

Responding to the Sexual Revolution

It was about 12 months ago. A female member of my church in her mid-60s asked me for help. She said she was out of her depth. She'd got talking to a woman who she met on the bus going to work. It turned out that they had mutual friends who were homosexual. They were getting married and the wedding was to take place soon. The woman asked her "Are you able to go?". She said "no". When asked why she explained her position on same sex marriage. This began a dialogue over many weeks. The woman held strong views in support the LGBT position. She provided a lot of arguments. I agreed that she gave the woman my email address and we engaged in discussion on this whole subject. So I thought this is something we will all face at some point, and it would be good for us to look at this subject of responding to the sexual revolution. This will be an overview rather than an in depth analysis but it might stimulate some helpful discussion later. There are many facets to this subject that we haven't time to look at in detail.

We're going to look at two questions. The first is this,

How did we get to where we are today?

Get to where? To the point where Asher's Christian cake business broke the law by declining to decorate a cake with a pro-gay marriage campaign slogan. Or the case of Peter and Hazel Mary Bull where a same-sex couple sued them because the Bulls' B&B only allowed married couples to share a double bed. The Bulls based the policy upon their Christian beliefs about marriage and applied it equally to heterosexuals and homosexuals. Then there was the preacher John Craven who was approached by two boys who asked about his views on homosexuality. John responded by quoting the Bible's stance on homosexuality, but said that "whilst God hates sin He loves the sinner". Mr Craven was arrested by the Police for a public order offence, after the boys told the officer they felt insulted by Mr Craven's comments. Eventually he was released after 19 hours in prison and compensated for wrongful arrest. Then there was the case of Lillian Ladele the marriage registrar at Islington Borough Council. She was forced out of her job because of her Christian beliefs about marriage and her conscientious objection to same-sex civil partnerships. Also, Adrian Smith who worked as a housing manager at Trafford Housing Trust in Manchester. He said gay weddings in churches would be "an equality too far". He made the remark outside work time using his own computer on his personal Facebook page, which was not accessible to the general public. Yet managers saw fit to demote him and slash his salary by 40 per cent.

LGBT influence has been very pervasive and extensive. In 2007 the Department of health funded a booklet stating that "sex is to do with your chromosomes, genitalia, hormones and gender is to do with your internal sense of self". Internal subjective feelings override biological sex at birth. You are the sex you feel subjectively rather than how you present yourself physically. The LGBT support group Mermaids promote the idea of gender fluidity toilets arguing that they are immediately available brought in line with new gender presentation. They conclude that "if others do not wish to share the ladies or gent's facilities with a Trans person then it is not the trans person who must use alternative facilities". The extent of LGBT influence is seen in the support group Educate and Celebrate. They provide LGBT and inclusive training to staff,

support staff, departments, leadership teams and governors in children centres, nurseries, primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and public and private organizations. So 38,000 school children took part in the UK Diversity week organized by the LGBT charity Just Like Us. The aim was to make “Schools better places for LGBT and pupils”.

Sadly, both former President Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron said that the greatest achievement for them both during their term of office was making same sex marriage legal, so that someone can marry who they love regardless of sex.

Dr. Sharon James is right when she observes, “Gender identity theory which even ten years ago was largely confined to academic discussion has it seems overnight become mainstream and is being increasingly integrated into our legal and educational system”.

Of course, this makes things increasingly difficult for us who hold on to the biblical definition of sexuality and marriage.

There are at least three factors that have quickly brought us to this situation.

1. Historical developments.

There is the Gender Recognition Act 2004. Anyone over the age of 18 who is in their chosen sex for 2 years or more can apply for a Gender recognition certificate and can live in their chosen sex for all intents and purposes.

The Equality Act 2010 includes gender reassignment as a protected characteristic the same as race and religion. There’s legal protection from discrimination in providing goods and services.

The Marriage Same Sex Couples act 2013 made it possible for marriages to take place between same sex couples, and for the marriage to continue following one spouses legal transition as long as the other spouse agreed.

Although not an act of Parliament the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, held in January 2016, recommended that when applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate a doctor’s authorization wasn’t required, change of sex should be quick and simple, fewer documents should require declaration of sex, 16-17-year-old should be able to change sex, and easier access should be available for children to access hormones to block puberty. The government is presently looking into providing a plan of action.

There was an international conference held in Java Indonesia in 2006 out of which came the Yogyakarta principle. This laid out principles of international human rights on sexual orientation and gender identity. It affirmed that “Gender identity is understood to refer to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth including the personal sense of the body, which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means, and other expressions of gender including dress speech and mannerisms”

Evangelical Compromise. It hasn’t helped when so called leading “evangelicals” have broken ranks. There are high profile personalities like Steve Chalke, Tony Campolo, and Rob Bell who all support, and promote, same sex marriage. We find the same in the writings of James Brownson Professor of the NT at the Western Theological Seminary

Michigan, and Matthew Vine President of the Reformation project each of them from an evangelical background. This hasn't helped to strengthen the biblical position on sexuality and marriage. It's brought confusion amongst believers, and provided ammunition for those who oppose biblical Christianity.

Diversity framework. There are essentially three frameworks connected to thinking about sexuality. The integrity framework which argues that male and female are separate sexes and complimentary. Biological sex is an aspect of personhood, it's sacred and shouldn't be tampered with. The Disability framework which maintains men and women have a fallen nature things aren't what they should be leading to distortions in sexuality. There's the Diversity framework where transgender issues are seen as something to celebrate and honor as part of normal human diversity. Sex and gender need to be reframed because the present traditional view is an outdated social construct. This framework is the view of our present culture and is shaping people's outlook on sexuality and marriage. This is especially apparent in the media. TV soaps and Dramas are constantly blurring sexuality, there's no male and female. There's regular sympathetic pro-gay reporting in the news. News items like Ryland Michael Whittington the six-year-old transgender now brother to Brynly. The media presented this positively as a great news story. The impression left was that to question this was unacceptable if not offensive.

2. Philosophical influence. The contribution of Michael Foucault. He was born in 1926 and died in 1984. He was a French philosopher well known for his three volume work "The History of Sexuality". He was greatly influenced by Nietzsche who was an atheist. Foucault adopted an atheistic worldview. Essentially his philosophy was that sexual desire, identity and practice was entirely fluid and culturally conditioned. Sexuality or gender can be changed at will in pursuit of liberation and satisfaction. You must discard anything viewed as repressive and restrictive for you to flourish. He especially rejected the Christian view on indwelling sin and the flesh. This was seen as oppressive. His writings shaped much of modern day thinking seen in the diversity framework.
3. Effective Strategy. Part of the reason for the phenomenal progress of the LGBT worldview has been a well applied strategy. There's the use of emotion. A heart rending story can have more impact than clinical argumentation. Stories that pull at our heartstrings are powerful modes of communication. As Ed Shaw says, "advertisers and pollsters know that it is our emotions that drive us". Sam Allberry in his review of Matthew Vines book "God and the Gay Christian" says this, "he (Vine) shares heartwarming stories of young gay people excluded and hurt by their Christian communities. The book packs a hefty emotional punch. It's an emotional argument seeking exegetical justification". Allberry makes the point that we essentially have an emotional narrative driving the point home not sound biblical exegesis. But people are greatly affected by emotion. The response you will hear is often, "How terrible for someone to suffer like that, and what a shame"! It's possible to gain a lot of support by simply using vivid emotional language when arguing your case. Strangely, it was the suffering of the homosexual and lesbian community during the Aids crisis in the 1980s that drew a lot of sympathy towards them from the public.

Listen to this sweeping emotional appeal from Matthew Vine, “no other teaching that Christians widely continue to embrace has caused anything like the torment, destruction, and alienation from God that the church’s rejection of same-sex relationships has caused. If we tell people that their every desire for intimate, sexual bonding is shameful and disordered, we encourage them to hate a core part of who they were created to be. And if we reject the desires of gay Christians to express their sexuality within a lifelong covenant, we separate them from our covenantal God, and we tarnish their ability to bear his image” (Shaw, Ed. *The Plausibility Problem* (Kindle Locations 1803-1804))

Demonizing the opposition. LGBT often use negative terminology about those who disagree with their arguments. They invented the word Homophobia. This word creates a negative image. When you disagree with same sex marriage you’re labelled homophobic. In the public eye it’s a nasty word and refers to nasty intolerant bigots. It’s a clever way to silence those who disagree with the homosexual lifestyle.

Revisionist Theology. Those within the so called “Gay Christian Community” and advocates of “Queer Theology” have provided a different interpretation of bible passages that condemn homosexuality. They say that bible passages referring to homosexuality refer to homosexual lust, perversion, and in some cases male temple prostitution. It’s argued that they have nothing to do with a stable loving homosexual relationship. This is simply twisting the clear meaning of scripture. Jeffrey John isn’t an evangelical. He’s the Dean at St Albans Abbey. However, he’s an example of how revisionist theologians maul scripture to their own ends. He writes this about the Roman centurion and his servant whom we meet in Matthew 8: 5– 13 and Luke 7: 1– 10: “Any Jew encountering them, or reading the Gospel story about them, would almost certainly have assumed they were gay lovers”. This is nothing more than supposition and reading into the text something that isn’t there. There’s no warrant in the biblical text to support this view. We are meant to reinterpret the incident as indicating Jesus’ apparent approval of their same-sex sexual relationship. The aim is to throw doubt on the passages that speak clearly about the unacceptability of homosexuality. Listen to Justin Lee, Executive Director of the Gay Christian Network, “And so, it seemed, the entire Bible argument came down to this one word. The Leviticus and Romans passages had a clear context of idolatry, not committed relationship. If 1 Corinthians 6: 9 was condemning the same things, or something else like pederasty (ped erasty), then the Bible didn’t address committed gay relationships at all. If arsenokoitai, however, was really a reference to all gay sex in every time and place, then it shed light on other passages as well, and any other interpretation was just looking for loopholes. I realised with frustration that neither answer was entirely satisfactory. I could make an argument for either side, but whatever argument I made, how did I know I was right? If I got this wrong, I’d end up either trying to justify sin or unjustly condemning loving relationships that God never intended to condemn. I tried reading the passage one way. Then I tried the other. They both sounded convincing, yet they both left me feeling thoroughly unconvinced”. (Shaw, Ed. *The Plausibility Problem* (Kindle Locations 1829-1831)). It’s the old question asked by Satan, “Did God really say?”.

Another argument is that if the OT forbids the eating of shrimps and wearing tattoos and these are now acceptable even amongst Christians, then why should we continue to

prohibit homosexuality which is mentioned alongside these other now redundant prohibitions. Surely, they say this is picking and choosing.

The second question is

How should we respond to this sexual revolution?

Biblical Response. We must continue to faithfully uphold the biblical teaching on sexuality and marriage as described in Genesis and reaffirmed by Jesus. He said in Matthew 19:4-5, "Haven't you read, he replied, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female, and said 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'. So they are no longer two but one". It has been said that Jesus never mentioned homosexual relationships with the implication that this is left as an open ended matter. However, this is a fallacy. He didn't need to mention other forms of sexual relationships because of his clear commitment to the Genesis biblical definition which he affirms. This verse has been described as the best verse in the bible on homosexuality. It affirms marriage. Scripture doesn't have a doctrine of homosexuality it does have a doctrine of marriage. Furthermore, he adds a rider not found in Genesis, "Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate" Matthew 19:6. This is a very significant statement. It does not mean that another man must not interfere with another's marriage through adultery to bring about separation between a man and his wife as bad as that is. Rather it means that man must not change the Genesis definition of marriage in any way. It is a divine institution and shouldn't be tampered with. Jesus was committed to the definition of marriage as found in Genesis so he didn't need to refer to any other relationship outside of this marriage formula. As a consequence, it goes without saying that any form of sexual relationship outside of this definition of marriage, as defined in Genesis and reaffirmed by Jesus, is to separate what God has brought together. He instituted marriage by bringing together or joining together a male and female. This is the divine formula for marriage and mustn't be interfered with. When any other form of sexual relationship falls outside this clear biblical definition of Gods will and purpose for marriage and sexual behavior it is classified as sinful. We must firmly but graciously uphold this truth as unpopular as it might be in the present climate. This is a case where Gods word overrules current legislation.

We must also give a biblical answer to the criticism of picking and choosing. That is the OT prohibition to eat shrimps is lifted so we should do the same with the prohibition on homosexuality. In the Old Testament God governed the Jewish people as a physical nation. He included within that government various civil and dietary regulations. Most of them were prohibited because the pagan nations around used these things as part of pagan worship, ritual, and signs of allegiance to other gods. The Lord God of Israel called the nation of Israel to be separate from them and to be different in behavior. They were lessons in holiness. When Jesus died on the cross he exclaimed, "It is finished" John 19:30. This cry was an announcement that all that was necessary for salvation had been accomplished in his death. Included in this are the civil and dietary regulations (shrimps, tattoos etc). These had come to an end, or "finished", as a standard for holiness and a means of saving efficacy.

We must also uphold biblical marriage because of the redemptive picture it presents in scripture. The Bibles history begins with marriage, God brought Eve to Adam. It ends with marriage. In the book of Revelation, we have the climax of redemption in the marriage supper of the Lamb where we have Christ the Bridegroom with his Bride. Throughout scripture there are many marriages recorded. The relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite woman in the

Song of Songs is the perfect picture of sexual relationships approved by God. We also have Jesus approving marriage by attending the wedding at Cana in Galilee in John 2.

We must have a complete all-round view of sex and marriage as presented in the Bible. You remember Justin Lees comment, ““And so, it seemed, the entire Bible argument came down to this one word”. The Biblical argument about sexuality and marriage is based on the whole flow of scripture. What is the thrust of scripture as a whole? God created sexuality. Male and female are a significant part of Gods plan for companionship, and procreation. God doesn’t want men and women to be alone. Men and women are not the same and God wants them to have children within marriage. Marriage as instituted by God is between a man and a woman. It’s a sexual union. Jesus reaffirmed the Genesis account of the nature of marriage. The fall and original sin brought into the world all sorts of distortions, including sexual aberrations. Mankind rejected Gods order for relationships. Human and sexual relationships are damaged. Man’s relationship with God is marred. Same sex relationships are identified as wrong before God. Its evidence of man’s inherent rebellion against God and his order. The good news is that sinners of every kind can be made right with God through faith in Jesus. Remember that list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9, sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers. 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”.

An attack on marriage as biblically defined must be seen to be what it really is-an attack on God. Any view of marriage contrary to how the Bible defines it is evidence of the spiritual warfare we are involved in. Satan hates marriage because it represents redemptive truths. Marriage is a picture of the gospel. Jesus is seen to be seeking out a bride that he will present as without blemish when he returns. He calls that bride to himself through the proclamation of his death burial and resurrection. In Ephesians 5:25 Marriage is a picture of Christ’s love for his church. Marriage is a picture of the final coming together and consummation of Christ and his bride. It pictures the final triumph of Jesus and the final state. Satan will distort and pervert this image as much as he can. Ephesians 6:12 tells us clearly, “for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”. We are told to “Stand firm”. Satan masterminds all that opposes God and righteousness and the church. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:1-3, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts”. The diversity framework is an attack on the divine order as seen in the original institution of marriage, on the gospel, and on Christ and his love for his church. It’s nothing more than an evil attempt by Satan to rob marriage of its redemptive imagery.

Pastoral Response. This response should be compassionate and Christ like. I say this because we have to face an uncomfortable fact. It’s possible that amongst the singles in our churches someone could be struggling with same sex attraction. I’m not pleading a special case for them nor are they. We all face temptation of different types. But this has a direct bearing on our subject. They might find it difficult to open up about this for fear of being labelled gay and all the implications this brings and the worry that the rest of the congregation thinking he or she is “dirty”. We have to be sensitive to this. There are godly Christians who battle with this same sex attraction. They refuse to identify themselves as Gay and with the LGBT worldview because they don’t hold to this and want to remain faithful to the biblical definition of sexuality and marriage. They want to avoid any other identity that would displace their identity as a Christian. They prefer to use the expression same sex attracted rather than gay for that reason. They see

their struggle with same sex attraction as part of their battle with sin, temptation and their fallen nature which must be crucified with Christ. They are no different to us as we battle against sin and temptation. Sins like those listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9, sexual immorality this can include viewing porn, lusting after a woman, idolatry, adulterous thoughts and actions, and stealing. These are listed alongside homosexuality. Sin is sin however its expressed. Homosexuality is no greater sin and no less than the others listed. The sin that could easily entangle some is same sex attraction, the question is what's yours?

Recently there have been some high profile evangelical Christians who've opened up about this struggle with same sex attraction. For example, Vaughn Roberts Vicar at St Ebbs Oxford and Director of the Proclamation Trust, Ed Shaw Pastor of the Emmanuel City Centre Church in Bristol with a thriving evangelical congregation. Ed wrote an article recently with the title, "Why your church shouldn't sign Steve Chalke's charter for gay marriage". Sam Allberry Pastor of St Marys Church Maidenhead and who as a same sex attracted man gave an admirable defense of biblical marriage and the challenge and need to live a celibate life at the recent Anglican synod on Sexuality. How do we account for their battle with same sex attraction? What causes it? Ed Shaw gives this helpful analysis in his book "The Plausibility Problem", "Cue talk of the 'gay gene' – the claim that same-sex attraction is there in my DNA. I was born with auburn hair. I was born gay. There is nothing I can do about either (except the auburn hair is fading while the same-sex attraction is not). And if that's the case, say many, my same-sex attraction is natural and so it can't be wrong to express it sexually. If it's genetic, it must be right. Indeed, it would be a crime to say that I can't – a denial of my human right to be myself. I hope you feel the power of this argument – whether you agree with the 'gay gene' theory or not. It is certainly the one that fits best with my lived experience of same-sex attraction (if not everyone's). It is the most powerful case for affirming homosexuality today. And, I guess, that's why some evangelical Christians have put a huge amount of time and energy into fighting the idea that same-sex attraction is genetic or innate. The scientific evidence for and against has become one of the most fought-over pieces of ground in this whole debate – rather like a patch of grass in the middle of no-man's land at the height of the First World War. But I think we could afford to concede this ground. Now, the scientific case for doing so is admittedly poor. Despite some hyped-up newspaper headlines, a 'gay gene' has yet to be found – indeed, the evidence for it has actually weakened over the last couple of decades. In her recent book "Straight Expectations", gay journalist Julie Bindel asks geneticist Dr Andrew Rutherford whether it actually exists. He replies, "I feel I can give you an unequivocal answer to that question, which also applies to the biology of almost any complex trait, which is, there isn't a gay gene". But, I want to argue, even if the 'gay gene' were found tomorrow, we would still not need to worry about this particular battle being lost: a genetic basis for homosexuality would not make it right; it would not equal a lack of responsibility and thus open the floodgates to liberalism. Indeed, it has been a significant and damaging theological misstep for people in the church to think that this would be so. You see, one of the central truths of the Bible is that we are all naturally sinners from birth and yet are still held responsible for our sin. And so being born same-sex attracted, and yet being reproached for acting on it, is not a problem in its pages. Since the fall, the Bible maintains that sin infects every part of us because we have a sinful genetic inheritance (manifested in countless different ways). And yet one of the glories of being human, created in the image of God, is being treated by our Creator God as responsible for what we think, say and do". (Shaw, Ed. The Plausibility Problem (Kindle Locations 612-613 Kindle Edition). The problem is this that the fall and the impact of sin has brought many distortions into the world and affected personal behavior, appetite's and desires. This is the doctrine of original sin. David said in Psalm 51: 5, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me". The impact of the fall affects us all but in different ways. For some it comes in the form of sexual distortion. For others it will be another type of sinful inclination. Our fallen nature has the ability to lead us astray in all sorts of ways and but for the grace of God go I. Our responsibility is to

put off the old man and put on the new. This is a battleground but it's our calling from God in the process of sanctification. Compassionate pastoral care is important so that we react to someone in a way that doesn't make them feel rejected or unclean like a leper in Bible times!

Someone who is challenged with same sex attraction has said that he feels the church should be more supportive of single people. Much of church life is family based with family services, sermons on marriage and marriage seminars. This can make any single person feel somewhat inferior and neglected. He found it very helpful and felt supported when the church embraced him and involved him as a single person. He accepts that he can't fulfill his same sex attraction. He doesn't want to so he can obey the Lord. He wants to remain faithful to what the bible says about relationships. He has concluded he will never have a family. The church has become his family and those who know of his battle with this inclination have included him in various activities. This in turn has given him strength to fight temptation and has helped to fill a vacuum in his life. He uses Matthew 12:48 to support this practice where Jesus said, "who is my mother and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples he said, here are my mother and brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother". We need to recover this idea of the church as a family and see it outworked more in closer relationships within the congregation and in supporting the "family-less" people. One older Christian same sex attracted woman committed to biblical sexuality and marriage has said she's become a sort of Grandma to many children in the church. Families have welcomed her and involved her in some of their activities like a fun day out and the like. She said this has helped to take away some of the pain. This family concept is reflected in Paul's language when he wrote to the Thessalonians. He says in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, "but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her children", and in verse 11, "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his children".

The challenge of being a Christian and being same sex attracted is that it's a burden to carry as they remain intent on doing what is right before the Lord. Scripture says, "if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you may also be tempted. Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ". Same sex attraction becomes a sin when its acted upon. The idea of acting on your instinct and doing what you want is what the LGBT promotes. For same sex attracted people who are seeking to live righteous sexual lives to be without a partner is a burden for them to carry. Scripture calls us to support such fellow believers as they wage this war against this pull from their fallen nature. The law of Christ is the law of love. We show our love by "carrying" those who themselves carry a burden that's often hard to bear. We do this by being understanding, supportive and prayerful. Ed Shaw a sound bible preacher and pastor of Emmanuel City Centre in Bristol talks about carrying this burden, "I have what I call 'kitchen floor moments'. I call them that because they involve me sitting on my kitchen floor. But I'm not doing something useful like scrubbing it, although it could always benefit from that. Instead I'm there crying. And the reason for my tears is the unhappiness that my experience of same-sex attraction often brings. The acute pain I sometimes feel as a result of not having a partner, sex, children and the rest. I know what my non-Christian friends and family would say to me in these moments. If not acting on my same-sex attraction makes me so unhappy, I should start acting on it. I should get myself a nice man, have great sex, adopt some lovely children, and be happy. I know that many of my Christian friends and family would struggle to know what to say to me in these moments. My unhappiness in not acting on my same-sex attraction is what most persuades them that I should act on it. Surely God wants us to be happy? If I could find myself a nice Christian man and 'marry' him,

what could be wrong in me having sex and children with him? How can God condemn something that would bring such happiness to so many people? Why do I arrogantly think I know what most people would say? Because that's where my mind goes too: because the great authority in the world we live in today is our personal happiness. If someone or something leads to unhappiness in our life, they or it must be wrong. If someone or something makes us happy, they or it must be right. The evidence for this is everywhere. Happiness is what the adverts promise us if we buy their product. It's what the politicians will deliver us if we give them our vote. It's what the new love of our life offers us if we ditch the old. It's why human beings today do most things. We just want to be happy, and all our decisions are driven by what will get us the most happiness soonest (and, perhaps, cheapest) ... When I want to live life as a gay man, to embrace the whole modern identity and lifestyle, God's Word assures me that it will not make me happy: even though denying my sexual feelings the affirmation and expression I so want sounds cruel and unloving, it is actually what I would choose myself if I knew what was best for me. Psalm 19 guarantees me what I most want, even as it stops me getting that in the way I often want it. That's why I'm seeking to make God's Word the authority in my life rather than what I (or any other human being) might think will bring me happiness. Which, of course, is what being a Christian is really all about: taking God at his Word, and so trusting him (Shaw, Ed. *The Plausibility Problem* Kindle Locations 769-772)

Evangelistic Response. You'll be familiar with Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka Kansas. It was led by the late Fred Phelps who died in 2014. Westboro is a Baptist church criticized about its hate speech, toward LGBT people. Their language is often aggressive, condemnatory and cruel. When we get into conversation with LGBT people as we evangelize it would be wrong for us to speak to them as though they are the greatest sinners ever to walk this planet. Our example is Jesus Christ. He addressed a sexual sin. There was a woman caught in the act of adultery. She was brought before Jesus by Jewish leaders who wanted to catch him out. They said, "In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women" (John 8:5). Jesus didn't approve of her sin but he dealt with it with firm yet kind words, "has no one condemned you? Then neither do I condemn you (kind words), Jesus declared, go now and leave your life of sin (firm words)". Our duty is to point men and women to Christ whatever their sins might be and let them see that forgiveness and transformation can be theirs in Jesus Christ. When they become believers our duty is also to tell them of the spiritual battle they will fight as they seek to be like Christ and develop an increasingly sanctified life. A little while ago I was helping in an open air meeting. The speaker would gather a crowd and then the team members would get alongside those who stayed and listened and get into conversation with them about the gospel. I noticed a tall young man listening intently. At the end I approached him and offered him a gospel of John which he said he didn't want. I offered him a leaflet and again he refused it. "Anyway" he said "You won't want anything to do with me because I'm Gay". My response was to tell him that I'm a sinner. I'm guilty of my own particular sins as you are of yours. I assured him that homosexuality is a sin but so is heterosexual adultery and fornication. We're all sinners who need a savior. We chatted for a while. At the end he said, "Thanks for the debate, and you know what, I'll take your gospel of John and the leaflet". Had my approach been aggressive and condemnatory I would have lost him. He would have walked off with the stereotypical picture of Christians as intolerant bigots.

Prayerful Response. We must continue to pray that God will have mercy upon us and change the destructive course our nation is on. We are told in 1 Timothy 2: 1-2 to pray "for Kings and for all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness".

Pray for our government as they make laws. Pray for a change of direction. God is able to change things and bring about a complete reversal of things if he chooses to do so. Christian ethics are not shaped by the cultural shifting sands of this transient world, but by the word of God which Jesus says, “will never pass away” – Matthew 24:35. So called cultural “norms” come and go as does public opinion. In a gracious work of God public opinion can change and bring about a moral reversal in society. In his piece in the Telegraph Online 24th October 2016, responding to the court decision on the Asher cake case, and in defense of their right to freedom of speech, journalist Neil Midgley, himself homosexual, wisely observed, “Because one day, the prevailing political consensus may change again. Our lawmakers may once again be tempted to turn against gay people. And on that day, I hope the Christian bakers will stand by me in my fight to protect fundamental freedoms that transcend any cake, any religion and any daft law”. The words of Christ remain unchanged as the consistent standard for morality for Christians, and will be the standard of judgement for everyone when he returns – John 12:48. Pray for a return to these biblical standards. Pray for the lost whatever their sins might be that God will be gracious to them and bring them out of darkness into the light of the Kingdom of Christ.

Practical Response. Contact your MP. Write to them about your concerns when they support new legislation that’s contrary to the Bible. Write and commend them when they support biblical morality.

There is a concern about LGBT materials being placed in schools. Books with the titles, “My Princess Boy” and “The Gender Unicorn” a guide for teachers to help trans identified and gender non-binary students. The Christian Institute have a helpful leaflet for parents on good questions and concerns to raise with head teachers. It’s worth making these available to families in our churches.

Pray for parents and teachers who are on the cutting edge and who will have to face these issues.

So we live in a fallen world. But the day is coming when all things will be made new. This old sinful world will be transformed into a place where nothing but righteousness lives. We are now in the battle to uphold righteousness and Gods standards of behavior. The world will always show its true colours of hatred for God and his will. Distortions and deviations from the divine ideal will be present until Christ comes again.

I close with the words of C S Lewis, “... our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation... At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of the morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get in”.

Shaw, Ed. The Plausibility Problem (Kindle Locations 1740-1743)

