

How To Love Those Who are Sexually and Gender Confused

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We cannot reach the sexually and gender confused until we first love them.

One of W. E. Sangster's seven rules for personal evangelism was, "Do not set out to make people good—love them."

No one has ever been argued out of gender confusion or homosexuality ... or into the Kingdom of God, for that matter!

Churches typically do not know what to do when confronted with someone of the congregation who is suffering unwanted sexual/gender confusion churches really against homosexuals

* Loving Homosexuals & Transgender folks requires that You have experienced God's Love

It is impossible to express a love that you have not experienced. God says "I have loved you with an everlasting love." (Jer 31:3) And John the Apostle wrote, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 Jhn 3:1)

God wants his love to be reciprocated, but he will not force us to love him. If you would love homosexuals best, you must love God most! The greatest expression of God's love is typically demonstrated from a heart which has itself gone through many internal conflicts, struggles, and torment ... and the lengthy process of very painful restoration.

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, President of Southern Seminary writes "Evangelical Christians must ask ourselves some very hard questions, but the hardest may be this: Why is it that we have been so ineffective in reaching persons trapped in this particular pattern of sin?"

The atheist Voltaire may have had the answer. He wrote, "If Christians want us to believe in a Redeemer, let them act redeemed." Ouch!!

Rick Warren says, "There are two basic reasons people don't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They have never met a Christian. They have met a Christian." Ouch again!!

*Loving Homosexuals & Transsexuals Requires Getting Right with God

You can be a Christian and still not be right with God.

A lady walked into a psychiatrist's office. She was wearing a strip of bacon over each ear and a poached egg on top of her head. As soon as she sat down, she struck a serious pose and said to the doctor, "I've come to talk to you about my brother—who has a problem."

Jesus said before you can remove the microscopic speck from your brother's eye, you need to eradicate the lumberyard from your own eye. (Loose translation of Matt 7)

A mother, father and their teenage son came to see me; the parents had learned their son had same-sex attractions by viewing the history on his computer—gay porn. One of the recommendations I made was to perform a DSL-ectomy on the home computer. Immediately the father became agitated saying, "That's impossible, my work depends on it." I was not surprised to get a call from the son later that week. "I couldn't tell you the other day, but the reason Dad became agitated at your suggestion to disconnect from the Internet is because I secretly know he has some sites he visits also."

*Loving Homosexuals & Transsexuals Requires Distinctive Qualities

Humility: tops the list. Has it come to this? Do evangelicals pride themselves on the mistaken belief that their church has no one with homosexual attractions? Wake up and smell the latte!

Charles Spurgeon visited an affluent, aristocratic woman one day. He moved the conversation to sin and one's need of Christ.

The woman said "Rev. Spurgeon– I'll have you know I have not sinned in the last three weeks!" Spurgeon said...

"My, you must be awful proud of that" to which she answered, "Indeed I am!"

Care: is important. Most people will only come to you for help if you can demonstrate genuine care. You do not have to be a skilled and trained psychotherapist. Just be genuinely caring.

Empathy: is "Direct identification with, understanding of, and vicarious experience of another person's situation, feelings, and motives." We often call it "walking in another man's shoes."

Kindness Mark Twain wrote, "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." (See Colossians 3:12)

Patience, gentleness and respect. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." (1 Pet 3:15) The Episcopalian preacher Phillips Brooks wrote, "An element of a preacher's power is genuine respect for the people whom he preaches to."

*Loving Homosexuals & Transsexuals Requires Being Pro-Active

Many friends of homosexuals tell me, "All I know to do is pray for her." I believe in prayer, but prayer is never an excuse for inaction! Love is a verb!

Have evangelicals forgotten that when Adam and Eve ate us out of house and home, God initiated a search and rescue mission–calling out to Adam, "Where are you?"

Are we inoculated against the miracle of the Incarnation– forgetting that God left the splendor of heaven for the stench of a cow stall–to become a man and dwell among us?

And have we underestimated the fact that nowhere in Scripture is God ever pictured in a hurry–except in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son? The father, who represents our Heavenly Father, races to the wayward son. (Luke 15)

*Loving Homosexuals & Transsexuals Requires Believing in the reality of Change.

"LOVE" that rejects the reality of freedom should be considered "cruel and unusual punishment."

Grace that forgives us of sin, but does not free us from sin is a grace not worth having. Individuals who hold to "Once a homosexual, always a homosexual," should take Christ's words to heart–"You know neither the scripture nor the power of God." (Matt 22:29)

*Loving Homosexuals & Transsexuals Requires Asking Their Forgiveness

I know what you're thinking. "Why should I ask forgiveness from my homosexual/transsexual family member? He's the one living in sin!"

Bear with me here.

Larry Burtoft writes, "If the Biblical and Theological perspectives are right, which see in homosexual behavior one of the myriad forms which human fallenness can take, then those engaged in such behavior deserve...the offer of divine forgiveness and healing which is available." I would add that evangelicals need to ask homosexuals for their forgiveness for some inappropriate responses that are made on this issue. Note I said "responses" not "beliefs."

This recommendation is often met with incredulity. Take a spiritual inventory. When you first learned that a friend or family member was homosexual or transsexual,

Did you curse them?

Did you scream at them? Did you use any language unbecoming a Christian? Did you condemn them? Did you entertain the thought "I'm glad I'm not like him." Did you gloat? Did you feel yourself to be holier or better than him? If you did any of the above things, you have sinned against God and homosexuals/transsexuals and need forgiveness. First, go to God and ask His forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:9)

Then go to the judged individual and ask his/her forgiveness. No emails or letters; this needs to be face-to-face; or, if distance is an issue, make a phone call. Here's an example of what to say. "When I learned of your same-sex attractions, I said some angry things I should not have said. While I still hold to my beliefs on the issue, I ask your forgiveness for the mean-spirited remarks that I made. Would you please forgive me?"

At this point you wait for them to say, "I forgive you." If they will not forgive you or take the conversation in another direction, remain polite and respectful. Remember, you are not asking forgiveness in order to gain a confession of sin from them. Your request for forgiveness needs to be personal, brief and sincere.

You are not responsible for how they treat you; you are responsible for how you treat them!

In preparation for a speaking engagement at a major university, I encouraged the host organization to run an ad in the student newspaper. I wrote the following ad which they ran.

Apology to Gays Overdue (that headline caught attention) While we have clearly communicated our beliefs about homosexuality, we confess we have not always done so with humility. Our conspicuous, self-righteous attitudes have contradicted the very message we proclaim. We have regularly emphasized truth to the neglect of love. Often our desire to be right has overshadowed our responsibility to be respectful. We confess that we are sinners in need of God's grace, that the way we live our lives has not always matched what we confess with our lips. We confess that although all of us are created in God's image, that image has been marred by our own deliberate sin against our Creator and we long to be remade in His image through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Thus we apologize for the way in which we have addressed this issue. We ask your forgiveness and commit ourselves to build bridges of friendship based on human dignity rather than human sexuality.

*Loving Homosexuals Requires More Than Words

1 John 3:18 reads: "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." (Emphasis added)

When a friend or family member of a homosexual / transsexual contacts me, an initial question is usually, "What do I tell him so he will leave this lifestyle?" As if there is a magic set of words that will do the trick.

In 1979 Adrian Rogers was elected as President of the Southern Baptist Convention. He could have run for re-election in 1980, but chose not to. When asked by a reporter why he was not running for a second term, Rogers said God told him not to. The reporter then asked "Did God speak to you in an audible voice?" Adrian Rogers revealed one of God's attributes when he answered "No, It was louder than that!"

If God can speak in inaudible ways, can his children not also? Chuck Colson and his wife have the following matted and framed in their home: “Christians should share the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.”

*Loving Homosexuals/Transsexuals Requires Touch

Physical touch is not optional, it is essential! Americans, particularly men, are reticent to express affection to each other. Not so in other countries, nor in the Bible. In China, Africa and other countries it is common to see men embrace and hold hands. When I was in East Africa a few years ago, I noticed two teenage boys with their arms thrown over each others' shoulders. Ron Taffel, in his book *Why Parents Disagree*, recounts a father's question, “Is it all right if I hug and kiss my two-and-a-half-year-old son goodnight? I'm afraid it will turn him into a homosexual.”

Such thinking is counterintuitive!

Some in the church defend their resistance to ex-gay ministry on the grounds that homosexuality is a “dirty subject.” I politely state — “I am not aware of a ‘clean sin.’ God the Father got His hands dirty when He “...formed man from the dust of the ground.” (Gen. 2:7) God the Son got His hands dirty when He washed the dust/dirt/sewage from the disciple's feet. (John 13:5)

Communicate love physically, not just verbally! Biblical examples of demonstrative male friendship include David and Jonathan, Paul and Timothy and Jesus and John the Beloved Apostle. (John 21:20)

*Loving Homosexuals/ Transsexuals Requires Telling the Truth

Take another inventory. When you read the previous point—“Loving Homosexuals Requires Telling the Truth”, which truth did you first think of?

that homosexuality is sin, or an abomination or that when a person asks forgiveness, God separates them from their sin as far as the ‘East is from the West’ or ‘and such were some of you?’ My point is this— I find that when the word truth is used in relation to homosexuality/transsexuality, many Christians first think of “sin” or “abomination” versus God's transforming grace. We must give people the whole counsel of God. What people need is “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.”

Let me illustrate this with an actual email I received from a Christian man who mistakenly thought I was still a homosexual:

“I will continue to pray for your misunderstanding and immoral offenses. I have faith that God will open a door for you so you can realize your sins. Here is a verse written by Paul in Corinthians. ‘Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists will inherit the kingdom of God.’

If Jesus was ok with homosexuality, then why was Paul and everyone else to follow the Christian movement until the late 20th century so against it? The Bible talks about such catamites as this in the end times. Please find the truth.”

Much love, Tom (not his real name)

I do not advocate Tom's form of evangelism for the same reason I do not advocate sticking one's lips in a meat grinder.

Tom made some major mistakes. First, he assumed I was homosexual. Second, the tone of his email is less than loving; on the contrary it reeks with arrogance. And thirdly, Tom does not give me the whole truth when he quotes 1 Corinthians. He quotes verses nine and ten, but omits verse eleven which is crucial to the text. Versus eleven reads “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Emphasis added)

Also note that telling the truth does not mean converting homosexuals to heterosexuality. Many Christians peddle heterosexuality like it's 'another gospel.' (See Galatians 1:6) Conversion is to Jesus Christ who, in turn, transforms us. Jesus did not say "Go and make heterosexuals." He said "Go and make disciples."

*Loving Homosexuals/Transsexuals Requires Listening

James 1:19 reads "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

We can learn a lesson from Job. His oxen and donkeys are stolen. His servants and sheep are killed. His camels are carried off. A storm collapses on the house—killing his sons and daughters. And his health deteriorates dramatically. When Job's three friends hear of his multiple calamities, they go to comfort him. Because of Job's poor health, he is unrecognizable to the friends who weep in sympathy.

Here's the important part. "Then (the friends) sat down on the ground with (Job) for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great." (Job 2:13) (Emphasis added.) Can you imagine sitting with a hurting homosexual and remaining silent for a week? Some Christians cannot be silent seven seconds when the issue of homosexuality is broached.

After addressing a church group, a visibly-angry lesbian made her way toward me. My understandable fear subsided when I got the story. The lesbian's sister would not allow the lesbian's partner to visit her nephew and niece.

Though tempted to interrupt her tirade and say the sister had the right and responsibility to guard her children's exposure to such relationships, I sensed I should remain silent and just listen compassionately.

Then, with no hint that things were about to change, tears began to stream down her face. In a soft-spoken voice I asked, "Why are you crying?" Though she didn't answer my question directly, (and what's more I already knew), her reply spoke volumes. She said, "I cry all the time." I pulled up two chairs; we sat down and for more than an hour I listened to her story of hurt and confusion.

Do not miss the point! If I had not kept my mouth shut, this lady and I would never have connected.

Peter Marshall said, "There are aspects of the gospel that are puzzling and difficult to understand. But our problems are not centered around the things we don't understand, but rather in the things we do understand. This, after all, is but an illustration of the fact that our problem is not so much that we don't know what we should do. We know perfectly well, but we don't want to do it."

Is it possible that what many Christians do not want to do is ... love?

Jesus said "...all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

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