

Homosexuality Is Not the Issue, Says Portland Pastor

There is a new book out that I can't wait to read. I'll get to that in a minute.

I have written no less than a half-dozen posts about the LGBTQ conversation. There is a world of complexities when dealing with this issue—and they are *not* all black and white. One of the worst things we can do to another person is make their struggle a universal black-and-white issue.

There is a black-and-white issue here that we should recognize, but it's one that, unfortunately, few people articulate. The issue that we should be concerned about in our churches is not one of homosexuality, but one of *porneia*.

This is the Greek word translated in most cases as “sexual immorality.” It speaks of *any* sexual promiscuity outside God's design for marriage. Homosexual behaviors can fall into this category, but the truth is that heterosexual behaviors are addressed at a much greater length in Scripture than any homosexual behaviors are. That's black and white.

To point out one *porneia* behavior over another may be done out of ignorance by some, but sadly, in many cases, it seems to be little more than bigotry. On the other hand, discipling people who are gay is not for the bigot, but for the follower of Jesus.

For those of us who want to lovingly guide people toward the ways of Jesus in any issue, we understand discipleship as being much more than walking people through a curriculum once a week. It's every bit of the word *messy*. It's anything but black and white. Everyone is different. Their fears, concerns and questions are unique ... and befriending gay people is no exception.

I recently read an article that expressed some of the growing complexities we are seeing in our context. It was written by a gay man who just found out his partner was a trans woman (a man in transition to become a woman). He was concerned about what this made him ... heterosexual now? It was complex, but it was honest. It was an article that explained the emotional complexities this man was going through and the questions he was honestly wrestling with.

Now, this may be an extreme case for some of us, but make no mistake about it—every gay person is riding a number of emotional roller coasters that are unique to that individual, and especially those in the church. If we want to lovingly relate to people, whatever their struggle, we need to pay the price of time with them. That's when we become certain that this is not black and white.

There is a new resource out through Simply Youth Ministry that I am looking forward to reading. It's called *Ministering to Gay Teenagers: Practical Help for Youth Workers and Families*. I would recommend checking out the video from the author (Shawn Harrison), reading the description, and purchasing the book. I don't personally know the author, but I am looking forward reading his book.

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