

# Evening Seminar: Walking With Gay Friends Q&A;

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Date: 11 November 2012

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[ 0 : 00 ] to come back if it wasn't clear enough or anything else. We'll do that. Okay, so here's a very helpful one to start with.

Sometimes we might only have a brief moment or one-line opportunity to respond to the accusation, you're a Christian, you think it's a sin to be gay.

Any one-line answers that you could suggest? Okay, yeah, I don't know that one-line answers are necessarily going to have much impact, but Jesus had a very good way of turning questions around, and I would say that's actually a question I would turn around.

The Bible doesn't actually talk about being gay, I've already mentioned that this evening, it doesn't talk in terms of people's attractions, it talks about practice. But actually, I would want to get right to the heart of the matter, and maybe one way you could deal with that is say, well actually, in the Bible, Jesus said that the most important commandment of all is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

So actually, that's the biggest sin of all that he's really worried about. And it kind of, it gets the conversation onto a conversation about sin, rather than specifically about being gay, which might be really helpful.

[ 1 : 20 ] And just as a general pointer, I think what is really important, where we're trying to share the Gospel with gay friends, is that we have it clear in our minds that their being gay is not the main issue.

Okay, I think that's really important. Their being gay is not the main issue. The main issue is that they're not in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So actually, even though they may make it the big issue, I think it's really important that as Christians, we don't make it the big issue.

Because what we end up doing is making it a stumbling block. So in other words, we give the impression that actually to become a Christian, you have to give up being gay. Well, that's not true at all.

Okay, you become a Christian, and then God, with his Holy Spirit, convinces you of all kinds of things he wants to change, and transform, and lead you away from. But it's not, I give up being gay in order to become a Christian.

It doesn't work that way. So, sorry, that was a very long-winded answer. That was by no means a one-liner, but it's not as simple as that. Okay. Second question.

[ 2 : 24 ] If on any of these points, if you want to follow up, if you just raise your hand, and then we'll be able to come to you. Here's a very helpful one if you have children. Both my children have been told at school by teachers that if they feel attracted to the opposite sex, that's okay.

Basically, they are encouraging their classes to practice and go ahead with homosexuality. How do I, as a parent, deal with this? Yeah, I know that's a real issue in schools at the moment.

I am aware of one school where the head has actually issued an instruction to all the teachers that if anybody, even as young as 11, comes out and says, I'm gay or I'm bi, that they have to be affirmed in that.

You can't question it. You can't say, are you sure? You actually have to affirm them. And as I mentioned, I think that's really sad, because it's not giving young people space. I think, you know, I'm speaking here as someone who isn't a parent, and it's sometimes very easy when you're not a parent to give helpful advice to parents.

But I think what we need to be doing as parents is making sure that we're actually doing some teaching at home. So it's really good to get a conversation going with what is being taught in your school.

[ 3 : 37 ] So asking your child what they're learning. And that's not always easy to do. I do realise, having been a teenager, that it's not always easy to strike up those conversations. But in a sense, we need to be being prepared to counter what may be being taught in school.

And that's not by coming out with then sort of, you know, homophobic views, but actually trying to communicate a really biblical, grace-filled Christian view.

You know, and so, for example, if a teenager came home and said that, I'd be kind of wanting to say the kind of thing like, well, actually, do you know what? You know, a lot of research has shown that people's sexual attractions can fluctuate over time.

So people sometimes may have same-sex attractions in their teenage years and that then disappears in their 20s. And that actually is sending out a very positive message to your child to help them, you know, to be able to not judge their gay friends.

But also, potentially, your own child could be struggling in this area. And so you want to be sending out a positive message that, look, you don't need to define yourself in this way, even though the teacher says you should be or, you know, you ought to be just accepting it.

[ 4 : 39 ] And I just think it is wrong. It's wrong teaching. And maybe you need to engage with the school over that as well and actually be, you know, asking the teachers, are you aware that people's sexual attractions fluctuate?

You know, often into 20s and well beyond. You know, maybe have that kind of conversation. And I know of some parents who have had those kind of conversations. I hope that's helpful. Do come back, as Johnny says. Any comeback?

Can you all hear at the back okay? Loud enough? Good. Here's a very practical one. Well, that one was too. They all are. My wife and I stayed with her gay brother in London.

Now I'm wondering what I will do if they ask to come and stay in my house. He's in a long-term relationship. Yeah, okay.

Yeah, very practical issue to deal with. Okay, well, I want to say there are actually, I think there are two ways of dealing with it. There may be more, but certainly two that I can think of.

[ 5 : 43 ] And I think what it is going to come down to is a question of conscience. I think actually conscience is a really important part of Christian living. So the first way is that you say, well, your brother is not a Christian.

Him and his partner, I'm assuming, are not claiming to be Christians. They're not Christians. Therefore, why should I expect them to live Christianly? You know, let's face it, it's hard enough for those of us who are Christians.

You have the Holy Spirit in us to live Christianly. Why should I expect those who are not Christians to live Christianly? So you could argue it in that way. And I would say you can take encouragement from examples that I gave this morning in this morning service from the Lord Jesus in the way that he would meet with and minister to people who had strayed from God's purposes sexually.

So, for example, the way he met with the woman of Samaria, the way he met with the woman who wiped his feet with her hair, who was a woman of ill repute. Jesus didn't say, look, you go and sort your life out and get righteous and then I'll have fellowship with you.

Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. And the reason he was known as a friend of sinners was because he would have meals with, quote, sinful people. And it got him in a lot of hot water for doing it. So that's one way.

[ 6 : 57 ] The other way, though, is that you say, well, this is my home. It's a Christian home. And I feel strongly that I don't want somebody in my home acting in a way that goes against my Christian principle.

I think that's perfectly valid as well. But I think if you're going to do that, you need to find a way of explaining it very lovingly to your family member and saying, look, because of my Christian convictions, this, you know, just have an open discussion.

It puts me in some difficulty. And I think you can argue both ways. And, you know, I'm giving you very, trying to give you a fairly brief answer here. You can make a biblical argument both ways.

But what I think it comes down to, and as I say, this is the important issue, is it's a question of conscience. So I would say if with a clear conscience, you can allow a family member into your home with his partner into a room and you have a clear conscience before God because you're convinced that actually that's the best way to reach them for the gospel, maintaining a good relationship, showing them a loving welcome, not judging them.

And you can do that with a clear conscience. Then my view is that you shouldn't allow anybody else to judge you and you should do what you believe is right before God. If, however, you believe that by doing that, you're compromising your faith, you're sinning against God, and that goes against your conscience, then you shouldn't do it.

[ 8 : 15 ] Because actually, by doing it, you are then sinning. That's the biblical teaching on conscience. But I think it's a very difficult one to give a black or white answer. I would challenge anybody to give me an absolute clear biblical answer.

And as such, my feeling is that it's a question of conscience. And you should prayerfully, and I do mean prayerfully, praying and asking God, Lord, show me how to act in a Christ-like way.

Show me how to be full of grace and truth in this situation. And if you're genuinely doing that, committing it to prayer, seeking to do the right thing, I do believe that ultimately God honours that, even if perhaps we don't get it exactly right.

You know, it's a question of what our attitude is and what our heart is. I hope that's... You'll notice with all of these questions, they are not easy ones, and I'm being very careful not just to give black and white answers.

I actually don't think that's helpful in a lot of these situations. Yeah, okay, can you say it nice and loud so we can all get it?

[ 9 : 17 ] It's probably the same thing for us as people living together. Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah. And whether you put them in a different room and explain why you do that.

Yeah. I think it's exactly the same issue. Yeah, whether it's exactly the same as if it's two people who are opposite sex attracted living together. Exactly, yeah. And I do think it's a question of conscience.

And actually, you may find that over time your conscience changes as well. You know, a decision you might make at a certain age, you may make a different decision. Some of you say that doesn't mean that you've become more liberal.

It just may mean that your conscience has changed before God, and we should be open to that. Just to say, in your children in the house, it might shape your decision in one direction.

Yeah. If you don't have children, you might feel free or free. Yeah, thank you. That's a very good point, isn't it? Yeah, because you're concerned about the example you're setting for your children.

[10:15] Yeah, absolutely. Any comeback on that? Anything further? Gentleman there. Yeah. Just one point for the one line of people or two. One thing we do is that we don't say a sin, God accepts it.

Yeah, yeah. And we follow Jesus Christ who says that sin, even for our own family. Yeah. And so our issue is not with how my conscience, should I or shouldn't I think.

My conscience is how I follow Jesus Christ who says that sin. You know, the Lord has asked me not to smoke, not to drink, for us. No. No. No. No. No. So I follow what he says. No. No. No. No.

[illegible]

No. No. No. No. You keep drinking there.

[ 11 : 12 ]    No. No. No. No. A Christian teacher has colleagues who are gay or pro-gay.

How do you witness to Jesus in such a situation when any challenge to gay assumptions is treated with hostility? I'll repeat that again.

A Christian teacher has colleagues who are gay or pro-gay. How do you witness to Jesus in such a situation when any challenge to gay assumptions is treated with hostility?

Yeah, okay, good question. I think probably I would come back to something I said earlier, that actually from your point of view, I think it's important to remember that their being gay is not the main issue.

So in one sense, you want to, you know, talking about how do you share your faith, how do you witness? You witness in the way that you would to anybody else who isn't a Christian, and that is, it's by sharing your life.

[ 12 : 09 ] I think that's really important, that they see by your life, the way you live, the way you act, the way you speak, the way you don't speak, maybe the fact that you don't gossip. All of those things, you'd be amazed at the impact that can have on people.

I remember in the days when I was in my same-sex relationship, I had a couple of Christians working in the office where I worked, and although I gave them a torrid time, believe me, I gave them a terrible time, their lives really had a massive impact on me.

And actually, I can think of two Christians who had a real impact on me, and they were two good friends, actually, who knew that I'd gone into this same-sex relationship, even though I'd been along to church with them.

And they actually set me aside and spoke to me and said, look, we know, you know, we want you to know that we still love you, but we believe that the direction you're going is taking you away from God, and we're going to be praying that God would commit you.

Now, I didn't like to hear that, but actually it was addressed in such a way that I was able to take it. So I think in one sense, it is just treating them as you would anybody else, so sharing your life, sharing your love, taking opportunities to share gospel truth.

[ 13 : 11 ] And I would say, don't you focus on the gay issues. They may bring them up, and if they do, then you have to address them, and all you can do is speak the truth in love.

And they may be hostile, and they may reject it, they may react against it, but in a sense, your job is to speak the truth in love, and you leave the consequences with God. But I would suggest that only speak on gay issues if they raise them, because that's showing that that's where they're at.

They're convinced that the gospel is opposed to gay people, or God is opposed to gay people. Then you have to deal with it. But if you show them by your own behaviour that actually this is not the main issue for you, at all, that actually, you know, because Jesus didn't go up, for example, to the woman of Samaria and say, you're an adulteress, you're going to hell, you know.

He didn't address her in that. He dealt firstly with her sense of alienation, and it was only later on that he began to challenge her about her sinful behaviour. So I think that's the kind of model we need.

We don't begin with people's sin. We begin actually with them as a human being, and possibly, you know, this hostility that comes out sometimes from gay people actually often can be masking, a real sense of being downtrodden and rejected and feeling that they're hated, and all those things can come out in quite hostile behaviour.

[ 14 : 27 ] So that's my thinking, and it tends to work that way, where you don't concentrate on the gay issue, but address it if they bring it up, but then address it with, you know, grace and truth, again, is the phrase I would use.

Thank you. Okay. Maybe before we ask another one, just a question in terms of terminology that we use.

Is there a difference between saying gay or homosexual or I'm pro-gay and anti-homosexual? What's our right way of using our terminology?

Thank you. Yeah, okay. What I tend to, I think when you're speaking with people who are not Christians and you're trying to build relationships with people who are not Christians, I actually think it's really helpful to use what I would call culturally acceptable terms.

So I have a number of friends who are gay and they call themselves gay. So I will call them gay because that's how they identify them. So in a sense, that's meeting them where they're at.

[ 15 : 30 ] And again, I think that's modelled by the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus meets people where they're at. So I think gay is the culturally acceptable term. Certainly, I'm assuming it is over here. Certainly is in England.

Homosexual, now, most people who are gay wouldn't call themselves homosexual. And it can often be seen as a derogatory term. So it's seen more actually as a Christian, this is the Christian term that people use because they're anti-gay.

So I personally would avoid using homosexual just simply because of that reason. But homosexual is, if you like, the more, you could say, medical scientific term in a sense.

It's describing someone who is attracted to those of the same sex. But I would say, preferably use the word gay. But I would also say, within church circles, when we're talking about these things, I like to challenge this whole concept of identifying ourselves according to our sexual attraction.

So I think it's really important within Christian circles, we're not using those terms to each other. We're not saying, I'm straight. You know, that's not how God sees us. If we're Christians, we're in Christ.

[ 16 : 42 ] And actually, you know, we're not to describe ourselves primarily according to our sexual attractions. It is completely an unbiblical concept. But that isn't going to make any sense to somebody who isn't a Christian. So you don't begin there.

Have I completely confused you all now? I don't know. Anyway, that's my answer. No, I think that's fine. That's helpful. Please, if there's other questions, I have two more here.

So if there are other questions from the floor after this, please raise them. Here's another one. If orientation, that same sex, has some environmental factors which contribute, then should the new believer remove these things as part of being changed, healed, redeemed, i.e. a choice of clothing, taste in art, music, get rid of the cat.

I guess they assume gay people have cats. I don't know. Or is it better? Or is it better to see these things as redeemed too?

So if it's environmental factors, when we become a believer, do we remove ourselves from these environments? Do we change our tastes or what?

[ 17 : 59 ] Like you wanted to be an air hose steward? Yes. A travel agent? Yes. Did you go, right, I'm never going to be that again? Or want to be that? No.

No, no, not for that reason. Yes, it's a really interesting question. I don't know if I've ever had a question quite like that. I think, no, it's a great, I think it's a great question. Apart from, does it really say about getting rid of the cat?

It does say get rid of the cat. Is that, is that, is that, is that philophobic or something? I don't know. I don't, I don't like cats either.

Oh, okay. Did you write this question? You wrote this question. But I'm not, but I'm not gay. Okay. Okay. Let's, let's, let's, let's get serious again. Yeah, I think it's a good question.

I think certainly as a Christian, I think the environment that we spend our time in is important. I would think, I would probably not focus so much, I think that the way we dress and for example, I don't think that's so much what I mean by environment.

[ 19 : 01 ] I mean, it brings us to a more general question. You know, why is it that some gay men, for example, do tend to dress a family? By, by all, by no means all, all men. And I think that's much more to do with how they're feeling, you know, in themselves and that sometimes it can be a statement, wanting to make that statement.

Well, sometimes it can just be simply the fact that they're associating with people who dress in a certain way and they want to be felt, they want to feel that they're part of that group. But I think it's certainly in terms of being careful where you go and what you open yourself up to as a Christian, I would certainly say yes, it can be helpful to change environment.

But I want to be a little bit cautious because I actually think the way we're transformed mostly is actually inwardly. When we become Christians, God's Holy Spirit dwells within us and we read and we meditate on God's word, the Holy Spirit works within us.

And we're actually transformed inwardly, which then leads to our behaviour changing outwardly. The danger with this approach is that we think that actually if we change everything out, if we change all the outward signs, that's actually going to make us different.

Well, it really isn't. The only thing that's going to make us different is when we're transformed inwardly. So I would say that actually as part of that inward transformation, you may well find that a person who's come from this background, becomes a Christian, does actually and hopefully does start to change various behaviours.

[ 20 : 25 ] That may be in terms of the way they dress. It may be in terms of the places they go, the people they mix with. I mean, I still have some gay friends who I spend time with, but I make sure that actually most of my time is spent with Christian friends because that's really important.

I need that Christian fellowship. But actually, I still really enjoy the company of some of my gay friends because they're friends. And it's not because they're gay, it's just that they're friends who happen to be gay. So, yeah, I hope that's somehow, that's a very, it's a very interesting question.

So, I hope I've addressed it. Don't get rid of the cat. That's terrible. Does the person who doesn't like cats want to come back on that?

Or any follow-up on that question? Yeah, I think it's a prayer. Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. And I think that is, that is very important.

Yeah, the whole.

[ 21 : 32 ] Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, that would be the same if you think about it for any kind of sin, you know, sin that you're struggling with. I mean, if you're, you know, if you struggle with alcoholism, you are going to need probably to avoid being in places where alcohol is being served freely, you know, or you're spending too much time with people who regularly drink.

I think it's the same kind of principle. Yeah. Actually, being careful what we open ourselves up to as Christians is really, is really very important. One more here.

If people are not born gay, how come it becomes obvious by looking at their mannerisms that they are different? I'll read it again.

If people are not born gay, how come it becomes obvious by looking at their mannerisms they are different? Yeah, it's a really good question. And by saying people are not born gay, I think it's important actually to recognise that, you know, people do notice signs in people as young as two or three.

You know, I've had parents say to me, you know, I'm convinced even as young as three, you know, that my son is turning out gay. They just have this feeling in certain mannerisms, interests and so on.

[ 22 : 47 ] I think that, I mean, that's often referred to as gender nonconformity. So somebody who is growing up and not conforming to their gender, that does not necessarily mean that they're going to develop same-sex attractions.

But just for whatever reason, they're not conforming to the typical male or female stereotypes. And that can be for a whole number of reasons. That can be environmental. It could be that there are some genetic factors there.

So it could be that actually there is some genetic influence. Some people maybe are born, you know, and they're just genetically, they have maybe more female influence than male influence.

And I mean, the other danger with this is I know of a number of people who males who are very effeminate or women who are very masculine who are not at all same-sex attracted.

And you can make, very easily make assumptions that because maybe they have certain mannerisms or they dress in a certain way, that that means that they are therefore gay. I mean, I think the fact is that there is no proof that people are born gay.

[ 23 : 50 ] But as I said earlier, there could well be genetic, biological kind of influences that will appear at a very young age. But again, just because they appear at a young age doesn't mean that they are actually there necessarily by birth.

If there's any other questions, I'm going to ask one. In terms of us as a church, should we be doing anything proactive in terms of our outreach or our witness?

Or is it simply, as one of the questions there was, you know, working with a colleague who is gay, just simply being a faithful Christian in that environment? Or should we be proactive in seeking to reach out?

Thank you. Yeah, I think in answering this, I'm reluctant to be too prescriptive. But my own personal feeling is that generally the best way to reach openly gay people is actually going to be through friendship or through our normal contact.

So, for example, people that we work with, family members, friends, neighbours, whatever it is, them seeing our lives lived out for Christ is actually probably going to be more powerful than them sort of coming across some evangelistic event or so on.

[ 25 : 14 ] But, as I said, I'm very reluctant to put God in a box because God works in all kinds of ways. So, for example, I know of a church over in the USA who did an outreach specifically for gay people.

And as a direct outcome of that outreach, the leader of the Gay Pride March in quite a prominent city in the USA came to faith. And that was a massive coup, if you like, for God.

So, God can work in all kinds of ways. But my general experience is that most gay people are not likely to respond very positively to direct evangelistic outreach just because it's going to immediately get the shackles up and all of the baggage is going to come to the fore about how the church is anti-gay.

So, I think my general experience and feeling is that it's through building a friendship and, you know, I think most gay people really need to see a Christian who is non-judgmental and full of grace and truth.

You know, that's going to be the thing that's going to really challenge somebody. But let's not ever try and put God in a box. He can reach people in all kinds of ways. So, I do know of people, for example, in London who go to gay bars in Soho directly seeking to reach out with the gospel.

[ 26 : 29 ] I know of a boy, a 14-year-old rent boy, that's a male prostitute, who came to faith in Christ in Manchester as a direct result of the street pastor's outreach.

So, you know, when you hear things like that, you think, wow, isn't God amazing? You know, God is at work. God will work in all kinds of ways and means. But my general feeling is that actually friendship is the best way to reach people.

We'll go Peter and then John. Is there any way you think that God is going great to give us ways to learn from the LGBT community?

Is there anything that they do really well and they feel that we can in fact learn from them? That's a good question. Yeah, the question is, is there anything that we could learn from the LGBT community?

Anything that they do well? Anything that we could... I think... I mean, I know, for example, of lesbian, gay, bi, transgender community.

[ 27 : 39 ] Sorry, you kind of make assumptions. Everybody knows the lingo. I've known of Christian unions in universities who have kind of tried to get a debate going and a conversation going.

So between the Christian union and maybe the gay society or whatever it may be called. And that can be a good thing to do in terms of getting conversation going.

So I've spoken at an event, for example, in Cambridge, Cambridge Christian Union. They did an event where Christians actually invited all of their gay friends to come and sort of gave a talk to them.

And I was a bit apprehensive as to how that was going to go because, I mean, I have been kind of booed off before in these kind of situations because they don't want to hear. But actually, they were really, really good and they listened very well.

And I think that was actually, you know, they had invited the Christians along. So I think they actually began that conversation. They said, look, why don't you come and see what we do in our, you know, our meetings and then maybe we'll come.

[ 28 : 43 ] So, but is that kind of what you were thinking? I'm not quite sure if I've hit the question there. Yeah.



Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I think probably what I would say is that they obviously are very good at including people.

And I think that's probably, this is where the church, I think, does need to learn. One of the reasons why I think the pro-gay lobby has been so effective, and certainly in terms of reaching out those who've been influenced by churches in the past, one of the reasons is that the church historically has not been very good at including people and welcoming people and dealing with these issues sensitively.

So I think one of the things that we do need to think as Christians is, how can we ensure that our church fellowship is welcoming to people who come from whatever background?

So actually, for me, the ideal should be that any church on a Sunday, you can have two people walk in, whether it's two people of the same sex or the opposite sex who are married, not married. They come in and they don't sort of get these sort of looks from the congregation.

[ 30 : 19 ] Oh dear, you know, look at... And that does happen, sadly. But actually, they're just given a warm welcome, because that's the only way, really, that they're likely to hear the gospel, is if they're welcomed in. They're not judged by people.

They're shown... They're treated the same as anybody else would be treated, whether they're in an opposite sex relationship or a same sex relationship. You know, in the same way, the person who's maybe a prostitute or the person who's transgender, you know, I've heard of churches who are very good at welcoming people who are transgender.

So, you know, you've got a guy walking around in women's clothes. That's going to be quite a challenge for a church to deal with. But how, you know, how you deal with that could have a really positive or a very negative influence.

So, to my mind, the way it ought to work is that the church should accept people from all kinds of backgrounds, all kinds of struggles, doesn't matter what their culture, what their image, what their sexuality. And they come into church, they see the love of Christ, and then they hear the word of God.

And it's the word of God and the Holy Spirit that does the convicting. And I think sometimes as Christians, we think we have to do the convicting. We've got to kind of get in there and lay our... You do know, don't you, that the Bible is...

[ 31 : 24 ] I'm not saying we put it quite like that, but we feel that we have to lay our cards on the table. And that's, I think, where the gay community has been quite good, in that they've welcomed in, disenfranchised people who've been to churches or even...

It's amazing how many gay people, openly gay people, have had sort of brushes with Christianity in the past. So a number of them maybe have went to a youth group but felt that the youth group didn't accept them because they were struggling in this area.

So I think that would be my main way, is just by being proactive in being loving and welcoming, not feeling we have to do the judgment. We're never to make judgments over people.

God does the judging. We do the loving and the speaking the truth in love, and then allowing God to do the rest. I hope that's helpful. Thank you.

John? Thanks, John. Yep. Thank you, John, for everything. In this country, the next few years, there will all be certain things that are in the referendum of gay marriage.

[ 32 : 24 ] It's not going to be working in Ireland. I was going to ask, I think you really answered my question already, how should the church, especially in the other words, conduct those in this, when it was very public, likely very often days.

And I'm thinking part of the answer, when you reflect back to what you said, is that maybe in my church hall where we're joining here, we should post a debate between both sides of the church, is what we're doing here.

Is that the opening part of the way in this? Yeah, I think it could be. I think the only potential danger with that, I mean, you're trying to do two things at the same time, of course, because you want to give clear teaching to believers, and what you don't want to do is, because I think that the one potential danger with this is that there are an awful lot of Christians who are really unsure what to believe on these issues.

And the only danger with opening up to debate is that actually you may find some Christians are persuaded by what are sometimes very convincing and sometimes very well put arguments by the gay lobby.

So that would be my only slight concern on that. I think probably in terms of how do we deal with the gay marriage, we shouldn't be afraid as Christians to speak and to speak the truth.

[ 33 : 46 ] I think that's really important, but I think it's the way we do it. So I'm not ashamed to be, and I would say to my gay friends, I believe that actually marriage has a theological definition.

It's actually something that God has created. It's not something actually that the state owns. And I'll have that discussion with my friends, but they know that I'm not standing in judgment over them. I'm just actually expressing my beliefs.

And I think actually the way we express our beliefs is probably going to be really important. And that actually as we do that, and I was quite encouraged by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, for example, recently, he said something along the lines of, it's really important that the church has nothing to do with homophobia.

And yet he is, as far as I can tell, he is certainly holding firm to the church's teaching that actually same-sex sexual relationships are not right in God's eyes.

But he found a very helpful way to express that. So I think it's going to be much more in the way we express ourselves. But we shouldn't be afraid to speak the truth. It's going to be difficult to do that, because we will be accused of all kinds of things.

[ 34 : 51 ] But if at the same time as being pro-marriage, we're also showing that we're not standing in judgment over gay people, we're not sort of rejecting them, and we're doing whatever we...

I would say much better, maybe, to find ways how can we actually create an environment at church which is welcoming to people, whatever their sexuality, but at the same time not compromise what we believe.

Eight seconds, Martin. Yeah. I mean, if I can't do that, I don't know that it's made a confidence that I've never brought to the past.

John, I just asked a question that my body will walk a little bit. For those in church leadership, what is the supposed to be for best? To see how I work with more teachers, but continue in a lifetime.

Yeah. Obviously, I'm not even... Yeah, thank you. Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for that. Yeah, let me be clear what I mean by not standing in judgment over people.

[ 35 : 55 ] What I mean by that is actually it's not for us to judge. God is the only judge, and he's appointed the Lord Jesus. But that doesn't mean that as Christians we're not to make judgments. Do you see what I mean?

There's a subtle difference there. We are to make judgments as to what is right and what is wrong, and obviously the Bible gives us the direction there. So we are to make godly judgments, but we're not to stand in judgment over an individual.

So in those kind of situations, and I've been in that kind of situation as a church leader, we do have to challenge all kinds of behavior. We have to do that with grace.

We have to do it with real humility. We have to do it on the understanding that actually the whole purpose of any kind of church discipline, if we're calling it church discipline, the whole purpose of any church discipline is actually restorative.

It's not to punish people. It's actually, you know, even if somebody is put out of a church for whatever reason, it's always with the hope and the intention and the prayer that they'll actually return to the Lord and return to faith.

[ 36 : 55 ] So I think that's really important. But there will be times, yeah, when we do need to challenge behavior. The other thing I want to say on this, though, I think it's really important that we don't, again, elevate any kind of sexual sin and make it out as to be the most important thing, the thing that we must address.

And I'll give you an example. I know of a church situation where they were very willing to challenge sexual sin, but in this particular church, and I sort of did a bit of consultancy with them, there was a couple who were being extremely divisive within the church, causing real, real problems within the church.

Now, I know that there's some teaching in Titus that talks about warning a divisive person once, warn them a second time, and after that have nothing to do with them. This particular church weren't prepared to do that, and it turned out that they were what they, quote, called generous givers.

Now, that, to me, is complete, you completely are, boy, you're showing prejudice, aren't you? You are prejudicially treating one couple.

Somebody who is sexually sinning, deal with it. Somebody who's causing division, which is actually equally as damaging to the church. Don't deal with that. Yeah, so I think we need to be careful. If we're going to challenge sinful behavior, which we should be doing, and actually it's not just for the pastors and leaders of a church, we're all to challenge each other, you know, speak the truth to one another in love.

[ 38 : 17 ] We all have responsibility to do that, but let's make sure that we're doing it from a position of humility, that we're seeing it as something restorative, not punitive, and that we don't just do it for one particular sin and ignore all these other kinds of, you know, slander should be challenged, you know, all of these other things that 1 Corinthians 6 talks about.

Thanks very much, Jonathan. We're going to stop there, but please do come and talk to Jonathan if you'd like to afterwards. Thanks very much for coming. I'm simply just going to pray, and those who have to leave can leave.

Father, thank you so much for your amazing grace for the gospel that has reached into our lives, that Christ would come and take my guilt, our guilt and shame, and our sin upon himself, and take the wrath that we deserve so that we can be forgiven, welcomed in, and accepted as your children.

And we praise you, and we thank you for that. Please help us as we go into our families, our workplaces, our schools, our colleges, to be people who bring that same grace and offer that same gospel, that we would be people who do so with grace and truth.

Please provide those opportunities for us, open up doors of opportunity, that we would live well, that people would see that difference and ask and talk.

[ 39 : 50 ] We pray for Jonathan. We thank you for the work of True Freedom Trust. We pray you would give to him great wisdom, pastorally, as he meets with people, that he would be given the words to say, and that you would encourage him in his own life and work.

And we ask, Father, your blessing upon us all as we leave. Bring us home safely, and we thank you for this evening. In Jesus' name. Amen. So I encourage you just to check out the website that's on the screen, but thanks again very much for coming.

If you have cups, just put them up on the hatch there. Thank you.