

A Loving and Proper Response to Same-Sex Attraction

February 18, 2018

Ephesians 4:1-3, 15, 32

I want to tell you that this is a special day for me. Part of my job is to speak, on occasion and in various churches, on behalf of Outpost; but for me this church, of all churches, is special. It's been a lot of years since I was a member here, but I will always think of this church as home. I was a child here, and a young man, had my first girlfriend here, and my mother still attends here. In fact, you may have noticed that there's something a bit unusual about your church building, and that is that the ridgepole in this sanctuary runs from side to side rather than from front to back like in most churches. Well, if you've ever wondered who the goofy guy is who came up with that idea, you're looking at him.

Our world is changing all around us, in ways we didn't expect and often don't understand. That's why I'm here -- I'm supposed to know something about it. And I guess I do, more or less; I've learned a thing or two over the years. But I confess I'm often baffled at what I see taking place. Gay and lesbian relationships have now become normal fare on television. and transgender is quickly becoming so. The Minnesota State High School League, an organization which sets policies governing high school sports, has decreed that if a boy happens to decide he's a girl today when he goes to school, it's absolutely proper for him to shower in the same locker room next to your daughter. And the school is not allowed to inform you, the parent. And, LGBTQ rhetoric now dominates the public stage to the point that a few months ago I had a conversation with my boss -- you know, one of those half-serious, half humorous ones, and I'm not sure which half was which -- where we wondered if the time had come when he and I should sit down with our children and explain that Daddy might go to jail because of what I do for a living.

Outpost Ministries was born 42 years ago in order to minister to people who are being hurt by this change in our society. Our mission has two parts: The first is to minister to those who have encountered relational and/or sexual brokenness. This includes same-sex attraction, but also sex addiction, an outreach to the families of those who are in the LGBTQ world, and inevitably all this leads into ministering to broken families in general. The second part of our mission is to be a resource to the Body of Christ. The need is growing, and churches are waking up to the realization that they are less equipped than they want to be. So, we teach and equip and mentor, as best we can. We answer a lot of questions. That's why I'm here today. What is not our mission is to engage in an argument. We're not out to convince anybody of anything. We're not activists, and we don't take a political stand. We're just there to offer a service to anybody who asks because we see a need, and we have some expertise, and we want to help.

Let me begin, then, by making what I believe to be an important distinction, and that is between same-sex attraction and the term we've all heard -- LGBTQ. Same-sex attraction is about a person. It's about how we relate to our own bodies, and to the bodies of others -- whether of the same or the opposite gender. Same-sex attraction is something which is often discovered, to their surprise and often horror, by young men when they reach puberty. And the obvious question, the one we hear over and over, is; how did it get there? And current, conventional wisdom, what has come to be accepted all around us as fact, is that you're born with it. You're stuck with it. Embrace it, because it's your identity. Well, at Outpost, we beg to differ. For two reasons: One, it's not Biblical. You'll hear a lot of people claiming a lot of things about what the Bible does and doesn't say about homosexuality, etc., but in fact there isn't a single place in the Bible where, if you stick to disciplined exegesis, it will say anything in support of the gay agenda. The second reason is, it doesn't work. This is a discussion we have with every one of our clients. Like everyone else, they desperately want to be loved, and they come to us equipped with a core belief which says they're going to get what they want from the LGBTQ world. But they won't. It doesn't work. It can't. There's no time today to defend either of those assertions, but I could. It isn't hard. But it leaves us with that question, why is same-sex attraction there? How does it happen? We get that question a lot. And there is an answer, a convincing and effective one; but it's not easy. It's not a simple answer. It's not one-dimensional. It's

what we do. So, for today, suffice it to say that we believe that boys are boys and girls are girls, the way God created them, and if you encounter same-sex attraction, in yourself or in someone you love, what you need to know from me is that it's not permanent. You're not stuck with it. Healing is available. At Outpost, we're not in doubt about this, any more. After forty-plus years, we've proved our point.

That's same-sex attraction. LGBTQ is-- well, it's a different kettle of fish. LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and the Q is there to sort of cover the rest of the gamut -- you may not have noticed, but your Facebook profile page now offers something over 50 different options for gender identity, and the number keeps growing. And unlike same-sex attraction, LGBTQ is not a psychological issue. It's a political one. When someone declares that henceforth they will identify as gay or lesbian, etc., what they are doing is joining something. It's a life-style decision, a socio-political declaration. And frankly, that's not our mission. There are folks whose mission it is to evangelize into the LGBTQ community; just not us. We partner on a regular basis with one such ministry -- we function as a place where they can send folks in need of healing and aftercare. Why I'm here with you today, what Pastor Jerry asked me to talk about, is the role of the Church in this changing world. And today's text came out of Ephesians 4. Well, in the preceding chapter Paul presents the remarkable idea that there is a great debate going on in the Heavens. The debate is between God on one side and what Paul calls the Principalities and Powers in the Heavenly Places on the other, and what's at issue in this debate is the simple question, is God good? does he tell the truth, or is he a liar? Is he faithful, or will he let you down? Is he powerful or helpless? Is he worth trusting?

And the Principalities and Powers are diligent in prosecuting their case. God, they claim, is a liar. He's untrustworthy, unreliable, weak and un-loving. And they preach this message in any way they can to anyone who will listen to them. And how does God answer? Well, not by engaging in an argument. He doesn't bother with yes-I-did, no-you-didn't; no-I'm not, yes-you-are, etc. He doesn't descend to that level. Instead, God's answer to his detractors is -- just us. He points to his Church and says "Do you see my servants? That they love me, trust me, believe me, are faithful to me? They didn't have to -- they had a choice. And they chose me, because they see that I am worthy." The Church is God's representative on Earth. The Church is God's answer to evil, his argument with his detractors. That's the Church's role. But, there's something that history teaches us, and that is that the Church has typically been better at living out that role when things are tough than when things are easy. Of course, that's a vast over-generalization, but it has legs. Study your history, and you'll find that revivals and movement are born out of times of difficulty, not of ease. And the fact is that over the last couple of hundred years or so the going, for the Church of God, has been relatively easy. This is true over much, though certainly not all, of the world. And the upshot is that, as our society has begun to degenerate around our ears, the Church has not engaged. The Church has hidden her face. The Church has turned inward. Do you want to know why 3% of our population now exercises complete domination over the public discourse? It's because nobody is arguing! The Church has largely been silent. With the result that the Church is in imminent danger of becoming irrelevant.

So then, how can the Church engage? How can it become relevant? Good question. And some would say the answer is, the Church needs to get big. We need to pound the pulpit, shake some fingers in some faces, let those sinners know how bad they're being. Repent -- or burn! But that's not what Ephesians 4 says. Therefore (verse 1) I, Paul, a prisoner of the Lord... I -- what? I suggest? I advise? I invite? No. I urge you -- my translation says, I implore you -- to walk in a manner which is worthy of your calling. How do we do that? What is it that is worthy? And Paul gives a list: Humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, diligence. How do we do that? How do we be patient, tolerant, gentle, humble? Do we ignore the truth? Agree with everything so we can accept anybody? Become so open-minded that our brains run out? No (verse 15): Speak the truth -- in love. Speak the truth, but as you do (verse 32) be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving -- just as God also forgave you. So, I'm here today to talk to you about what you can do when someone comes through your doors who is either same-sex-attracted, or out and proud. And what I'd like to do is to give you two things you must never do, and two things you should always do.

I'll begin by telling you a story, about a fellow named Walt. Walt was transgender, which means he had gone through sex alteration surgery, and he had lived many years as a woman. But the time came when Walt began to seriously seek God. He began to look for answers. He began to look for a church. Walt visited a church and told the pastor, quite honestly, where he was coming from. The pastor's response was, in effect, "We can't help you. We don't want your kind here." As you may imagine, Walt was devastated when he heard this. And it would have been very easy for him to go home, curl up in a ball, and give up. We've all done that at one time or another, haven't we? But Walt didn't give up. He went to another church and met privately with the pastor. He looked the pastor in the eye and said, "Please, tell me that you won't try to change me?" And the pastor responded this way: "No, Walt. I won't try to change you. My job is to love you. It's God's job to change you, and don't be surprised if He does." The pastor asked Walt to write down his prayer requests, and the church's elders began to pray over them weekly. And the whole church took him in, and cherished him, and walked alongside him as he sought God with many tears and went through intense therapy. Until, the day came when Walt made the decision to do the "de-trans" surgery, and re-declared his full identity as a man. Walt Heyer now has been married 18 years, and has a powerful ministry -- not only to members of the LGBTQ community but to anybody who is serious about seeking holiness.

And what this story does is to illustrate two things we must never do. The first is, never appoint yourself judge. Let me ask a question: What would have happened to Walt if the second pastor, the one who took him in, had behaved like the one who rejected him? What, in fact, would have happened to the thousands of people whom Walt has touched with his ministry? It is very easy, very tempting, to adopt the moral high ground; to assume that because we're right and they're wrong, we have the right to pass judgement -- and even to enforce that judgement -- on the behavior of others. But we don't. There is one Judge, and not only are we not He, but we do nothing but damage when we presume to do His work for Him. The second thing we must never do is, never compromise. Compromise what? Two things: Never compromise the truth for the sake of loving, and never compromise loving for the sake of the truth. In the story, the first pastor, to do him justice, stuck to the truth. But he did it at the expense of loving. On the other hand, there's another kind of church -- not mentioned in the story, but you know what I mean: They're all about loving, and if the truth happens to get in the way then we'll just toss out bits of it as they become inconvenient. The second pastor did neither of these. He stuck, very clearly, to the truth. But he didn't hesitate to take Walt in, and cherish him. He treated Walt not only with love, but with respect. He was clear about what he believed, but he didn't try to force it down Walt's throat. He didn't "should" on him. That wasn't his job. He left that up to God -- and Walt. So, two things we must never do is to a) appoint ourselves judges, and b) compromise. Now let's talk about two things we should always do. And the first of these is simply this: Listen, listen, listen... The fact is, most of us talk too much. Isn't it the truth? Most of us are far more interested in our own opinions, our own sense of rightness, than in what it's like to be the other guy. Step one of loving is to listen. That doesn't mean you have to agree -- it just means you need to pay attention. It means we show the same respect to the other guy, with whom we disagree, that we want to receive from him. If you ever want to get the chance to speak into someone's life, start by listening. Earn the right to be heard.

The second thing we should always do is, serve, serve, serve... For just a moment, let's flip our perspective. Let's all be that stranger, walking uncertainly into this church. You have no idea the power of testimony, when you encounter a bunch of people who clearly believe something which is different from what you believe, and yet are willing to serve you. When you walk into a church filled with strangers who promptly begin to care about you, about your needs; who are willing to go to bat for you even though you stand for something they profoundly disagree with -- You have no idea what that does to a person! They may, or may not, convince you of anything right away, but I'll guarantee they'll get your attention. Dr. Michael Brown is a well-known figure in the modern American Christian world. Some folks swear by him, and some swear at him. But he has earned a reputation as the foremost living American apologist. Dr Brown has a track record of winning debates with gay activists -- for, I would assert, two simple reasons: He knows his topic, and the facts are on his side. He has won these debates so often and so convincingly that the upshot is, gay activists don't want to debate

Dr. Brown any more. But one fellow didn't know that, and agreed to a debate, which he lost, publicly and convincingly. When that happened, a local gay leader was incensed and made a public declaration that, on a certain day, there was to be a demonstration in front of Dr. Brown's church. They were going to march, they were going to picket, they were going to make Dr. Brown wish he'd never been born. What makes this story interesting is Dr. Brown's response. He made an equally public announcement, and said "Come! Demonstrate. Picket my church. Come in great numbers. Stay as long as you want. We will be there with refreshments." When the day came, a few people did show up, but they stayed only a short time. And the capstone of the story is that a few days later, the organizer of the protest called Dr. Brown, and apologized. It's the truth -- you serve someone, and you will not only get their attention, but you will also touch their heart.

Well, I'm running out of time and need to close, or I will be facing the wrath of Jerry. Let me close by saying this: I am aware that whenever I go somewhere and give this kind of talk, I am addressing two distinct audiences; and you, here today, may be a member of one or the other, or both at once. The first of those is simply, the church -- this church, you folks, the people who belong to this building and use it as a base of operations for ministry. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is three things: First, say goodbye to your comfort zone. Become willing to engage in discussions which seem odd to you, in languages which are new to you, in cultures which are outside your experience. Because believe me, they are not far from your doors. Second, preach the truth with vigor. Never compromise what the Bible says. And third, love -- with risk, and abandon. Become willing to be the hands and feet of God for people who desperately need someone to talk to, to listen to them, to take them seriously.

Now, is there more to know? Yes, there is. Give Outpost a call, and we'll bring the team up here and do our Distinctions seminar for you, and we'll talk your hind leg off -- you'll go home feeling like you've drunk from a fire hose. But for now, those three -- abandon your comfort zone, preach the truth, and cherish your neighbor. The second audience which I'm aware is here, is those who are struggling with same-sex attraction. Oh, come on -- I know you're out there. Listen -- If you're here today, and you've been struggling with same-sex attraction, then I'm here to tell you that you were not born with it. You're not stuck with it. I'm not guessing about this -- I know. Healing, restoration, transformation, are available to you. There are two things I want to say to you. First, I want you to know, that I know, that you are suffering. And that matters. It matters to Jesus, and it matters to me. Now please -- I don't mean to sound all grandiose, like I'm standing up here next to Jesus and we're pals and we're looking down on you with love. I'm just your basic, block-headed pastor guy -- I'm nothing special. But the fact is that I'm up here, so right now, here today, I represent for you the tender heart of Jesus in his Church. And please, I know -- the Church hasn't always done an amazing job. And I'm sorry about that. The church is full of fallible, confused folks -- kind of like you. But the church is your best hope. The Church is the way God made for you to be loved. And the first step, for you, is to break the silence, to risk telling the truth. Because, there is an open door for you. You are not trapped. You are not abandoned. You are not forgotten. And this is your Church. Believe it or not, we really are here for you.

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on February 18, 2018 by Pastor Dale Fredrikson from Outpost Ministries