

Same sex marriage and the church

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[0:00] The prophet Isaiah and applied himself, Jesus described his approach to them saying, 'A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench.'

! Jesus will not let fragile people crumble or collapse beneath the weight of their struggles. Jesus wants to take those who feel they are close to flickering out and help them return to brightness and joy.

Jesus is tender and gentle towards those who think they cannot go any further. And this evening, as we consider this topic of same-sex sexuality, we're talking about human beings.

Human beings who are like us, sinful and broken, and with many different struggles. And the beginning of that book calls us to remember our Savior Jesus, who has compassion upon sinners. And Jesus, in another place in Matthew's Gospel, says, 'Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'

[1:26] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you that he is gentle and humble in heart, and in him we can find rest for our souls. For his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

Father, as we consider this huge topic in our world at the moment, as we consider what your word says, Father, we pray for your help.

And we pray that you would help us and grow us and shape us more into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who we love and seek to follow in this world.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing of the Lord Jesus. We're going to sing this lovely hymn. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear.

[2:26] It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, and drives away our fear. So let's stand and be ready to sing as Phil leads us.

As a church, we're called, aren't we, to be distinct from the world that we live in. Jesus, in his sermon on the mount, calls us to be light and salt.

Light shining in the darkness of our world. A city on a hill that cannot be hidden. We're called to be salt, adding a kind of distinctive and preservative flavor to the world.

And so it's been really sad to see over these last few years different churches and denominations, which on this issue of same-sex sexuality, have departed away from the teachings of the Bible.

I saw, as I'm sure some of us did in the news a few months ago, Sandy Toksvig, the comedian, decided she was going to write and then have tea with Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to tell him that people like her should be able to get married in the Church of England.

[3:56] But I've also seen, interestingly, a few people on social media and on different news websites say, actually, we'd like to see the Church stand up for whatever it is it believes in, rather than trying to please everyone.

And some of those people saying that are even non-Christians, which has surprised me. And so, as a church this evening, we are thinking about this issue of same-sex sexuality.

And much of what I say is stemmed from different readings, as well as from the Bible, different readings of different books. And I would highly commend this little book for you, this short little book called *Is God Anti-Gay?*

by Sam Albury, who himself would describe himself as someone who has same-sex attraction. He's a pastor in a church in Nashville in America.

He's English, though. He's one of our own. If you're interested in buying this, do let me know if we have 10 or more people from our church that want to buy it, we can get a bit of a discount on it.

[5:20] So, I feel like I'm someone from 10 of those or something. Let me know. Be more than happy to help set that up for us.

And Sam, in one of his chapters, helpfully reminds us that the Lord Jesus, when he came, came full of grace and truth.

This is what John 1 verse 14 says, The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

But it seems to be that some churches have gone on the side of grace and forgotten truth. That they have welcomed and accepted everyone rightly, but then gone too far with that and affirmed people in whatever way they choose to live.

ignoring what the Bible says. And on the flip side to that, other churches have gone more on the side of truth.

[6:38] That if people don't live the way the Bible says, they'll bat them down with the Bible without showing any grace.

But Jesus came full of both grace and truth. I hesitated as to whether to get you to talk about this, but I think I will.

Just in where you're sitting in little groups, just for maybe three or four minutes, chat about this scenario. A lesbian couple have just moved on to Viaduct Road, that's this rose.

They say they're Christians and would like to be part of a local church. They attend Calvary here one Sunday morning. How should we respond?

Have a chat in groups. We'll share thoughts. Hopefully then the rest of this evening will be helpful for us as we think about this. Go for it.

[7:48] Any feedback from this initial... Sorry to get you to discuss such a big topic so quickly.

Where are people's thoughts at? It would be interesting to know. Phil... Anyone want to chat?

Mark. Mark, thank you. Yes, personally I thought this was rather an incongruous situation because if they're living in a lesbian relationship and they say they're Christians, that has alarm bells.

Are you really? Because they don't go together. Obviously they could... Obviously, as Steve said, you've got to be gracious to them coming into the church and welcome them, as you said, but there's also the aspect of truth.

We've got to preach the gospel and they're going to hear the truth and they're going to feel uncomfortable if they're in that relationship. Yeah. Thank you, Mark.

[8:53] Thank you. Yeah, some helpful thoughts shared by Catherine and Maria here about welcoming with compassion. Catherine mentioned, you know, being really prayerful for, you know, what words are said and, you know, just seeking the Lord's help with those conversations but desiring to share the truth of God's word with them.

And Maria was saying as well about just often not assuming that people know and have been under solid teaching.

Yeah. And I guess just the time it can take, the transforming work and repenting work in hearts and lives. That's really helpful. Thank you.

Sorry, they may not be aware of the scripture because if a lot of other churches are teaching tolerance and acceptance and affirming the LGTBQ that that's okay.

Yeah. So, and then it's explaining that art that your church is, goes by the scripture and teaches that teaching and that's the correct teaching.

[10:12] teaching but also to be led by the Holy Spirit when you're speaking to them and maybe even praying for scenarios, potential scenarios like that before you even come to church so that you're led by the right words like through the Holy Spirit.

Yeah, that's how, yeah, praying that this could, could be a reality one Sunday. Yeah, thank you. Steve, yeah.

I just wonder whereabouts in scripture does it make reference to lesbians, women, people? Yeah, we're gonna, we're gonna look at some passages.

We're gonna, don't, yeah, that's, that's, thank you. It was, maybe one more comment? Okay, my discussion with Jack, he mentioned something about, just like Mark said, the graciousness full of grace.

The grace is that we would not chase them away from worship and coming to worship, but then the truth is that we are going to also let them know the biblical position on that.

[11:32] And then the scenario of the woman caught in adultery, there was what the Lord said and there was something Jesus told her at the end, neither do I condemn you, but go and sin no more.

Yeah. Yeah, so there was that aspect. Thank you. I, I had that, that story, I remember preaching on it a few months ago, that, that story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery, yeah, all those Pharisees who were ready to cast the spirit, no, they sinned too.

Yeah, thank you. Final, final comment, David, thank you. Yeah, I'm just reminded, it's not so much, it's not, the example I want to talk about is, it wasn't a lesbian, a gay person, it was, it was a Muslim friend of mine when I was at sixth form, I used to witness to him quite regularly and have long discussions about Christianity and Islam, and I brought him to the Christian Union there, and they were really nasty, really unpleasant towards him.

Oh, wow. So, it's important to be kind and welcoming. Thanks, thanks David, that's a, yeah, that's a sad situation.

We're probably more likely to face a man and a woman living together and, rightly or wrongly, we tend to be much more tolerant towards them, but in the same way, we should treat them graciously, we shouldn't try and avoid it, which I think often we do with someone living together, but, so, it's very difficult, and I think sometimes, if, as it were, you're sitting next to somebody and they start to raise questions, and they want to become part of a local church, it's right for that person to try and say something, but is it more appropriate if they want to actually become a member, I don't know if they want to become a member of a part of the local church, that we ask them to speak to one of the elders or the pastor, because,

[14:05] I mean, we can say it, but not everybody has the right words or finds it easy to speak. Thanks, Jack.

That kind of situation, you're right, I think we probably do have certain sins we tolerate, and that's probably actually quite wrong, that, yeah, if it was a man and a woman who aren't married, living together, coming to church, we might not even give it a thought.

Yeah, thank you. I think we'll stop there with comments and questions and stuff, but we'll come back and hear from you all a bit later.

I raise this because I think it is a scenario which could happen. We're living in Brighton, and as you can see behind me, there's statistics that say that Brighton has the largest LGBT population in the UK, one in ten people over the age of 16, that's 10 to 15% of the population will be in the kind of LGBT camp, and so there are people in this city who identify as lesbian or gay or some other sexuality, people in and they are living in the roads around us, they are our neighbours, maybe our friends, maybe our work colleagues, maybe even our families, peace, and so this is a real genuine possibility for us, and we as a church, we need to see what the

Bible says and be equipped to live in this world and to be prepared to welcome people, but know how to welcome people.

[16:11] We're going to look at two passages and then three implications, so I want to turn us firstly to Leviticus, back in the Old Testament, it's, what is it, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, chapter 18, Leviticus 18 and verse 22, and then just a page or two beyond that, chapter 20 verse 13, Leviticus 18, 22, do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, that is detestable, and then chapter 20, verse 13, verse 13, if a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable, they are to be put to death, their blood will be on their own heads.

these are laws which clearly prohibit same sex among people.

They regard it as detestable, or as an abomination before the Lord. texts. These texts aren't taken in isolation, we have read them in isolation, but if you look at the surrounding context, you would see there are other texts in place which prohibit things like incest and bestiality and adultery, and I think we would at the very least all agree incest and bestiality are out of question.

Morally, they are not good and not right, and I hope we would agree as Christian people, adultery is morally wrong too. And so why would we exclude pick and choose and exclude same sex relationships from that list too?

there are some people, some Christian people, who would argue from these verses that actually because it says the word detestable or abomination in those verses, that actually refers to idolatry, same word is used for idolatry, and so as long as that same-sex relationship isn't an idol, evil, then it's okay.

[19:16] That's what some Christians would argue with us about. But I think that is very clearly not scriptural, not a right interpretation, but then we might hear people say, and Phil was telling me that this has been written about I think something that Phil had said in a talk about Leviticus prohibits us eating shellfish, and so if we say it's okay for us to eat prawns and shrimps,!

then why don't we say that this is okay? Well, I think we have to remember that the Old Testament laws, they are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he actually declares all foods clean for us to eat. The sacrificial system, we don't look to that anymore, we look to Jesus' completed sacrifice for us on the cross.

cross. And whilst we don't try and obey every single letter of the law, we are confronted with God's righteous and holy standards for living.

And it clearly goes against God's created order, doesn't it, for people of the same sex to have romantic relationships.

[20:56] marriage. And in the New Testament, Jesus very clearly defines marriage as between one man and one woman. The New Testament affirms that, affirms God's good original design for this world that we looked at in Genesis last Sunday together.

together. I want us to turn to the New Testament. I want us to turn to Romans 1, verses 18 to 32. So that's verses from the Old Testament. Now we go to the New Testament and we see that this applies to us today.

Romans 1, 18 to 32. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that people are without excuse.

[22:36] For though they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator who is forever praised.

Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.

In the same way, men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

[23:51] Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind so that they do what ought not to be done.

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice.

They are gossips, slanderers, God haters, insolent, arrogant, and are gossips. Slanderers, God haters, sorry, I've read that, boastful. They invent ways of doing evil.

They disobey their parents. They have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy, although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death.

They not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them. It's a huge passage. It says a lot of things.

[24:50] We're just considering the topic that we have for this evening. We could go down many routes, I'm sure. Just thinking about verse 26 to 27, there are some Christian people who would look at these verses and say to us, well, it feels natural to me to have a relationship with a woman, a woman saying that, or the other way around, a man saying that.

And so if it feels natural to me, then it can't be me exchanging natural relations for unnatural ones. But actually, I don't think Paul is saying that at all.

He is saying that people have rejected God, the knowledge of God, the creator, who it's plain for us to see.

We look at his creation, we can see that clearly there are marks that there is a creator of this world, even of us as human beings. And they've rejected that idea.

Paul says although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to them. They've suppressed the truth that God can exist, that there is a right and a wrong way to live.

[26:20] And so God gives people over in judgment. to do these kind of shameful acts that it talks about in verses 26 and 27.

Our sinful nature is not how we were created to be. We were created completely good, very good. We saw that in Genesis 1, didn't we?

But our hearts are twisted. We don't naturally follow God who we were created to serve, to worship. it. And so this is the result. And Paul doesn't just focus on the issue of same-sex relationships.

He focuses on other sins as you read further down. It's not just him picking on certain people. He picks on all sorts of sins down here that we read.

So that's truth from God's word. Two different parts of God's word on this issue.

[27:32] We could look at much more. I'm going to pause to check are we happy? Do we have questions? Do we have comments?

Before we move on to I think three implications of these things. And we'll have the microphone read first. just very quickly.

I think you touched on it at the very end there. I mean obviously anything of going into Romans 2 where it kind of says almost be aware of you judging others because you yourself are also condemned.

Those early chapters of Romans are like actually all of you have sinned and fall short of God's glory. So to me there's just this kind of how important that we have this right understanding of that we are all have sinned and we are included in that not kind of all of those sinners over there and we are excluded from that group and it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

Absolutely. Thanks Ruth. And we'll see more of that in a moment as well. This passage in Romans and the passage in the passage are quite strongly worded aren't they?

[28:46] They come on quite strong. I mean personally I mean I don't know what to do with them. I mean it's going to frighten a lot of people isn't it really?

Well you're right to say they're strongly worded and we need to remember whose word this is. This is God's word. And we need to remember the seriousness of sin that sin leads people to hell if they don't repent.

But we remember too as we'll see God's great incredible mercy as well. Yeah. It could and the gospel does cause offense.

And the problem is our human proud hearts stubborn hearts thinking we're okay. I guess there are certain groups of people sometimes even in the church that believe when it comes to certain things the Bible can be kept aside and let's just go with what the society seems to be more comfortable with.

We tend to forget that God's standards are what they are. God will not shift his standards for anyone. I mean during the time of Noah majority of the world found themselves on the wrong side of things.

[30:24] But God still maintained his standard and his standard is straight. And the Bible says narrow is the way that leads to wide is the road that leads to destruction. Many people find it.

But narrow is the way that leads to life. Few people find it. When the road is narrow, sometimes someone said the problem with the Christianity nowadays is that we are trying to widen the road that is already narrow.

And so when the road is narrow, it can be inconveniencing, but then it leads to life. And then finally, just a question I have.

probably a rhetorical question. I think there was a time a few years ago that the Church of England called for some kind of general discussions around these issues.

I can remember I was in Nigeria then, even the Anglican Church there called, the African communion of the Anglican Church called for it. I think it was a worldwide discussion.

[31:39] So each country had to discuss it. And one of the, I found myself in some kind of Anglican setting then and some part of the questions people were asking, how did we get to a point where people are asking the question that is already clear in the scripture?

So really, how did we get here? What is the thinking? Should it even be up for discussion? And I'm also asking the same question. How did we get here? I don't know. You're asking us how did we get here?

How long have you got? I've read a number of books on that kind of topic, how did we get here? we can go back to the 60s and the swinging 60s, the availability of the contraceptive pill that made sex a big issue, free for all, do what you put on, it's gradually gone downhill from there.

That's a short answer to probably an incredibly big discussion. there was a distinction between the African and the more Western people.

[33:03] There's people listening at home. Start again, sorry. Within the church, there was obviously a distinction between a conservative view of the Bible and the Western view which tended to be quite liberal.

That's how we got to that situation I think because the Church of England in the West was being governed by outside social forces.

the church of England has a difference between the UK church and the worldwide church and actually the worldwide Anglican communion have rejected Justin Welby as their archbishop. fascinating to follow it. I guess also the church in the West has shrunk and not a lot of people are in the church in the West whereas in the global South the church has expanded and they are following the Bible.

I heard a statistic recently for every one conversion to Christianity in Europe there are 14 in the rest of the world.

[34:45] So I guess we're a minority but whatever we are and whatever our numbers are we still have to hold fast to the truth which is what Shama was saying and we will always have the situation where we will have to hold fast to the truth in the context of people who don't agree with us.

So I mean we could sort of be bowed down by feeling that we are you know a minority and woe are us or woe is us or whatever but that's always been the case and it always will be the case so we just had to have to tread a fine line and walk the narrow path and whatever people throw at us so there we are that's it thank you helpful I'm going to move on if that's okay Steve can we we'll have time more time later I think let's move on to chat about some more stuff and then yeah we can have more questions comments later okay I think I think I think we're all behind what Shema said we're yeah great cool we've looked at two passages three implications for us the first one is hopefully all these are kind of obvious but I think let's encourage each other in these things we need to welcome all people

I was thinking about this as I was writing this in a coffee shop so that's where this has come from church is a bit like a coffee shop in that anyone can come in and sit down and be here but church isn't like a coffee shop in that you don't have to pay to come in you don't have to buy a coffee to sit down you're free to come in free to come and sit with God's people regardless of whether you are following God or not last Sunday morning in communion some of us were thinking about the prodigal son that famous story I'm sure we will know it that son who was given his inheritance money wanted to live as if his father was dead he said I'm off now I'm off to enjoy my freedom away from you and so he enjoyed the pleasures of this world and I wonder if

Jesus was saying that story to us in Brighton today whether this guy would be off gay clubs and sleeping with other men maybe he was wild in his living he squandered his inheritance!

He ended up feeding pigs longing to eat their food then he had that thought well my father's servants are treated well I don't deserve the state of a son but maybe I could be a servant and so he headed back home probably wondering what on earth is his dad going to do how angry is he going to be rehearsing this speech round and round in his head father I've sinned against you but actually his dad is there waiting he sees him coming and he throws his arms around him and clothes him in fine clothes gives a great feast and that's the welcome we in this room if we're Christians this evening have come to know from God we were lost and helpless and hopeless sinners but God has opened us with arms wide open and so if we have been welcomed like that into the arms of

[38:51] God then we can surely welcome others to whoever they are into this building Sam Albury in his book says the church is to kind of be a visual aid to the world of what God is like and so if we're to be that we do we welcome people whoever you are we say come and sit next to me come and have coffee with us come and have lunch welcome come come and have lunch with me but so that's remembering grace

God's grace to us but we need to remember truth as well we need to preach the gospel to all people and so churches like a coffee shop anyone can come in but you don't have to pay you don't have to buy coffee but they also need to hear what we have to say they need to hear the truth see the gospel is for sinners the gospel is good news for sinners so turn to Romans chapter 3 we won't read all of it at all but scan through verses 9 to 20 who does Paul say is righteous no one there is none righteous no one not even one no one who understands all have turned away all are sinful no one Paul is showing whether we're Jew or Gentile there is no advantage all are sinful there is no one more sinful than another we're sinful in the eyes of God we have fallen short of his glory before we became a Christian we were lost and we were dead in our sins but the good news for all of us whether single married whether we have same sex attractions or not the gospel is for us so verse 21 to 24 let's read that together but now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify this righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe there is no difference between

Jew and Gentile for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus at the end of in verse 19 and 20 Paul shows that the law makes us conscious of sin and as we've read in verse 21 the law and the prophets testify to the righteousness of God the law reveals God's holy righteous standards for us and the prophets look forward don't they to the day when the Lord Jesus Christ would come who makes known this righteousness of God to us and through whom we are made righteous so verse 22 this righteousness is given through faith in

Jesus to all who believe the good news of the gospel is that sinful people though none of us are righteous we can be made righteous declared righteous in God's sight because of the Lord Jesus if we believe in him it's based on him and what he has done and it's a free gift of grace given freely it says it's what verse 24 says all are justified freely by his grace that word justified it means to be declared righteous declared righteous in God's court because of Jesus because of Jesus who has shed his blood for our sin paid the price for our sin such good news and this is the gospel which is full of grace and truth to all people whoever we are and this is the gospel that we proclaim to people including if that lesbian couple walk into church hopefully they will hear the gospel the truth

[44:20] Andrew Walker a Christian writer says this this requires us to be open about our own struggles and failings and worries too often our churches give the impression that the son of man came to seek and save good people not the lost too quickly our churches create a list of the sins that are more tolerated and excusable than others the gospel is powerful it says you are sinful but you are loved by the almighty God and he is offering to you this gift of grace whoever you are thirdly and finally we need to show the implications of following God to all people for that let's turn to

Luke 14 Luke 14 25 to 27 so if we take the claims of Jesus seriously if it leads to repentance and following him then we do need to be realistic with people about what the implications of following God are so Luke 14 verse 25 large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them he said if anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother wife and children brothers and sisters

yes even his own life such a person cannot be my disciple and whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple now Jesus isn't saying here that we must literally hate our own family or even ourselves but compared to our love for

God it should kind of seem like that because we love Jesus first and foremost above all things and people we must choose to obey God must choose to please God rather than other people and that may mean that it looks like to others that we don't love them but we do but we might disagree with how they might want us to live or believe so J.C.

Ryle former bishop of Liverpool says this on these verses we must choose rather to displease those we love most upon earth rather than to displease him who died for us on the cross for those who come to faith and are same sex attracted as they follow Christ that may well mean they are giving up a relationship that they have it may well mean they are giving up the prospect of any relationship if we are taking the teaching of the Bible seriously it may mean they will never have that prospect of being married because they are same sex attracted the following Christ does mean we do take up our cross and that's not an easy thing to bear but surely is worth it for the one who has died for us in our place and who is leading us to an eternal glorious future where we'll be without any sin and any sinful desires and

I think we need to be conscious of those things as we speak with people who might be same sex attracted whether they're in this church or whether we meet them outside of this building to follow Christ to follow the one who's died for us it's no small matter it may mean giving up a lot and from my understanding the LGBT community is a very loving close knit community people find acceptance there but surely the church should go above and beyond that we might not affirm everything that someone chooses!

[49:04] because we believe the truth we take sin seriously but oh people should feel loved there's lots more I could say before we move to any questions and comments you might have I want us to just to hear from someone who struggles with same sex attraction but has become a Christian and hopefully that will be a better word to end on than what I could say I watched several videos on a website called living out highly recommend looking at others I thought this was probably the most helpful based on what I've said this evening here we go hopefully it should just play my name is David I am from Sydney Australia originally I was brought up there and then moved over here to study theology at the University of Oxford and I work in Oxford live there and absolutely love it it's great

I had many boyfriends when I was growing up my search for relationships was really extensive I started going out to Oxford Street in Sydney which is the central strip of the gay world in Sydney trying to go to go to clubs and meet people I think love was a rush love was like an intoxication with the other person and it it was a kind of escapism really from the context that I was in because I didn't feel accepted I didn't feel understood I would primarily define love now that I'm a Christian as self sacrificial love the kind of love we see on the cross and ultimately first about giving yourself to the other and giving yourself up for the other and that actually in that you find the most brilliant intimacy there is the moment I became a Christian was incredible I first experienced Jesus when I was in a pub in central

Sydney in the gay quarter when a girl prayed for me and I just felt this most incredible presence come upon me it was like tingling like it was just this love I had never encountered before and I was completely gobsmacked completely dumbfounded that this was real it just need to but I think the difference with the relationship with God is that He is always faithful and I can actually depend on Him and I think that's an incredible security that I have with him that I just wouldn't want to give up for anything and so I think you can't find that in any other relationship it's only in that relationship with God that I have that and that that really helps me to love others better love others in a deeper way of course I miss romantic relationships and on some level I miss sex yes but in another sense not at all because actually the search deep down behind sex in our society is a search for intimacy and when I was having those sexual relationships I was not finding very profound forms of intimacy in fact often that would separate me or distance me from people so I think I found the intimacy I was looking for in Christ and in the church what I love about being a Christian is that I get to share the most incredible news with people that they don't have to live up to a moral standard that they don't have to climb this ladder and I think a lot of people feel condemned and actually I get to share the

news with them that they're not condemned when they receive Jesus and they turn away from sin or their old life they they're completely accepted completely loved completely brought into God's family and that there's no condemnation anymore I love that so good to hear that testimony he reminded us of the the great love great intimacy that we had can have with the Lord Jesus Christ and that's that's important for us from a tea um you might have questions you might have comments um you might completely disagree with me I want to walk out um uh microphones here stay here stay here um you're on um um um um doesn't like us and praise God

I mean I didn't know what to say to him and I said no my God died for you he sent his son to die for you because he loves you and he he wasn't he didn't say anything and I was quite shocked that that came out of me and I believe that was the Holy Spirit giving me the right thing to say at the right time and and I just wanted to share that that you know God can use you to speak to people with love absolutely especially when you don't know what you're saying yeah thank you that's an encouragement I'm sure for us to hear um any any other questions comments uh over I've just got a comment

I just thought you've handled this quite well it's a very difficult topic um very controversial and it's it's come across very well it's been very helpful thank you thanks David um yeah just to pick up on the point you made about I agree with what David just said by the way um brother um just to pick up on the point you made about um and I think the the chap who was speaking earlier kind of alluded to this just that the the how vital the church family has to be in providing that that loving community and family in the face of the reality of the LGBT you know so-called community whatever you right but there are there are pockets of very serious kind of committed you know friends and and people who are they are there for each other yeah you know you know and that in all sorts of ways that are totally really you know messy and I see all through this the union where I work

[56:49] I see all sorts of you know really sad implications of that but we have to be willing and what came to my mind as you were sharing was actually totally different matter but kind of similar in terms of like our discussions around let's say abortion matters too it's right and good and quite absolutely right that we share the truth of what the Bible says about things but if we are unwilling to ourselves put our lives on the line for those who are saying I'm giving up everything I'm giving up everything so we have to be there for people don't we so I think I think we need to take seriously that you know cost of discipleship for ourselves to say am I willing if that couple comes in am I willing to say you know not just share that truth but say I'm going to stand with you now and for as long as you live you know we need to be serious about this ourselves thanks thank you very much for the session we shared

I think I'm seeing a connection between the first and second point and I think that's where the balance sometimes is about how can we welcome people without affirming that kind of lifestyle you know and I think that's where sometimes the balance is and sometimes it can be misconstrued many of those people have not probably had good experiences from the past in terms of how the church has accepted them or how the church has responded to those issues perhaps the church was in some kind of shock at some point I kind of feel the church seemed to have been in some kind of shock in terms of how strong the movement came out to the extent that probably we you know in reflex if you feel attacked sometimes you go defensive and in that sense we've not been able to really think through our responses but I think with what we are doing now we're helping ourselves on how to approach them the first point about love and welcoming the second point about the gospel

I think that's where the balance will be to help us lastly is a question I have sorry I'm asking too many questions that's okay it says questions yeah so what could be the a helpful response to people that claim that they were born with those attractions they grew up in their childhood with those kinds of attractions and all that because some people some people feel God made me that way yeah at whatever level how can we help people what could be what are helpful tips to you know approach those kinds of situations or questions yeah well I mean part of the answer might just be simply what I've kind of said in that

Romans one passage there that they might look at look at what Paul says there and says but it's it's natural for me but actually it's all resulting from the fall of humanity that our desires are twisted and

I'm not saying that those those desires aren't real and genuine they are real genuine struggle for that person and so Sam Aubrey in his book is very helpful and he's very open and he's very honest I am same sex attracted he says but as a Christian our identity doesn't have to be in that our identity is actually I am in Christ and even though I struggle with same sex attraction that's not where my value and worth is my value and worth is in the Lord

Jesus and so I guess saying something along those lines can be helpful it doesn't mean those attractions are going to go away they may never go away but we all I guess we all if we're honest we struggle with different temptations different sins more than others but we know that the Lord Jesus has been tempted in every way and yet is without sin and we have a faithful merciful high priest who yeah whose forgiveness whose grace is just amazing we come to someone who understands and so we can be these people they can be real and open and honest with their struggles setting setting sins yeah yeah yeah it is it is yeah yeah yeah thanks Maria one more one more Richard

[63:07] I was just going to say some of my friends claim Buddha more than Christ and stuff like that as well and I think that could be a bit foggy for some people if you know what I mean yes I'm one of a different religion yeah another topic probably for another time but yeah hopefully much of this applies to whoever we meet in different ways yeah cool we're going to sing and then we'll close in prayer we're going to sing love divine all love's excelling the best love found in our great God and Saviour and then we'll close in prayer yeah Mark would you be happy to close us in prayer that'd be great thank you thank you