has given us and all that we've experienced so that we might worship and know God—sin has broken that, and we feel guilty, and we feel shame. And we run to other things for guilt and shame. We run to other things that would take away guilt or cover our shame. For him, it was homosexuality. For you, it's something else perhaps. I just told him, "You desire guilt to be taken away and your shame to be covered. There's not one man in this world; there's not one woman in this world; there's not one relationship that can take away guilt and shame. But that's what Jesus did. It was the whole point of Jesus coming. The cross of Christ was Jesus taking your guilt away and covering your shame. In Christ, you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified. You're his."

Let me pray for us: Father, thank you for your love and your mercy towards us. I ask that you would be with us now as we wrestle through some of these resistances and hard-heartedness. I ask that you would meet us in this place. In Jesus' name, Amen.