

# Gospel Transgressions: Pulling Up a Chair

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to introduce you to a political term that's used in the US. I don't know if you know this term. It's called gerrymandering, to gerrymander.

And to gerrymander means to manipulate the boundaries of an electoral district so that it favors one party or one class. One person observes that it describes it as politicians picking their voters instead of voters picking their politicians.

The idea behind it is you create a district that favors you, that people like you, that you know they are your supporters, and so you reconfigure the districts in your voting block so that it serves you. It originates from 1812 in the United States from the name of a governor of Massachusetts, Eldridge Gerry, and Salamander. Look at that.

You know, Sophia, I gave this to her just when I walked in, and she's so good. She just puts it there. Eldridge Gerry and Salamander. And you take each part of that, and you create one word called gerrymander.

[ 1 : 10 ] Now, the idea of this salamander... There it is. It's so cute. That salamander came from the shape of the district that was created that seemed to very much favor Gerry's party.

There was a picture of it published in a Boston paper that showed the districts and how those favored Gerry and how those that favored Gerry took on this particular shape, and you'll see the original map.

And it looks a little bit like that salamander, but you'll see there's been added wings and fangs and feet and a head, probably to suggest that the kind of violence that was being done to the political districts.

So this was the gerrymander map. Gerrymandering is an exercise of control. It's a process whereby those in power stay in power.

And believe it or not, it's legal, but it's not always ethical. You take that down. Christians cannot gerrymander.

[ 2 : 17 ] Whatever the role gerrymandering plays in politics, we cannot, as Christians, engage in the practice as we relate to the world around us. If we're going to be agents of reconciliation, we've got to be able to see how sin creates self-promoting, self-protecting boundaries and be willing to transgress them.

You know, the gospel is transgressive. It is essentially transgressive in our fallen world. Why is the gospel transgressive?

Well, first of all, to be transgressive means that you're violating moral or social boundaries. You might think of transgressive art. You know, Lady Chatterdy's lover, when that came on, oh, you're just breaking the norms of what should be written about.

Or you'll find some piece of art that's just, you know, made of cow dung or something. You go, that's transgressive. Well, it's crossing the normal societal expectations for art or for literature or morals. And so, being transgressive, it's violating moral and social boundaries. But we ask the question, how could the gospel be transgressive? I mean, the gospel is the zenith of moral norms.

[ 3 : 38 ] Well, the gospel is transgressive because it transgresses the sinful boundaries that have been set up, that keep people trapped in behavioral, societal, or religious categories that appear to be uncrossable.

And these could be boundaries set up by religious folk and non-religious folk. They could be based on politics, race, class, gender, moral, immoral commitments.

And when gerrymandering shows up in the church, it could express itself as an unwillingness or discomfort engaging with people that are different than us, that we think our religious scruples should keep us from hanging out with, that allows us to create a walk of faith that keeps us in

control, relationships that serve us.

But if we consider what's expected of us by our master, that we would love God with all of our being and our neighbor ourselves, I think we'll find that gerrymandering is out of the question for a Christian.

Somehow, loving God and loving neighbor are not opposing things. In fact, Jesus says they're like one another. This fellow, Christopher Walken, writes this about a neighbor.

[ 5 : 01 ] My neighbor is an anarchic category. You know what an anarchist is, right? Someone who doesn't like rules, doesn't follow the laws, doesn't go by the customs. My neighbor is an anarchic category.

A happenstance intrusion into my carefully curated networks of families, friends, and co-workers. An anomaly, not on my list of friends.

A subversive shuffling of the relational cards. We have to love our neighbor because he is there. A much more alarming reason for a much more serious operation.

Because it is the case that our master calls us to love our neighbor, we can expect that we will have to commit gospel transgression. Jesus did it. So did the early church.

And I am responsible for the next four services, this one and three more. During those services, we are going to be considering gospel transgressions. The first will be the one we are looking at today, committed by Jesus.

[ 6 : 04 ] The next two involve situations in the early church. And the last will return to Jesus again. The title of this particular sermon is called, Gospel Transgressions, Pulling Up a Chair.

Let's look again at Matthew for just a moment. Just the passage, 9, starting with 9 and going through 13, the call of Matthew. As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth.

And he asked him, he said to him, excuse me, follow me. And he arose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined a table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? But when he heard it, he said, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I came not to call the righteous, but the unrighteous. This is the first confrontation that Matthew records between Jesus and the Pharisees.

[ 7 : 16 ] Now, Pharisees were the religious gatekeepers of the Jewish community. They were highly scrupulous in their observance of the law. And they expected anybody who claimed the name of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if anybody claimed on them, they too were to be scrupulous about the things of the law.

And this would have been particularly so for someone like Jesus, who people considered a rabbi, who was specially anointed by God. Our passage begins, however, not with the confrontation with the Pharisees, but with the call of Matthew, and elsewhere he's named Levi.

And from all the information available in the gospel accounts, he's numbered among the tax collectors. Technically, he was probably a customs collector. That is, that he lived in a part of Palestine that was a crossing point from one region to the next, and so he'd collect customs or tolls. And this he did on behalf of the Romans and the local rulers. However, tax collectors were notorious, notorious for asking for more than really what was required, and they lined their pockets with that money.

Tax collectors were wealthy. Tax collectors were wealthy because they were thieves. So the tax collector was a thrice-holy unholy person.

[ 8 : 36 ] A thrice-unholy person. A collaborator with occupying regime, Rome. A thief. And one who was religiously unclean because of his interaction with the Gentiles. And all this added up to an identity that the Pharisees considered as inherently sinful.

We'll talk more about that in just a minute. Inherently sinful. What was he? He was a tax collector. But what happens when Jesus comes along?

Jesus saw him and despite Matthew's inherently sinful identity, he calls him with a simple follow me. And what does Matthew do? Matthew rises up and follows him.

Luke adds, he left everything and rose and followed him. Had Jesus known about Matthew prior to showing up? Did Matthew know about Jesus? We don't know. But what we do know is that this encounter was decisive.

As one commentator says, Matthew left a whole way of life to follow Jesus. Now if choosing, if choosing a disreputable person such as a tax collector to be part of your inner circle wasn't transgressive enough, what follows is even more.

[ 9 : 48 ] Matthew 9 and 10, Matthew 9, 10 and 11, as Jesus reclined a table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

You see, what's happened here, Jesus has followed Matthew home to enjoy table fellowship. But it's not just with this newly minted Christ follower that Jesus sits down with.

The company includes the friends and fellow thieves that Matthew has invited to share the meal.

Who might we assume is part of the dinner party?

Well, the group is described as being made up of tax collectors and sinners. We could think of Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector and he was a chief tax collector.

We read about him in Luke chapter 19 and when he is confronted by Jesus and he's repentant, what does he say about himself? If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. Yeah, they were thieves.

[ 10 : 50 ] And then in Luke 7, we learn about the sinful woman who comes and weeps at Jesus' feet and we assume that she's a prostitute. You remember the parable that Jesus tells of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

What does the Pharisee pray? The Pharisee standing up himself prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

See, there the tax collector is listed with categories of sinners, extortionists, unjust, adulterers. In short, those at the party, those at the party that Jesus was attending, saying, their identity is inherently sinful.

You see, being a carpenter, being a shepherd, being a farmer is not an identity that is inherently sinful. You might sin, but being a farmer is not inherently sinful.

It was only, but being a prostitute, an adulterer, an extortioner, a tax collector, it is an identity that is inherently sinful. See, the Pharisees had made a distinction between people who sin and sinners.

[ 11 : 59 ] Those at Matthew's dinner party had ceased being people who sin. They were sinners. So in Jesus' day, what he was doing, what he has done, that he reclined at table, it was transgressive.

To show up at Matthew's home and to recline at table with his guests was transgressive. It was not only rendered, it not only rendered Jesus religiously unclean by having contact with them, it would have also been seen as being comfortable with their way of living, of being comfortable of being with them.

You know, if you see somebody in a public setting in a restaurant and they see you there, they say, oh, come on, pull up a chair, have a seat. And you go, oh, great, I think I will. That's the feeling that people are associating with Jesus reclining at table.

And as such, for the Pharisees, no one who strives to be righteous should be reclining at table or frankly, having anything to do with such people. And that's why the response of the Pharisees is as it is.

When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? Now, we don't have any descriptive of their tone of voice, but it's not hard to hear incredulous scorn.

[ 13 : 21 ] Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? And though the question was not asked of him, Jesus is the one who answers.

Yeah, he hears and he offers an answer that is both an interpretation of his actions as well as a rebuke of the Pharisees. And here is where we need to pay particular attention.

Matthew 9, starting in verse 12. When he heard it, he said, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. You see what he's done? He says that what he is doing, pulling up a chair to dine with these acknowledged sinners, is analogous to what a physician does.

If someone is sick, you call a doctor. Why a doctor? Because he is the one fit for addressing the problem. When someone is sick, to not call a doctor would be unloving.

[ 14 : 28 ] It would exhibit a hardness of heart. Compassion should prompt us to be merciful towards the one who is sick. Remember, what's the second part of the great commandment? To love your neighbor as yourself.

And what's a neighbor? An intrusion into my carefully curated network of family, friends, and co-workers. An anomaly not on my list of friends. A subversive shuffling of the relational cards. In other words, a neighbor is an intrusion into my gerrymandered life. And the gospel forces me to transgress those boundaries that I have set up.

It forces me when I see the need to transgress, to move across the boundary out of love and mercy for the sake of the other. And what's the rebuke?

Jesus directed to the Pharisees. Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. It's a rebuke. He quotes a passage from Hosea, the one that we just read. Now, at the time that the prophet is speaking, there's been this abandonment of Yahweh by Israel.

[ 15 : 28 ] Their expressions of repentance and contrition sounded all very pious as the opening part of that passage. Sounds very pious, but the prophet said that the talk coming from them is like a morning cloud, like dew that goes away early.

And the priests, the priests, those who were supposed to present God to the people and the people to God were likened to robbers who committed villainy. Was Jesus equating the Pharisees with this kind of depravity?

Was he acknowledging their piety but because it lacked mercy, it was not true piety? Was he saying that their lack of love towards the tax collectors and sinners made them no better than a robber who waits to murder someone?

That's what the prophet says. And Jesus has just directed the Pharisees who are critical of what he is doing to go and learn from the prophet.

I don't think we'd be wrong to conclude that that is precisely what he is saying about that. The last phrase of Jesus' comments here, it urges gospel transgression.

[ 16 : 35 ] I came not to call the righteous but sinners. I came not to call the righteous but sinners. On the one hand, it's an acknowledgement of the sinfulness of those he is sitting at table with.

On the other, it expresses his love for them. They are in need of a physician and he is the physician. To not sit at the table with them would be a betrayal of his mission.

What does he say elsewhere? The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. That's gospel transgression. crossing these boundaries set up by society, by religious leaders, by people's own scruples.

It's moving across those boundaries because there are people who need healing. Are we guilty of it? I suspect we probably are.

How do we resist gerrymandering in our own lives? I'm going to suggest three things. The first one is to affirm our common humanity with all people. Affirm our common humanity.

[ 17 : 40 ] See, the first thing is to not allow anyone to be less than human in our thinking. Not let anyone to be less than human in our thinking.

And this will prove to be true in all the ways that we consider gospel transgressions. But for this morning, we must not allow even an inherently sinful identity to lessen the humanity of someone. Now, I suspect it's been your experience. It certainly has been mine when we read about some grotesque, horrible perpetration of violence and we learn about the person who didn't and we think, wow, what an animal.

It's true. The person may have behaved like an animal but he is nevertheless a human being. Human beings are capable of horrific behavior. But by calling them an animal, we are consciously or unconsciously creating a distance between us and them.

And I mean, we're saying that's not us. We can pray with the Pharisee in the parable. I'm glad I'm not like this tax collector. What such behavior in another human being should create in us is humility as we realize that that is the stock from which we come.

[ 18 : 49 ] And that is why we need Jesus to commit the transgression that he does when he pulls up a chair to sit down with tax collectors and sinners. Here are these few couplets. All are made in the image of God.

All fall short of the glory of God. All like sheep have gone astray. All must come by the narrow way. And in the church, all who believe have Christ as their head.

All partake of the wine and the bread. So the first is to affirm our common humanity. Second, consider no one beyond the power of the gospel.

Not even Matthew. Not even Zacchaeus. Not even the sinful woman. Not the guilty criminal crucified next to Jesus. Not Peter who denied Jesus three times. Not the apostle Paul who was a persecutor of the church.

No one is beyond the power of the gospel. We cannot allow what we consider to be a sinful identity to think they are just not able to be saved. What?

[ 19 : 47 ] God is not gracious enough. He's not generous enough. He's not powerful enough. He doesn't love enough to save that kind of person. Consider no one beyond the power of the gospel too.

Number three, exercise your mercy muscles. Exercise your mercy muscles. One of our daughters, Lydia, was just visiting us this past weekend.

She works at an entity called the Bowery Mission. And it's been an outreach to the Bowery. You know, I don't know if you know that phrase. That's synonymous like with drunkards and people, Bowery bums.

And well, back in the day it was. Now it's a pretty chic area. But the Bowery Mission is still there. And it's been offering the gospel and food and clothing and shelter for over 100 years.

140 years I think it is by now. Well, you know, you have here in Glasgow the Glasgow City Mission. I'm sure you're aware of it. And she was interested in going and visiting and seeing that work because she works in a similar work.

[ 20 : 51 ] So on Monday we had a tour of the Glasgow City Mission. And it's a great organization. It remains gospel-centered and gospel-motivated. It's an organization that is built on gospel transgression.

And I suspect their clientele is probably known to you or you suspect what the clientele is. Addiction and poverty, two main culprits shaping the lives of those who come to that mission. You know what?

They need volunteers. They need volunteers because, you know, they serve meals Monday through Friday two times a day. And what they have is they have their volunteers sit down at the table with the guests who have come in to get to know them, to build relationships with them, to love them.

And then they also need volunteers to help prepare those meals, to serve those who are coming in by preparing a meal for them. It's an opportunity to exercise mercy muscles, to cross a boundary, to cross a gospel, to be a gospel transgression, to be part of what they are already doing.

And the Gospel City Mission will gladly give you an opportunity and training to exercise your mercy muscles. Right here, as we just talked about at the very beginning, there's been a warm space that met every Tuesday.

[ 22 : 09 ] And it was a drop-in place for folks that are looking for company, a cup of tea. It'll come around again in the autumn. Put it in your mental calendar. I'm going to work out come the autumn.

And as we're considering how to best refit this generous piece of property and the buildings on it, we should keep in mind this need to have spaces for gospel transgression.

For instance, Glasgow City Mission, again, they have partnerships with churches in which they provide the material and emotional support for single moms and churches and they're always looking for a new space. This newly configured space will work well for such a transgressive partnership.

Yeah. Exercise your mercy muscles with the intent of making sure that we're not treating anybody as less than human, that we're not thinking that anybody is outside the possibility of gospel saving, nor that we will ourselves not play a part in that.

But no, no, we will. We're going to exercise our muscles. Now, okay, I'm going to take this in a different direction for a minute.

[ 23 : 23 ] A couple of minutes. Jesus exercises what I'm calling gospel transgression to those who have an identity that is inherently sinful.

For the Pharisees, they would have considered anyone who neglected the food and cleanliness laws to be sinners. But the category clearly involves people who by definition of how they live are

sinners.

If you're a tax collector, you're a sinner. If you're a prostitute, you're a sinner. If you're an extortioner, you're a sinner. It's kind of like saying that someone's in the mafia. You know, there's no maybe about it.

Oh, he's in the mafia. He's a sinner. I'm going to turn the tables on us for a minute because I'm going to suggest that in our context, in our contemporary context, from a biblical perspective, there is a group of people who are identified by something that is inherently sinful.

However, in this case, we're going to be looking like the Pharisees. Why do I say that? Because when we consider what Jesus did when he called Matthew and then went home to dine with him, we would consider that gospel transgression as life-giving, right?

[ 24 : 38 ] For him to exercise his soul-healing power for these who, by definition, were inherently sinful, that was restorative. It was life-giving. But in our context, from a biblical perspective, there's a group of people who are identified by something that is inherently sinful, and in this case, we might be seen as the Pharisees.

because what we would argue for would be not life-giving, but life-denying. And I'm speaking of those numbered among the gay and lesbian community.

There isn't any way, biblically, there isn't any way, biblically, to make room for God's blessing on homosexuality as an identity or in practice.

Now, you'll find apologists who try to do so but upholding the Bible as authoritative or doctrine and practice. It just, it can't be done. And I'm not going to take the time to go through all the biblical material that upholds that claim.

It's worthwhile doing. But starting from the creation account in which it is said that God makes humanity in his image, male and female, he made them, and he tells them to go and be fruitful and multiply, a directive which clearly includes procreation, there is nothing in subsequent revelation that suggests that a different understanding of basic human sexuality both in creation and function has changed.

[ 26 : 08 ] After the fall, after humanity's rebellion, was there aberrant sexual behavior to be sure there was? And there has continued to be. But humanity in its pristine state, in its pristine state, did not include any of the practices that fall under the heading of sexual immorality.

That's so both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Now I say all of this, I'm saying all of this without hostility, without hatred, without homophobia, even though it would likely be interpreted by some as being hostile, hateful, and homophobic.

I say this while acknowledging that there are men and women who experience same-sex attraction and others who have experienced what is called gender dysphoria.

In both cases, percentage of the population is small, but it is a reality. Additionally, there are people, a small number of people, who are what are called intersex.

When born, that is, there's no dominant physical attribute that would determine definitely the child is male or female. And for some who experience same-sex attraction, it's not the result of abuse, physical or emotional, it's not the result of some absent parent.

[ 27 : 19 ] That might be the cause for some, but not for all. For some, when sexuality was awakening in their lives, they found themselves drawn to people of the same sex. Now when I'm talking about this, I suspect that there's a divide.

There could be a divide in the room. See, when I make the assertion that those who identify as gay or lesbian have embraced an inherently sinful identity, there could be a divide, and that would be between older people and younger people.

There are likely those who are older who have always considered that homosexuality is out of the norm. It's an aberrant expression of human sexuality. It's not that they think it hasn't existed. It's just something that is seen as, dare I say, abnormal.

And given how the Bible judges the practice, and given the complementarity of the male and female body, such an assessment would seem to be supported. Homosexuality is something out of the norm.

And until relatively recently, this understanding would have been supported by the general culture. Now to be sure, the abnormality of it made the homosexual a pariah, an outcast, something freakish, and gave license to some to treat the homosexual with cruelty.

[ 28 : 37 ] The history of this cruelty, it cannot be denied. Those who were or are willing to perpetrate such cruelty have slipped into dehumanizing the person who experiences same-sex

attraction.

And because they are viewed as less than human, they can be treated with contempt. That cruelty is absolutely unacceptable. But then, there are younger people.

There are those who have grown up in a culture that views homosexuality as a plausible expression of human sexuality. It might be different than the way the overwhelming majority experiences it, but that doesn't make it abnormal, it just makes it different.

As our U.S. president said when he was vice president, love is love. So when the church seeks to maintain a biblical view of sexuality, it comes off as pharisaical, oppressive, misguided, unloving, the church is regressive, and will prove to be on the wrong side of history.

I'll say it again, that biblically, if one embraces the identity gay, that one is embracing an identity that is inherently sinful. Now, it might be considered harsh to link it with other identities we've considered, thieves, extortioners, prostitutes, but if there were any such individuals in the room with Jesus at Matthew's dinner party, he would have understood them to have needed the same mercy as the rest.

[ 30 : 00 ] He would have included them in his challenge to the Pharisees because he would have seen them as those needing a physician. Jesus would not disagree with Paul's teaching. Listen, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Who are the unrighteous? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, and the underlying Greek there is both for the passive as well as the active party, nor that of thieves, the greedy, drunkard, revilers, or swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

The only way one gets around that prohibition, the only way one gets around that prohibition is to decide that Paul was an unenlightened first century Christ follower who, if he were alive today, would have grown in wisdom, understanding what God really meant when he prohibited this kind of sexual expression.

Yet, if Paul was unenlightened about homosexuality, perhaps he was also unenlightened about thievery, greed, swindling, idolatry, maybe he would change his mind about those practices as well. See, biblically, this practice, which translates for some as an identity, is an identity that is inherently sinful. But the church cannot gerrymander.

[ 31 : 24 ] It cannot look upon those who have same-sex attraction with contempt. We cannot allow any hint of dehumanization to creep into our thinking. Jesus pulled up a chair and sat down with sinners and so must we.

In closing, let's quickly apply these three categories that I suggested for resisting gerrymandering when it comes to this category of sinners. First of all, we affirm our common humanity.

This certainly means that men and women who identify in this way are not less human for doing so. But it also means that we can acknowledge their desire for intimacy, for companionship, their need for community.

It's just as real for them as it is for everyone else. I'll tell you a very brief story. I may have told it a couple of people before. It was a really pivotal moment for me.

Barbara and I used to be in the theater and so we were hobnobbed with a lot of actors. We were self-actors and there was this one young man I went to school with and then later worked professionally with. I hadn't seen him for a long time and he identified as gay.

[ 32 : 26 ] I ran into him on the street one day in New York and I saw him. I said, hey, how are you doing? And he was downcast. He said, well, not well, my long time companion just died of AIDS.

I didn't know how to answer him. It's not set an indictment on me. I didn't know how to respond. I didn't have the liberty to comfort, to acknowledge that he had just lost his companion and meant a great deal to him.

But I had to go back and think about that. I had to go back and think that he's a human being. He desires intimacy, companionship, and community. He had it.

He's lost it. Now, we could say that, you know, it's hard for me to imagine that Jesus in that encounter would have said, you know what? If you hadn't been doing that stuff in the first place, that wouldn't have happened.

So you made your bed go lie in it. I can't imagine Jesus would have responded that way. He would have done something that was like a physician. But that wasn't me.

[ 33 : 29 ] Our fallenness, our sinfulness causes us to misdirect desires, and we end up fulfilling them in ways that are contrary to God's design. But that desire is there. We need to acknowledge it. Mercy, not condemnation, is what it's called for. Secondly, consider no one beyond the power of the gospel. How does Paul end the passage that I read that had that whole list? And such as were some of you.

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God. People experiencing same-sex attraction exists within the church. And I know that.

I know that to be the case because for many years our church back in New York offered a discipleship group for Christians, men and women, who experience same-sex attraction. The goal of the group is not conversion from homosexuality to heterosexuality.

It's not conversion therapy. It's discipleship to receive support, encouragement, and counsel as they seek to walk in the kind of holiness and righteousness that we all should be striving to walk in.

[ 34 : 36 ] And while there have been a number of intergendered marriages that have grown out of that group and babies even born to those married couples, the goal is not necessarily heterosexual marriage, nor is the presence of same-sex desire expected to be totally eradicated.

It's discipleship. And last, exercise your mercy muscles. In the scene from Matthew, how did Jesus exercise mercy?

By going to the house of Matthew, by pulling up a chair. He was clear-eyed about the need that those gathered had, but he was not going to have sent himself from their presence because of who they were.

He had table fellowship with them. He didn't keep them at arm's length, but brought them into his orbit. A preacher should never use so many personal stories, so I'm going to use another one.

We had a couple living two floors down from us in our flat in New York, Lou and Jerry. Long, long time, same-sex relationship.

[ 35 : 39 ] Decades. And we became involved in their lives. They were both elderly, and they had to get to the doctor, they had to get to the hospital, they had to get to other things, so we became like a taxi for them doing that.

We invited them up to their home, we went down to their house, we got to know them. And I'll tell you, one of the times in driving Jerry back from the hospital for an appointment, he said, would you like to go get a glass of wine with me?

I said, sure. I drink wine, he said, sure. So he said, oh, we're going to stop over here, we pull up, and the place that he stopped at was the oldest gay bar in New York City.

I said, oh, okay. So we sat at the bar, I think I had a beer, he had a coffee with wine, and we went home. You know, I'd like to say that our families exercising mercy muscles towards them resulted in their conversion, I cannot say that for certain.

I know that they were both prayed for in their presence when they were both in their final hours of life. They were both settled and proud of their identity, but as I said, no one is beyond the power of the gospel.

[ 36 : 54 ] Gerrymandering is an attempt at control. It establishes boundaries that favor the one who makes them. In politics, it's legal, but often unethical. In the church, it is unacceptable.

We don't want people to die for want of a physician. Our master calls us to follow him. You know, I didn't highlight this before, but when Jesus went to Matthew's house and pulled up a chair at Matthew's tables, we're told that his disciples joined him.

See, in league with their master, they experienced gospel transgression. And frankly, we should expect to do the same. who made that take him to the school to the studio. And then it's still here.