



SEXUALITY AND THE GOSPEL

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How to share Christ with the gay community

Christopher Yuan / April 24, 2020

Is God's offer of salvation available to our loved ones and friends in the gay community? Of course! And I personally know this to be true, because God saved me from there. It all started in 1993 when I announced to my unbelieving parents that I was gay.

Although my parents couldn't accept this, I had no more secrets and felt unimpeded to fully embrace "who I was"—or so I thought. This new freedom propelled me down a path of self-destruction, which became the catalyst leading my mother, father, and finally me to the Lord.

While in dental school, I was doing and selling illicit drugs, which led to my expulsion. However, my mother soon understood my biggest sin was unbelief—not simply my rebellious actions or same-sex behavior. What I needed first, more than anything else, was God's gracious gift of salvation.

So my mother prayed a bold prayer: "Lord, do whatever it takes to bring this prodigal son to You." The miracle in answer to her prayers came with my arrest. In jail, I received the dark news that I was HIV-positive.

One night as I lay in my prison cell bed, I saw something scribbled on the metal bunk above me: "If you're bored, read Jeremiah 29:11." So I did, and was intrigued by the promise I read there to a rebellious Israel: "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

I read the Bible more and more. As I did, I recognized my primary rebellion was against my Creator. In addition, it was clear from Scripture that homosexuality was a sin *and* that I'd put my identity in the wrong thing. The LGBTQ community emphasizes that sexuality is the core of our identity, but God's Word paints quite a different picture. My true identity is in Jesus Christ alone. Sexuality is not *who* you are, but *how* you are.



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Ultimately, upon my release from jail, I committed to studying and submitting to biblical and theological truth. I was accepted at Moody Bible Institute and later went on to seminary. My parents and I now travel around the world as a two-generational ministry, communicating God's grace and God's truth on biblical sexuality!

So how do we share Christ with those who identify as gay? We must proclaim God's truth—because the truth sets us free! And what is God's truth regarding homosexuality? It's a sin. True, but is that all and nothing more? Scripture, our only authority, provides the answer.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, the apostle Paul writes, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Sometimes, people will only focus on the middle of this list and say, “Gays and lesbians won't inherit the kingdom of God,” while conveniently ignoring the other sins. However, if we look at all the sins listed, none of us should inherit the kingdom of God!

I praise the Lord that Paul didn't stop there. He goes on to say one of my favorite Bible verses, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

That's not only good news, that's amazing news! You can be washed, you can be sanctified, you can be justified in the name of Jesus. Our message has to be redemptive. We cannot simply tell people they're sinners and not tell them about the Savior who saves sinners! It's important to know that my biggest sin wasn't being in a same-sex relationship. My biggest sin was unbelief.

But what about a Christian who happens to struggle with same-sex temptations and knows it's a sin to act on it? How can we best walk with them to Christ? Do you know how to respond if a close friend opens up about this?

First, thank them that they trusted you with this very personal matter. Don't freak out. The fact that they opened up to you says a lot about you. Be a good listener and don't assume anything. Most important, ask how their faith in Christ fits into their understanding of their sexuality. Ideally, we should hear, “My faith is strong. I am conforming my feelings and desires around my faith and submitting them to Christ.” Regrettably, we often hear the opposite.

Second, tell them they're not alone. Christians who are wrestling with their sexuality often believe no one can ever understand them, which is a lonely place to be. Be honest and tell them that you don't know everything there is to know about this, but you're committed to walk with them to Jesus. And if you think you must experience this same struggle to help someone with same-sex temptations, think again. This is not true for any other sin! If you know Jesus and you've had any victory over sin through Christ, you can help another sinner.

Third, help remind them that their identity needs to be in Christ. This is really important. I don't know of any other sin issue where we have conflated it with personhood. A liar is not who he is, but what he does. An adulteress is not who she is, but what she does. And yet “gay” is not what we feel or do, but who we are. Remember, sexuality is not *who* we are, but *how* we are. Then who are we? We are all created in God's image, but fell in Adam. Then Christ came to redeem us, and by grace through faith we are adopted as children of God. As a result, we no longer identify with the first Adam, but the second Adam who is Jesus Christ!

Fourth, be realistic; don't give false promises. We cannot just “pray away the gay.” Prayer and reading the Bible are important. However, we do these things not so that difficulties won't come, but that when they come—and they will—we are better equipped to remain faithful to God.

Fifth, focus on heart change, not on externals like how people walk or talk. The most important change is from the inside out. And heart change is what the gospel is all about.

Sixth, seek to deepen and strengthen bonds within the spiritual family. Yes, friendships are good, but they need to be grounded in the body of Christ, the local church. You cannot love Christ and not love the body of Christ.

But you may be thinking, “This is great for a Christian struggler, but what about my gay coworker or lesbian neighbor who has no interest in Christ?”

What Not to Say:

- Do not compare homosexuality with an addiction or pedophilia. It’s not a good way to win people to Christ.
- Do not use these two words: “lifestyle” or “choice.” I never used those words before I came to Christ because I had the wrong identity. And I’m willing to change my vocabulary for the sake of winning people to Jesus.
- Do not say, “Love the sinner, hate the sin.” Do it, but don’t say it.
- Do not feel you must debate with people or answer every question. Jesus didn’t. Instead, He would answer in ways that pointed to the kingdom of God.

What to Do:

- Pray and fast. Do battle for people who are unable to intercede for themselves.
- Be quick to listen, not quick to speak. If you want others to listen to you, you should listen to them first.
- Be intentional. Invite a gay neighbor over for dinner. No, this isn’t condoning sin. We shouldn’t be afraid to eat with sinners—Jesus wasn’t!
- Be patient and persistent. My parents prayed for eight years—and I know people who’ve been praying for decades. If God patiently pursued you, shouldn’t we do the same for others?
- Be transparent. What’s the best way to share the gospel? Share how the gospel has impacted your own personal life! Be transparent about what God has taught you and brought you through lately!

We must live the gospel before we preach the gospel. I would never have considered the gospel if I had not seen the gospel lived out in my parents’ lives first. In fact, I did not stop pursuing same-sex relationships because my parents convinced me such relationships were sinful. I stopped because they showed me something better—and His name is Jesus.

Our job as followers of Christ is to show a lost and dying world that whatever it is they are clinging to—all the fool’s gold in the world, fame, money, career, relationships—not only is following Jesus better, it is best.

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