

THE BIBLE AND LGBTQ ISSUES

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Intro

One of the most challenging, emotional, and conflict-ridden issues facing us today is how to speak to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues. Whether one holds an affirming view on same sex relationships, or a traditional view, we can all attest to the struggle and divisiveness this issue has caused in our society and churches. It is an issue that cannot be ignored any longer or pushed to the side by quoting a few Bible verses and pointing fingers in people's faces. Protest signs and derogatory speech only make the issue worse. The unwillingness to hear our brothers' and sisters' concerns and struggles on the other side of the aisle, cripples our abilities to witness. If we are to understand the issues and correctly navigate the circumstances in which we now find ourselves, it is vital to hear the arguments taking place on both sides. Particularly, how each handles God's inspired Word when it comes to identity, love, sexuality, and marriage. In what follows I will summarize key arguments being made from both perspectives, state my own position, and finally relate that position to pastoral ministry.

Perspectives on Same Sex Relationships

Matthew Vines

One of the strongest arguments put forth by the affirming view of same sex relationships is that of Matthew Vines, a very intelligent gay man. He describes growing up in a healthy Christian family where there was not abuse, neglect, or molestation, but a very loving environment. Vines describes the traditional view, in which he grew up as follows: there are only six out of 31,102 verses that speak to the issue in the Old (OT) and New Testaments (NT) combined, homosexuality is a sign of brokenness, attraction is not sin, but activity is. Additionally, same sex relationships are wrong no matter the quality or context, and one can never have a romantic bond with a partner of the same gender. God's ways are higher than our own, so you just have to deal with it.

Matthew Vines begins to push back against the traditional view with a provocative statement, "Straight people are told they can have deep intimate relationships while gays can't" (Lecture). For him, sexual orientation is more than mere attraction, or based on sex alone. Rather, it is also about the desire for a family and being able to experience the same amount of emotional bond and care for others as straights are afforded. Vines says that he as a gay man under the traditional view is, "Uniquely excluded from companionship, family, loving romantic relationship, and must be celibate" (Lecture). He argues that the worst thing to happen to a same sex attracted person, given traditional views, is to fall in love, because they will always be left out and never share in those joys, but rather be subject to

loneliness. They will always be alone, always worried about falling in love or becoming too close, and experiencing one heart break after another.

Vines appeals to Matthew 7:17-18 at this point, asking us the question, “Aren’t we supposed to know if something is good based on whether or not it produces good fruit?” The traditional view in his opinion has produced only hate, ostracization, and divisiveness. What about Genesis 2:18 which reads, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him”? Vines recognizes that for most men, a woman is a suitable partner, but not for the gay man. Why does the traditional view call good for the homosexual what is called not good for the straight man? Genesis one states that we are all created in the image of God, therefore the gay man is not an inferior creature. Why shouldn’t the remedy for homosexuals be the same, a suitable partner? These are after all the very words of God. Forced loneliness cannot be God’s will. Vines states that the traditional teaching here has been deeply wounding to the homosexual community, and he rejects the idea that homosexuality is a consequence of the Fall. All this being said, how does Matthew Vines interpret the six verses from Scripture mentioned above to further his argument in a move toward an affirming view of same sex relationships?

The story and context of Sodom and Gomorrah takes place in Genesis chapter 18 and 19. Vines rejects this as a valid text to use to condemn homosexuality. According to Vines, during the Middle Ages this section of Scripture began to be used to interpret the judgment of God as being because of the sexuality of the people in these cities. This is where we also derived the term sodomy, which he points out that in the Middle Ages meant any non-procreative sex. I agree with Vines here that the context is gang rape, not committed loving relationship, and that in Ezekiel 16:49 we are told that it was because of the cities’ arrogance, inhospitality, and treatment of others. Does that include homosexuality? Yes, but that’s not all it speaks to. Jude 7 however, does speak directly about sexual immorality. Essentially, for Vines this verse only speaks to violent, non-consensual relationships.

The other two OT Scriptures Vines brings to our attention are Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. They state that it is an abomination for a male to lie with another male as with a woman. Interestingly, the OT never speaks about lesbian relationships in these terms mentioned about. To this Vines poses a similar question: “Aren’t we in the New Covenant?” His argument continues pointing out that at the council of Jerusalem (Act 15) the law was deemed not applicable to believers (Gal. 3; Col.2:13-14, Rom 10:4). In the context of these verses in Leviticus, many things are prohibited such as pork products, shellfish, how to cut your hair, and tattoos. However, the overwhelming majority of

Christians today would say this does not apply to them. If I'm hearing Vines correctly he is essentially saying that to use these verses would be inconsistent and hypocritical. Either you take them all or leave it, because if you pick and choose what you want to obey and believe from the Bible, you're no different than anyone else. I agree with this assessment. For Vines the Mosaic Law is irrelevant and not applicable in discussions on this issue, and states that there is, "No good reason to have exceptions to the rule of Christ fulfilling the law" (Lecture).

Vine's turns his attention next to Romans 1:26-27. The New Testament passages, he admits, don't have the problems of context and applicability that Leviticus does. Further, unlike Leviticus, it speaks to both men and women. This being said, he argues that these verses lie within the larger context under the theme of idolatry in this chapter, and Paul is simply using homosexual relationships of a certain kind to demonstrate his point. These forbidden relationships being lustful in nature, not committed and loving ones. Paul is speaking of "natural" relations here, changing them for unnatural ones. Vines follows Paul's logic this way: a man started out heterosexual, and ended up gay (that's exchanging natural relations for unnatural). He says that gays natural, permanent, orientation to the same sex, that they don't choose and can't change, is natural. Vines reads Paul to say that it would be sin if you're naturally attracted to men and chose to be with a woman. The opposite of what your "natural tendencies" are is what Paul is speaking to.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 reads, "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Many holding the traditional view say, "case closed" here. Vines challenges us to look past the surface. He asserts that Hebrew, Greek, and Latin hold this in common: they don't have a word for homosexual, it is foreign to the Bible. Vines explains that the phrase, "men who have sex with men" hinges on two words: *malakoi* meaning soft, lazy, or passive partner in same sex intercourse, and other uses) and *arsenokoitai* (Paul made it up never used before). Even if Paul didn't make it up, the word *arsenokoitai*, it's flawed etymologically to deconstruct the word to make two words, "men" and "lay with" respectively. For example, the word butterfly, or honeymoon if deconstructed make no sense to the original word and vice versa.

Vines states in conclusion that the Bible does not say anything good about homosexuality. There is also no Biblical data on same sex loving relationships and the Bible never condemns it. Jesus doesn't say anything at all about homosexuality, and focused on outcasts. We are all called to honor

one another (Rom. 12 Heb. 13:3). We are all created in the image of God. Vines asks if the pain of the same sex attracted grieves us, or do we just deem them uniquely unworthy of having a family and finding a partner. Song of Songs says of the wedding day that for Solomon it was, “the day his heart rejoiced.” Why take that from someone? The Bible is not opposed to loving gay relationships. The true Christian response is support and love.

Dr. Gerry Breshears

In Genesis one we are told that we all are created in the image of God, male and female he created them (Gen. 1). This makes all mankind deserving of dignity and respect. In the Garden, God told them to nurture and care for the world. He also told them to be fruitful and multiply (v.28). But two chapters later in Genesis three the Fall takes place, and sin enters the world producing guilt and shame. But God doesn't bring hellfire and brimstone, he comes to his creation. Even when Adam hides, God pursues. The Bible says, we are all sinners in need of God's grace (Rom. 3:23-24). This being said Breshears states regarding the marriage relationship,

“Marriage is the publicly pledged, permanent, exclusive, covenantal union of one man and one woman... He (God) gave them the good gift of sex as a pleasurable, whole person bonding activity between husband and wife to confirm and deepen their marital relationship” (Breshears 1, 2).

Therefore, all sexual activity outside of marriage is forbidden. This is counter to our cultural norm that defines sex as a pleasurable recreational activity between consenting adults. Why? Because it defiles the person and the gift of sex and brings brokenness, and God's judgment. God is pro sex, he created it, it just has to be his way. According to Matthew Vines, the Bible being against gay marriage or same sex committed relationships is against the witness of Scripture. The Bible affirms not condemns homosexual activity, Vines argues. All of this is a modern concept, which Breshears rejects. Any sexual expression outside God's intended design, such as lust, pornography, cohabitation, sexual joking, and harassment of any kind, heterosexual or homosexual, is sinful (Breshears, 1).

A key issue is the ability to distinguish attractions from actions. Attractions are not sinful, actions are. All people have attractions and passion of various kinds, and they often do not change. However, “we are not defined by our passions nor need we live under their domination. Sinful sexual activities and attitudes, physical and lustful, heteroerotic and homoerotic, are to be brought to God and His people for help” (Breshears, 1). Mankind is to be defined, Biblically, by being children of God, redeemed by Jesus, and living with the power of the Holy Spirit rather than by putting our identity in

sexual attractions. Where we place our identity matters significantly. Is it rooted in Christ or our feelings?

Breshears states that same sex sin is just one form of sin and not fundamentally any worse than other sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:26-32). God brings transformation to all kinds of lustfulness for many of his children who seek it (Breshears, 2). Breshears comments,

“The Bible defines homosexual behavior as sin but no more inherently sinful than such sins as heterosexual behavior, theft, slander, or swindling. Gay marriage is just one of many legalized sinful behaviors in our culture (along with adultery, divorce, pornography). We call people and society to repent of these sins and bring our laws into the goodness of God’s design as a part of our work to establish God’s justice in society.”

What about the Scriptures that Matthew Vines pointed out? In regards to the OT passages that Vines speaks to, I think it’s safe to say that Breshears would agree at many points with the interpretations, but most importantly that the Mosaic Covenant is no longer applicable to believers today. He adds, “The Mosaic covenant was added to the Abrahamic until the Messiah came and the New Covenant was inaugurated. We are not under the Mosaic code, but much in the Mosaic code is part of the bigger biblical morality (Gal. 3)” (Breshears, 2). I also believe Breshears’ statement here to be true theologically. Their interpretations of the New Testament texts tell a different story.

Breshears interprets Romans one much differently than Vines. Whereas Vines defines “natural” relations as ones desires and feelings, Breshears defines “natural”, as how God created and designed the world to be. For Vines, Paul’s logic leads to same sex relationships being okay, as long as that is what one naturally desires. To act contrary would be sin. Breshears teaches what Paul is saying in this passage is that homosexuality is the result and consequence of the rejection of God’s created order. It is sin to act against God’s definition of marriage and sexuality (natural relations Rom. 1:26-27). God’s words are to guide our actions, not our feelings. Homosexuality is a symptom and evidence of the rejection of God’s design for sex. But it’s bigger than that. It is also a symptom of the larger rejection of the creator God himself, and choosing to live life how one sees fit, exchanging the truths of God for a lie in all areas of life (Rom. 1:18).

Next is the 1 Corinthians passage as discussed above. The Greek meanings that Vines gave differ greatly with Breshears’. “Sexually immoral” (1 Cor. 6:9) is the Greek word *porneia*: meaning any sex outside of marriage, *malakoi*: being passive in same sex relationship, and *arsenokoitai* : male who engages in sexual activity with a male (Breshears, 3). Vines states that Paul made up the word *arsenokoitai*, nobody else uses it, and so therefore it is invalid. Breshears on the contrary points out the

intentionality and specificity of Paul’s use of language. Paul, “coined the word *arsenokoites* from *arsen* (men) and *koimaomai* (lay with) from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13” (Breshears, 3). The Bible in its original languages does not ever say “homosexual” but the language clearly expresses what we know today to be deemed homosexual activity, and Paul says it’s a sin just like being greedy, a thief, or a drunkard is.

Many argue that when it comes to these issues that Jesus was silent. Breshears notes that Matthew 19 confirms gender and marriage statements of OT and Matthew 15 confirms the judgement that any kind of sex outside of marriage is wrong (Breshears, 3). It is true that Jesus does not single out homosexuality, but neither does anyone else. Let’s say that he didn’t speak to this issue. To argue that Jesus never said anything about, so it is okay, is poor logic. Jesus didn’t speak about a lot of things such as rape, human trafficking, or drugs.

God did not make anyone gay, it is a result of a broken world just like all other sinful desires. God’s love is demanding, it’s pure, and it’s conforming us into the image of his son Jesus (Breshears, 3). The following statement I believe shows the heart behind Breshears words,

“The Church strives to be a place of grace where sin of all kinds can be forgiven and healed with prayer and personal support. It is a safe space with an open, welcoming atmosphere for Christians or non-Christians who are trying to learn about and move towards Jesus. They can share and explore their stories for mutual encouragement and support as they help each other grow together into maturity in Christ. The church must accept and support people who live in freedom, forgiven of sexual sin of any kind as full members in their fellowship. People who guide their sexual passions – including same sex attraction – according to biblical standards are encouraged to serve and lead at every level in the church” (Breshears, 1)

My Personal Position

“Although it is not central to the gospel message at the heart of Christianity, right now the cultural moment requires that we be prepared to address this issue whenever we are publicly identified as Christians” (Keller, 1). What does the Bible say about homosexuality, and what is the church’s and family’s role in this situation, are two very pressing matters.

Homosexuality and Scripture

“If you say to everybody, ‘Anyone who thinks homosexuality is a sin is a bigot, ... you’re going to have to ask them to completely disassemble the way in which they read the Bible, completely disassemble their whole approach to authority. You’re basically going to have to ask them to completely kick their faith out the door’” (Keller, 3).

Our society today is asking us to do this. This is something we cannot do, however there are wiser, and more God-honoring ways to approach this issue than others. Before any discussion on

specific sins, people need to know that everyone has a fractured heart bent toward sin and are sexually broken, because the Fall (Gen.3) has touched every aspect of Creation (Rom.1, 8). All have sinned, and not one is righteous (Rom. 3:23, 3:10). This sin nature and what God's standards are for sexual conduct, for all humanity need to be firmly established. God's criteria for sexual morality and purity of heart are constructed to protect human happiness and joy (Prov. 5:18-19; 6:32-33; John 15:10-11). It is vital to remember God's motivation and goals for us. God wants what brings him the most glory and what is best for us. We are created in his image (Gen. 1:26-27) and thus given dignity and value, but as those who bear his image we must reflect his character and make known his unseen attributes to all mankind.

Sex is not an entitlement or right to demand. It is also not needed for wholeness or maturity. Remember our savior Jesus Christ never married nor experienced sexual intimacy. Moral purity in thought and deed are God's standard for sex. Sexual holiness can be compromised even in thoughts never acted upon (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Phil. 4:8; James 1:14-15). Sex is never to be used to oppress, or take advantage of anyone (1 Thess. 4:6). Fornication, rape, incest, sexual abuse, molestation, pedophilia, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, bestiality, etc., always exploit, degrade, corrupt, and mar the image of God, therefore they are to be condemned and they can never be justified (Lev. 18:7-10; 19:29; 2 Sam. 13:1-22; Prov. 6:26; 23:27; Matt. 5:28; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:13-14) (Colorado Statement on Biblical Sexual Morality). We must be disciplined to be sexually moral. Sexual acts first take place in the mind as the entertainment of lustful thoughts. Sexual acts must never treat others as mere objects of our lusts, and they should always be selfless acts that have the best interest of the other person.

There are somethings in the Bible that are difficult to understand or interpret. This is not one of them. The Scriptures are clear, and both the Old and New Testament condemn sexual contact and affection between two persons of the same sex (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10) and further make known that no one has the right to blame God or excuse this behavior by argument of being created in this fashion (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 1:24-25) (Colorado Statement on Biblical Sexual Morality). Timothy Keller writes that, "...every place the Bible directly addresses sexual relations between people of the same gender, it is always unambiguously forbidden. This is not only true in the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:22) but also in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; Romans 1:18-32)" (Keller, 1).

Moral sex is heterosexual by God's design. God is all knowing and all wise. He is the Lord over knowledge and the foundation of truth (Isa. 40:13-14; Ps. 147:5, Mat.10:28-31). God as creator and sustainer knows all things comprehensively, past, present, future, actual, and possible (Ps. 139:16; Mat. 11:20-22; 1 Cor. 2:7-8). His knowledge is innate, instantaneous, autonomous, and unlimited. In addition, God is infinitely wise. In the application of his immeasurable knowledge, he always governs by his righteousness and goodness, and chooses the best means to the best goals for his creation (Rom. 16:27, 11:33; Jas. 1:5). This being said about God, he has perfect knowledge of humanity's design as its creator, and is justified in his decision regarding what constitutes moral sex, and has not made a mistake forbidding homosexual activity. God gives strength to overcome temptations (1 Cor. 10:13; Jam.4:7; Gal. 5:16; Heb. 2:18). Homosexuality is not a greater sin than other sins, but it is unquestionably a sin, and being sexual in nature often carries with it a heavier consequential burden, as one is sinning against their own body as well as God (1 Cor. 6:18).

I think it is wise to let the Bible speak also to a couple of common "homosexual exegesis" takes on Scripture. This is the tribe Matthew Vines belongs to. Frame warns, "We should always be suspicious of exegesis that seeks to bring the Bible into line with some contemporary social or political movement" (758). One argument out there is that Jesus never spoke about homosexuality (mentioned briefly above), therefore he didn't condemn it. It is correct that Jesus never explicitly spoke about homosexuality, however this reading and argument is one made from silence. Jesus did have a lot to say about sexual ethics and marriage. In addition to agreeing with Dr. Breshears statements on Jesus and this issue, I find it far more likely given Jesus' take on marriage (Mk. 10:2-12) that Jesus didn't speak to the issue directly because he didn't have to. It simply wasn't a mainstream cultural issue for Jews, because they knew the Mosaic Law and lived in a hyper religious culture, trying to avoid another exile. Jesus agreed with the cultural norm of what was being taught about this issue and didn't need to correct it (Gagnon, 118-119). Jesus' take in Mk. 10:2-12 (quoting Genesis 1:18 and 2:24) shows what he believed to be normative for sexual practice, prescriptive not just descriptive (Gagnon, 119). Jesus' linking of these two verses together demonstrates that, because of their differing genders, they could become one flesh through sexual union (Gagnon 119). God ordained marriage from creation, it is not a social construct. Biblical Marriage is one man, one woman, husband and wife for life (Breshears notes). The Apostle Paul would agree. J. I. Packer once said, "I have asked myself at every turn of my theological road: Would Paul be with me in this? What would he say if he were in my shoes? I have never dared to offer a view on anything that I did not have good reason to think he would endorse". In Ephesians 5:22-33 the difference between a man and a woman is crucial to the meaning of marriage

(Frame, 759). The symbolism is of Christ (man) and his church (woman.) Christ is not the church, the church is not Christ. In our society today Frame notes, “Ultimately, the roles are interchangeable. But symbolically, this suggests that God and man are interchangeable. And that notion is not only wrong, but the root of all sin, the primal heresy” (759). This “new” exegesis in general,

“...reinterprets the other condemnations of homosexuality in the Bible, claiming (1) that they are ceremonial, not moral and (2) that they apply to specific kinds of homosexuality rather than homosexuality in general, such as temple prostitution, pedophilia, homosexual promiscuity, or “unnatural homosexuality (i.e. homosexual acts by people who are heterosexual by nature). (Frame, 758)

Church and Family Roles

Our first responsibility should be to see where a person roots their identity. We are called first to be children of God, created in his image, graciously saved by the cross work of Christ, and living Holy Spirit empowered lives. After this, then we can describe ourselves by our family, work, activities etc. Proceeding from a rooted identity as a child of God, when they help our brothers and sisters, heterosexual or homosexual, distinguish attractions from activities. Temptation is not sin, giving into temptation is, whether in the fantasizing of the mind or the act of the body. We must lovingly teach them what the word of God says about sin in general, the heart condition of all mankind, and what it means for them to apply it to their lives and shepherd and steward their passions, attractions and activities in a way that honors the Lord Jesus .

The Church is warned,

“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.” (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

How are we to handle this? The command to not be led astray,

“Indicates it is precisely in such matters as this that men deceive themselves, rationalizing that God cannot mean His moral demands seriously. This fundamental error is encountered increasingly today in the form of ingenious but wayward defenses of homosexuality” (Bahnsen, 87-88).

I would say that Bahnsen’s statement applies to all justification for the sins mentioned in 1 Cor. 6:9-10. Homosexuality is a sin, but it is one among many. We must remember that we too sin just in different ways and we too were once these things in Paul’s list (1 Cor. 6:9-11), so same sex sin is just one form of sin and not inherently any worse than other sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:26-32). We need to ask God to help us to forgive and love those that sin differently than we do.

Godly church leaders are responsible to lead God’s people by walking personally with God and by working as a team to help church members do the same. (Col. 2:6-15; Heb. 13:7, 17-19, 22-25; Ezek.34:1-16; Gal 6:12). This dilemma demands the need to,

“...give biblical answers to the culture’s questions. You don’t give them the answers they want, you give them the answers they need. You can’t be a responsible pastor if you don’t. If we are going to shepherd and teach, we must give the most disarming and truthful answers.” (Keller, 2).

We are to be instruments of grace and truth (Eph. 4:15; Heb. 4:16), knowing that we must confront sin and sinners, but love them and have the purpose of redemption in mind (Gal. 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:23-26; Matt. 18; 1 Cor. 5). Condoning outrightly or being nonchalant about our position as a church in regards to sexual sin essentially, “...falsifies the gospel of Christ, abandons the authority of Scripture, and jeopardizes the salvation of fellow human beings” (Packer, 1). In regard to who can serve in the church, it is about shepherding desires in a God-honoring way. I agree with Dr. Breshears that, “People who guide their sexual passions – including same sex attraction – according to biblical standards are encouraged to serve and lead at every level in the church” (Breshears, 1).

Personal Stories

I want to briefly share two stories. The first from my family and the second from a recent friendship. Growing up my mom’s cousins Steve and Paula would babysit her and her brother, and they lived only five houses apart in a small mining town in South East Arizona just a few miles from the America-Mexico border. Steve was gay, growing up in the 1960s and 70s. His dad rejected him and banished him from home when he found out. His father ridiculed him at work in the copper mines first. He came to my grandma for help, and she loved him, but didn’t really know how to help him. He attempted suicide more than once and eventually moved to North Hollywood where he managed a gay bar, and later died of AIDS at 31 in the mid-1980s. My mom spent a good amount of time with him later in his life when she was working for a sports newspaper company in Los Angeles. She comments,

“I have always loved gay people more than most people around here do (rural Colorado now, where I grew up), because of my cousin Steve. I personally watched him fight and lose some of the battles that Matthew Vines speaks of in his sermon (The Gay Debate: The Bible and Homosexuality). It was interesting to me that Matt said he wouldn’t have chosen it. Steve said the same thing and I watched the spirits of suicide and addiction control his life.” (Debbie Lenard)

This next story is much different. My wife and I have recently gotten a Golden Retriever puppy, who is about five months old. He’s a blast and handful! When we picked him up from the breeder they gave us the business card of a couple who also purchased a puppy from them. The couple

did this in hopes that someone else would snag a pup and hopefully live close by the Portland area. Turns out that someone else was me and my wife. We live just fifteen minutes from them. The couple are two lesbian women, in a committed monogamous relationship, and very happy. I know this because we have befriended them, thanks to Noah (our puppy), but more appropriately I believe under the sovereignty of God. I was nervous to engage them to begin with, but we wanted to enter into this situation and take hold of the opportunity to be friends and do life with people that are starkly different than we are. In talking with the two ladies, we found out that they have friends and even family members who have gone to Western Seminary, in Portland. They are satisfied in their relationship and seem genuinely happy. They told us that they feel misunderstood, but not in the traditional sense. What they mean by this is the stereotype that all homosexuals are flamboyant, liberal, closed-minded, and godless. They want to know and learn about God. They are conservative politically. Diane was in the army. She and her partner, Rowan, used to live in Kansas on a farm, and leased a 40-acre farm outside of Portland for several years. In the short time that we've know them, they're fun to be around, kind, and hospitable people. To my surprise, they are very open to discussing all kinds of things. They shared with us that they worked on a documentary, shot here in Portland (Rowan is the videographer) about the exchange of discussions between Mars Hill Portland church members and members of the Q Center discussing hate and misunderstanding on both sides of the debate. It is called *Lead with Love*. This will be an ongoing documentary series. My wife and I have watched the first one recently and I'm sure it will be part of conversations next time we meet.

These stories are vastly different and require that we apply the teachings of Scripture in different ways, seeking help from those who have more experience in different issues, such as with Steve. There is a lot going on. Family issues, mental health, identity issues, a lostness and lack of belonging. These are things a pastor can speak to, but also there are some things that may very well need the help of others in various fields of expertise to lend a hand.

“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” (Ex. 34:6-7)

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