

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

How I Wish the Homosexuality Debate Would Go

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Just once, I'd like to see a TV interview go more like this:

Host: You are a Christian pastor, and you say you believe the Bible, which means you are supposed to love all people.

Pastor: That's right.

Host: But it appears to me that you and your church take a rather unloving position when it comes to gay people. Are homosexuals welcome to come to your church?

Pastor: Of course. We believe that the gospel is a message relevant for every person on the planet, and we want everyone to hear the gospel and find salvation in Jesus Christ. So at our church, our arms are outstretched to people from every background, every race, every ethnicity and culture. We're a place for all kinds of sinners and people with all kinds of problems.

Host: But you said there, "We're a place for sinners." So you do believe that homosexuality is sinful, right?

Pastor: Yes, I do.

Host: So how do you reconcile the command to love all people with a position on homosexuality that some would say is radically intolerant?

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Pastor: (*smiling*) If you think my position on homosexuality is radical, just wait until you hear what else I believe! I believe that a teenage guy and girl who have sex in the backseat of a pick-up are sinning. The unmarried heterosexual couple living down the street from me is sinning. In fact, any sexual activity that takes place outside of the marriage covenant between a husband and wife is sinful. What's more, Jesus takes this sexual ethic a step further and goes to the heart of the matter. That means that any time I even lust after someone else, I am sinning. Jesus' radical view of sexuality shows all of us up as sexual sinners, and that's why He came to die. Jesus died to save lustful, homo- *and* heterosexual sinners and transform our hearts and minds and behavior. Because He died for me, I owe Him my all. And as a follower of Jesus, I'm bound to what He says about sex and morality.

Host: But Jesus didn't condemn homosexuality outright, did He?

Pastor: He didn't have to. He went to the heart issue and *intensified* the commands against immoral behavior in the Old Testament. So Jesus doesn't just condemn adultery, for example, as does one of the Ten Commandments. Jesus condemns even the lust that leads to adultery, all with the purpose of offering us transformed hearts that begin beating in step with His radical demands.

Host: You say he condemned adultery, but he chose not to condemn the woman caught in adultery.

Pastor: That's right, but He did tell her to "go and sin no more."

Host: But who are you to condemn someone who doesn't line up with your personal beliefs about sexuality?

Pastor: Who am I? No one. It's not all that important what I think about these things. This conversation about homosexuality isn't really about my personal beliefs. They're about Jesus and what He says. I have no right to condemn or judge the world. That right belongs to Jesus. My hope is to follow Him faithfully. That means that whatever *He* says in regard to sexual practices is what I believe to be true, loving, and ultimately best for human flourishing – even when it seems out of step with the whims of contemporary culture.

Host: But you *are* judging. You are telling all the gay people watching this broadcast that they are sinners.

Pastor: I'm not singling out gay people. I'm pointing to Jesus as the answer to *all* sexual sinfulness.

Host: But you *are* referring to gay people. Why are you so focused on homosexuality?

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Pastor: (*smiling*) With all due respect, you are the one who brought up this subject.

Host: Are you saying that you can't be gay and Christian?

Pastor: No. I'm saying that you can't be a genuine Christian without repentance. Everyone – including me – is guilty of sin, but Christianity hinges on repentance. We agree with God about our sin, and we turn from it and turn toward Jesus. When it comes to Christianity, this debate is not about homosexuality versus other sins. It's about whether or not repentance is integral to the Christian life.

Host: But do you see why a homosexual watching this might think you are attacking them personally? You're saying that something is wrong with them.

Pastor: I think Jesus' teaching on sexuality shows us that there is something wrong with *all of us* – something that can only be fixed by what Jesus did for us on the cross and in His resurrection. That said, I understand why people might think I am attacking them personally. Most people with same-sex desires believe they were born with these tendencies. That's why they often see their attraction as going to the very core of who they are, and so they identify themselves with the "gay" label. So whenever someone questions their behavior or desires, they take it as an attack on the very core of their being. That's usually not the intent of the person who disagrees with homosexual behavior. But that's the way it is perceived. I understand that.

Host: If it's true that a person is born with one sexual orientation or another, then how can it possibly be loving to condemn one person's orientation?

Pastor: Well, we really don't know for certain about sexual attraction being innate and set from birth. All we have is the testimony of people who say that they've experienced same-sex desires since childhood. Christianity teaches that all people are born with a bent toward sin. It's possible that some people will have a propensity toward alcohol abuse or angry outbursts, while others may have a propensity toward other sins. Regardless, Christians believe people are more than their sexual urges. We believe that human dignity is diminished whenever we define ourselves by sexual urges and behaviors. Consider this: married men are sometimes attracted to multiple women who are not their wives. Does this mean they should self-identify as polygamists? Not at all. And surely you wouldn't consider it hateful for Christians to encourage married men *not* to act on their desires in an effort to remain faithful to their spouses. It is the Christian way, after all.

Host: No, but it still seems like you are telling people not to be true to who they are.

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Pastor: It only seems that way because you believe sexual desire reflects the core of one's identity. It would help if you and others who agree with you would understand that in your putting pressure on me to accept homosexual behavior as normal and virtuous, *you* are going to the very core of *my* identity as a follower of Jesus. The label most important to me is "Christian." My identity – in Christ – is central to who I am. So I could say the same thing and call you intolerant, bigoted, and hateful for trying to change a conviction that goes to the core of who I am as a Christian. I don't say that because I don't believe that's your intention. But neither should you think it's my intention to attack a homosexual person or cause them harm merely because I disagree.

Host: But the problem is, your position fosters hate and encourages bullying.

Pastor: I recognize that some people have mistreated gays and lesbians in the past. It's a shame that anyone anywhere would mock, taunt, or bully another human being made in God's image. That said, I think we need to make one thing clear in regard to civil discourse: *To differ is not to hate*. I hope we can still have a real conversation in this country about different points of view without casting one another in the worst possible light. The idea that disagreeing with homosexual behavior necessarily results in harm to gay people is designed to shut down conversation and immediately rule one point of view (in this case, the Christian one) out of bounds. As a Christian, I am to love my neighbor and seek his good, even when I don't see eye to eye with my neighbor. Furthermore, the picture of Christ on the cross dying for His enemies necessarily affects the way I think about this and other issues.



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