

Holiness and Love Meet at the Cross

Matthew 7:24-29

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“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” —Matthew 7:24-25

For the seventh time in 20 years, The United Methodist Church will wrestle with the issue of homosexuality in a public church trial. (UMNS Report, by Heather Hahn, 21 June 2011)

1. What do UMs believe?

Theological Guidelines: “Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. Scripture is primary, revealing the Word of God ‘so far as it is necessary for our salvation’” (2008 Book of Discipline, ¶ 104, 77).

Qualifications for Ordination: “While persons set apart by the church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church” (2008 Book of Discipline, ¶ 304.3).

Chargeable Offenses for Bishops, Ordained ministers, or local pastors: “a) immorality, including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage; b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies” (2008 Book of Discipline, ¶ 2702.1).

In our Social Principles under Nurturing Community: “We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God...The United Methodist church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God’s grace is available to all...We implore families and churches not to reject or condone lesbian and gay members and friends” (2004 BOD, ¶ 161 F).

2. What does the Bible say?

Jesus answered questions about marriage by quoting God’s intent in Creation. —Matthew 19:4-6

Exchanging the truth for a lie. —Romans 1:24-32

Christians, once sexually immoral, were washed, sanctified, and justified by Jesus and the Spirit. —1 Corinthians 6:9-11

If we don’t allow scripture to guide us, we are left to decide for ourselves. And so we decide for ourselves, allowing our passions to lead us in any direction so long as the action, in OUR judgment, does not harm another. —Dr. Mark Ongley, www.restoredimage.org

3. Facts/Myths about Homosexuality

“To offer pastoral care without truth is “neither caring nor pastoral.” —Cardinal Ratzinger

Myth #1: Homosexual sex is an especially abhorrent sin, an abomination worthy of stoning.

Truth: Scripture refers to a “haughty smile” and using improper scales as abominations.

Truth: Leviticus 20 also says disrespecting parents is worthy of stoning.

Myth #2: They've chosen to be that way.

Truth: We distinguish between Homosexuality as a condition and Homosexual behavior.

Truth: Does anyone choose to be heterosexual? Or a workaholic? People pleaser?

Truth: There is an evangelical obsession to make sure everyone knows the behavior is a sin.

Myth #3: Science has proven that same-sex attraction is genetic.

Truth: The most recent research has revealed genetics can predispose, but not predetermine.

Truth: The American Psychological Association (APA) has modified its earlier stance on homosexuality:

1998: "There is considerable evidence to suggest that biology, including genetic or inborn hormonal factors, play a significant role in a person's sexuality."

2008: "There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation... no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors."

Truth: Richard Cohen's research: *A Constellation of Potential Variables*

Heredity Relational patterns are learned and passed down across generations.

Temperament: Hypersensitivity or greater sensitivity. A more masculine female or more feminine male. A high maintenance child. Artistic nature. Gender nonconforming behaviors.

Hetero-Emotional Wounds: Over-enmeshment with the opposite sex parent.

Homo-Emotional Wounds: Views same-sex parent as cold, absent, passive, abusive, or unavailable. A sense of detachment develops.

Sibling Wounds/Family Dynamics: When a same-sex sibling, especially the elder sibling, criticizes or abuses. Leads to gender disidentification.

Body Image Wounds: Lower sense of self-worth due to feelings of inadequacy about one's body.

Sexual Abuse: 90% of lesbians and 75-85% of gays have been sexually abused.

Social or Peer Wounds: Lack of peer bonding. Name calling, rejection, boys nonathletic. Girls—too rough and tumble. Not fitting in and so disidentify with gender.

Cultural Wounds: In an attempt to do away with discrimination against homosexuals, myths and false information sends messages to "normalize" the condition.

Wounds from Other Factors: Divorce in the family, death of a parent, or other personal traumas can be interpreted/perceived by the child as rejection.

Myth #4: All homosexuals can change!

Myth #5: No homosexuals can change!

Truth: Dr. Robert Spitzer on YouTube

Truth: *Ex Gay? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*, By Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse

- The average participant experienced statistically significant change in sexual identity and sexual attractions.
- Changes were generally modest, with decreasing homosexual attraction more significant than increasing heterosexual attraction.
- Exodus describes 38% of participants as successes, changing to either a "meaningful but complicated" heterosexuality (15 percent) or a stable chastity (23 percent).
- Surprisingly, a "truly gay" subpopulation showed the clearest changes in sexual identity and attraction.
- No evidence of increased mental distress was found.

Where do we go from here?

Our Culture? _____

The Church? _____

My Relationships? _____
