

Love Homosexuals as Jesus Would

✖ In September 2005, the Lord sent a team of ministers, led by Jesse Engle, to San Francisco, California. Their calling was to “cry for mercy on behalf of San Francisco and for deliverance of the homosexuality community.” The Justice House of Prayer in San Francisco (JHOPSF) has been fulfilling this call for three years now. However, the passing of Proposition 8 has significantly heightened the amount of hostility they must face as they attempt to share the love of Jesus with the gay community in Northern California.

Last November, while ministering in the Castro District of San Francisco, Jesse’s group experienced persecution so intense that it took about 20 police officers to control the mob of approximately 200 angry homosexuals attempting to harm them. For those who haven’t heard, Proposition 8 was a ballot that recently passed in California, changing the state’s Constitution to define marriage as being only between a man and woman.

In my book, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would*, I wrote about my belief that Christian involvement in the political issues related to homosexuality can complicate our ministry to homosexual people. I have experienced this first-hand as I have traveled and spoken on secular college campuses, and even at a few Christian events.

When I speak in a campus setting, my goal is to challenge Christians to better love their gay friends and neighbors. I also want to challenge the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students who are sitting in the audience to consider the love that Christ has for them. Despite my belief that homosexuality is a sin, I want the LGBT community to know

that they are deeply loved by their creator and by His bride, the church.

LGBT students and those sympathetic to them are usually very respectful during my talks. But when question-and-answer time comes I always get some variation of the same question: "Are you in favor of gay rights/marriage?" This is not just another question, it is a *litmus test*.

If I say, "Yes, I am in favor of gay marriage," they'll believe that I love them. But if I say, "No," then they will often discard everything I said in my talk about loving homosexuals as Jesus would. In many cases, they will even get hostile. This is even more the case now that Proposition 8 has passed.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that we compromise our beliefs regarding the definition of marriage in order to minister effectively to gay people. However, it is very hard to convince people you love them when they perceive you to be on the wrong side of their battle for civil rights. There is no pithy phrase or debating technique that will change the hearts of our gay and lesbian neighbors on this matter. So what is the solution to this dilemma?

There is only one thing that can overcome this stronghold: *radical, undeniable, unconditional, selfless, sacrificial love*. We must ask God to give us an opportunity to lay our lives down for the people that He has put in our paths. If we love our gay and lesbian neighbors in a way that truly *costs us something*, it becomes very difficult for them to discount our love for them.

My mentor and friend, Lenny, had a homosexual relative named Jeff. Jeff was dying of AIDS with no health insurance. He came to the point financially at which he was literally forced to choose between purchasing the medication that was keeping him alive, or paying his rent and utilities.

After much prayer, Lenny made the decision to give Jeff his life savings, which was \$5,000 at the time. There was no question in Jeff's mind that the love Lenny had for him was real. At this point, Jeff didn't care how Lenny felt about gay rights or what Lenny believed the definition of marriage should be. Jeff just knew that he was able to live out the final years of his life in peace and comfort because of the radical sacrifice that Lenny made for him.

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13, NKJV). As Christians, we must come to understand that gay and lesbian people are not our enemies; they are our friends. We should ask God to supernaturally orchestrate opportunities to show them that this is true. Whether it's through a generous financial contribution, as was the case with Lenny, or forgiving something that is unforgivable, if we simply ask, God will create an opportunity for us to love our gay friends in a way that they cannot ignore, despite the chasm between their politics and ours.

And let's pray for our Christian brothers and sisters from the Justice House of Prayer in San Francisco, as they are doing this very thing for the gay community on the West Coast. However, before you pray, take a minute to read the brief account () of what happened to them on November 14. As I read it myself, I was especially impressed with this statement:

"Our faith in Christ calls us to be willing to die for the sake of the gospel, and we are not to sacrifice for the sake of comfort or a false peace. Though the American church has not often been tested in this, these days seem to be upon us. We love the LGBT community and we do not believe that everyone in this community is filled with hate or anger. What happened on Friday night was different than what we have ever encountered. We forgive those who assaulted us physically and sexually. We forgive the anger and threats of violence against us. Our desire has always been to be a bridge to bring the

love of Jesus.”

I’m praying for the safety of my Christian brothers and sisters at JHOPSF as they love homosexuals as Jesus would; and I’m praying that all of God’s people will read and follow the example they have set for us.

Chad Thompson is the author of *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would* (Brazos Press). He has also produced a DVD titled “Bringing Christian Love Out of the Closet.” For more information on his ministry to the gay community, visit .