

# Black-and-White Truth in a Fifty-Shades-of-Grey World

Catholic bishops made headlines this week when they hosted a discussion at the Vatican about homosexuality and then released a 12-page report on their conversation. Depending on who was spinning the news, the headline either read: “BISHOPS MORE OPEN TO GAY MARRIAGE” or “CATHOLIC LEADERS STILL OPPOSE GAY UNIONS.”

Vatican leaders insist Pope Francis won't be changing church doctrine anytime soon. But with so many mixed signals in this new report, he needs to say what he believes. In an age when *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the book and film, is a dominant force in popular culture, we need leaders who will speak to us in black and white.

I know what I believe. I've tried to state my convictions here, and I challenge you to see if you agree with what I consider the biblical precepts that should be guiding the church's discussion on sexuality.

**1. God's original plan for marriage involves one male and one female.** Unless you've ripped Genesis 1 out of your Bible or you don't believe the Old and New Testaments are inspired Scripture, it should be obvious that marriage was invented by God, both for procreation and for partnership, and that it involves a man and a woman. Any other sexual relationship—incest, adultery, homosexuality or bestiality—is outside God's moral boundaries.

**2. Homosexuality is a sin, because it is contrary to God's perfect will.** The New Testament affirms that people who willfully engage in unrepentant sexual sin of any type—including adultery, fornication and homosexuality—will not inherit the kingdom of God (see 1 Cor. 6:9-10). And Paul

the apostle wrote that when a culture embraces homosexuality and promotes it, this is a sign of deception and moral depravity (see Rom. 1:20-32). We oppose God's loving plan for humanity when we celebrate gay sex or encourage people to participate in it.

**3. Some people develop same-sex feelings because we live in a fallen, sinful world.** Human sexuality is complicated. Psychologists are still studying the causes of same-sex attraction. These can include parenting style, bullying, exposure to pornography, sexual abuse or just certain family dynamics or dispositions. Because all human beings are born sinners (Rom. 3:23), it is entirely plausible that some people are born gay, just as some people have a propensity toward certain addictions or behaviors. This does not mean God loves them less, since He invites *all* sinners to discover the forgiveness of Christ.

**4. Homosexuals should be treated with compassion and respect.** God loves people regardless of their flaws. So should we—because none of us deserve His amazing grace. Christians have no business shaming, ridiculing or using crude language to condemn homosexuals. Jesus showed compassion to all types of sinners. When He extended mercy, people renounced their sins and discovered grace to live free from shame. Jesus offers this freedom to any person who is sexually broken. The church should be a welcoming place for any person who struggles with sin and wants healing.

**5. A Christian may have homosexual feelings, but he or she can find the power to resist temptation through the power of the Holy Spirit.** The apostle Paul acknowledged that there were former homosexuals in the Corinthian church who no longer were enslaved to that behavior. He wrote: "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ..." (1 Cor. 6:11). Through the power of sanctification, God can break any unhealthy sexual habit. This doesn't mean a gay man who finds

Christ has to marry a woman (he may choose to be celibate), but it does mean that when he experiences salvation, he will find supernatural power to live a holy life.

**6. The Christian church should never sanction homosexual behavior just because culture accepts it.** The Bible does not give Christian leaders permission to change God's moral law or vote to change the words of Jesus. When Jesus was on Earth, certain religious leaders tried to get Him to sanction their adulterous behavior, but Jesus re-emphasized to them that marriage still involves one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). He didn't leave room for marriage to evolve into something else. Denominations that are voting to change the rules for marriage are stepping away from God's grace.

**7. We don't have to perform gay weddings to show love to gay people.** It's likely that same-sex marriage will soon be legalized in all 50 states. It remains to be seen if our government will force churches to do what our conscience says is wrong. But regardless of how people of faith will be treated 10 years from now, we must decide now to be a people of compassion.

When abortion was sanctioned in 1973, Bible-believing Christians continued to preach that killing an unborn child is sinful. Today we show compassion to women who have aborted babies, to the men who pushed their girlfriends to abort, and to the doctors who performed the procedures. We offer them forgiveness, and we even offer to adopt unwanted babies—but our love doesn't compromise what we believe. The same rule applies to gay marriage.

We can't rewrite the Bible or hide the truth from people. We must stand on our convictions. But whether people are straight, gay, bisexual or transgender, we must point them to Jesus. He is the only hope for all sinners.

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