

## What Does The Bible Say To Gay People?

1. Warm-up Question: Before launching into Sunday's sermon, Pastor Jeff premiered our church's brand new Public Service Announcement produced in partnership with Comcast. The PSA reminds viewers how hate is running rampant and invites them to go to OvercomeHate.com – where positive, practical actions steps are listed. If we can raise \$7,000 on our GoFundMe page, we will be able to air the PSA 540 times over the next couple months, resulting in one-third of all adults in central Indiana seeing our PSA at least four times, for a total of 2.3 million impressions!

When you saw the PSA, what were your thoughts? How do you feel about being part of the church that's spearheading this campaign?

2. The most common argument conservative Christians use against LGBT people is called Creation Order Theology. It comes from the Old Testament notion that God created people and animals in clear and distinct categories that must be kept separate. Land animals are supposed to walk on their legs, birds are supposed to fly, and fish are supposed to swim. In this view, birds that swim (storks) or land animals that fly (bats) are transgressing God's clear lines of creation order and declared "unclean detestable abominations." When applied to people, this way of thinking says that God created clear categories of people – men and women – who are supposed to behave only in certain stereotypical ways. For example, men are supposed to couple with women, and women with men, and anyone who doesn't is blurring the clear lines of God's creation categories. The same reasoning has also been used to condemn biracial couples, transgender people, and women who step into roles traditionally viewed as "male," such as preaching.
  - a. Jeff compared Creation Order Theology to people who are obsessive about keeping their food separate on their plate and/or eating their food in a certain order. Have you ever known someone who ate that way? Do you eat that way? (Come on, confess.)
  - b. Why do so many people find Creation Order Theology so appealing?
  - c. What are some of the obvious flaws with Creation Order Theology?
3. Creation Order Theology reigned supreme until Jesus came along and started mixing everything up! Two weeks ago we saw that, in Mark 7, Jesus emphatically rejected the notion that blended creatures are an abomination. Jesus declared all creatures "clean" (Mark 7:19), including storks and bats. Jesus' teachings in Matthew 19 build from there and specifically apply his appreciation for diversity to us humans. Read Matthew 19:1-12.
  - a. At the outset of our reading, Jesus is asked whether it's permissible for a man to divorce his wife for any reason or only certain extraordinary reasons. Jesus responds that divorce is appropriate only under extraordinary circumstances, like adultery. Why do you think Jesus wanted us to strive to limit divorce to

exceptional circumstances, rather than any circumstance? For you personally, what kind of circumstances feel extreme enough to justify divorce?

- b. In support of his view that divorce should be limited to really bad situations, Jesus quotes portions of the creation story in verses 4-7 of our passage. Read those verses again. What wisdom and insight do you think these verses offer us about marriage?
4. When conservative Christians read verses 4-7, they jump to the conclusion that Jesus is saying that 100% of all men and women were meant to embrace heterosexual marriage. But that interpretation ignores the rest of what Jesus says in the passage. After Jesus announces his cautious view of divorce, his disciples exclaim, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry!” Read again Jesus’ response in verses 11-12.
- a. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given”?
  - b. Notice that Jesus uses the language of “gift,” i.e., “given,” to describe the three categories of men who are not meant to marry women. What’s the significance of that?
  - c. In ancient Greek, the term “eunuch” (*eunouchos*) referred to a category of servants who were responsible for serving and protecting women in wealthy households and palaces. Some were castrated – “eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others.” But some eunuchs were so trusted – so safe – they were left intact. What kind of men would be ideal for this role?
  - d. Jeff went through a litany of ancient literature demonstrating that many eunuchs had the reputation of being interested in men, rather than women. These eunuchs were referred to as “natural eunuchs” or “born eunuchs.” In the literature of the time, they were often feared and made fun of. What’s the significance of Jesus affirming that there are “eunuchs who have been so from birth” and that this way of being was “given” to them by God?
  - e. When we put everything Jesus says in Mark 7 and Matthew 19 together, how would you describe his view of creation – and his view of diversity?
5. Jeff told the story of Jack Hankins, a faithful, elderly, man who, in the early years of our church was our one-man Sound Team, despite being hard of hearing. Jack could never quite shake the self-hatred he internalized at the hands of Creation Order Theologians. At a low point, he drank Drano and died. In your own life experience, have you seen people destroyed by Creation Order Theology? Tell us about it.

6. Once we know the historical background of eunuchs, the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch takes on a whole new depth of meaning. Read Acts 8:26-39.
- a. Philip was called away from a wildly successful revival in Samaria to go out into the desert to share the Good News with one individual. Why? In God's eyes, why was this single encounter so important?
  - b. The eunuch had traveled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship in the temple. But once he arrived, he would have learned that eunuchs were banned from the temple. After experiencing that rejection, how do you suppose he felt on his way home?
  - c. When Philip learned that the man in the chariot was a "eunuch," what thoughts might have raced through Philip's mind?
  - d. Why do you suppose the eunuch was so drawn to the words of Isaiah 53?
  - e. Note the way the eunuch frames his question about baptism, "What is to prevent me from being baptized?" (Vs. 37.) Why did he ask the question that way? What do you suppose he feared Philip would say?
  - f. What's the significance of Philip's response?
  - g. Acts 8 is the first recorded instance of a eunuch being welcomed into the early church. What's the significance of that?

***Always remember: Whosoever will may come!***

***P.S. If you feel called to support the airing of our brand new PSA, and are able to do so, go to OvercomeHate.com, scroll to the last box on the page, and click on our GoFundMe link. Thanks!!***