

## What does God's Word say about homosexuality?

A three-part Bible study by Rev. John Heckmann

### Leader Guide

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#### Color Code

Black = Study content and questions  
Blue = *Full text of Scripture references*  
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### Introductory Article

This is the story of a blood bought (redeemed) child of God, husband, father, son, Baptist pastor, friend, by the name of Pastor Michael Goeke, as told by him.

"Homosexuality is often described as an 'issue,' but for me, as an adolescent Christian in a strong conservative Lutheran congregation, it wasn't an issue. Same-sex attraction seemed to be tied to the core of who I was and gained increasing control of my life and emotions.

"I was well aware of what the Bible said, but absent some acknowledgement of the reality of the deeply rooted feelings I was experiencing, I began to view myself, and not just my behavior, as an abomination to God.

"When you believe that you are disgusting to God, it is difficult to convince yourself to run to Him for love and care and strength in the midst of struggle. I desperately wanted to be 'ok' with God, and when faced with scary feelings that I knew were not in line with God's Word, I began to perform for God rather than build a transformative relationship with Him. My church was founded on grace, but my life was characterized by an increasing effort to earn God's approval and affection through my 'good' behavior.

"I often look back and wonder what might have happened in my life had the church sought to do more than proclaim the sin of homosexuality and had, in addition to that, sought to understand and help those of us struggling with deep, dark secret attractions.

“Perhaps I would not have sunk deeper and deeper into myself, full of shame and fear of what God thought of me. Perhaps I would not have lived a surface, legalistic, perfectionistic and ultimately lonely and self-defeating life. Perhaps I would not have married carrying my secret, and perhaps I would not have felt the need to seek out false theology to somehow try to medicate my depression and shame over the feelings I battled. And perhaps I would not have left my wife to pursue, fueled by **ear-tickling theology**\*, the same-sex attractions I had held at bay for so long.

\*While part of Pastor Goeke’s original quote, these words were deleted from the Bible study portion of the Leader Guide to avoid a misunderstanding on the part of the Bible study participants. In reference to “ear-tickling theology,” Pastor Goeke shares, “Church doctrine that licenses what God calls sin can very much give people the sense that certain behaviors might well be ‘ok’ God. When ‘shepherds’ tell you something is ok, and when you desperately want to believe that, then you can very easily be lured to do things you might otherwise avoid. That is why Paul (2 Timothy 4:1–5) so often challenges people to be wary of false teaching. Jeremiah said it this way of false prophets: “they promise peace where there is no peace” and “they heal the wounds of my people superficially.” [See also 2 Peter 2:1–2: *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.* <sup>2</sup> *And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.*]

“After my wife and I reconciled and I began my journey out of homosexuality, I began to pray that the church — the church that held THE answer to those of us struggling with same-sex attraction — would begin to be a part of the solution and not just a proclaimer of the problem with regard to homosexuality. I began to pray that the church would learn what it means to be 100 percent truth and 100 percent grace — not beating struggling people up with the truth and not using grace as a license for behavior that God calls sinful and destructive.

“The Gospel sets people free — not always from struggles and temptation, but always from the bondage of being controlled by struggles and temptations. We need to talk about homosexuality. The world is talking about it — our kids are talking about it — false prophets and teachers are talking about it — and God talks about it. God’s truth is designed to shine a light on the realities of our lives.

“Homosexuality has impacted many families both in and out of the church. If we don’t talk about it, those families will find their information somewhere else. God bless you as you allow His Word to illuminate an issue that has caused much pain and hurt — in culture and in the church. The darkness is defeated at the intrusion of the light. Be ready to see!”

# WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

## Part 1A

**Opening Hymn:** "The Law of God Is Good and Wise" (*LSB* #579; *LW* #329; *TLH* #295)

### **Introduction:**

We will start with what many, even in the Christian church, will see as a very blunt, uncaring, biased, unenlightened, intolerant statement. I ask that you allow me to make the statement and that you permit me also to ask that you please continue with me to study and discuss this topic, praying that God would open your mind to what His inspired, inerrant, infallible Word has to say about this highly charged discussion.

I pray, as we are bold enough to undertake this study and to evaluate our ideas and opinions **in the Light of God's Word**, that we learn together how we can best be used by God — wherever and whenever He has need of us — especially in regard to speaking the truth in love regarding homosexuality, living homosexually, and same sex attraction and that we reach out in Christian love and form relationships so that we can share with others the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is critically important that we allow God's Word to inform all that we say and do, especially when the topic is highly charged, like this one, and there are many people wanting to form and inform what it is that we believe. The bottom line in this study, as in everything we do as the children of God, is that God's Word has to be the final authority.

### **Let us pray:**

Heavenly Father, we come to You at the beginning of this study, thanking You for giving us the opportunity to study together what you have to say, not only about homosexuality and sexual sins in general, but about all sin, from the "smallest of white lies" to adultery and murder and other sins. Bless this time You give us together. Bless our discussion. Give us patience and love for one another as we discuss this very timely issue since our ideas and opinions on this highly controversial subject will surely differ. Allow us to learn from Your Word how we can best respond, not only to those dealing with homosexuality, but to each and every sin which so easily entangles. It is in the precious, forgiving name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we are bold to ask these things of You. Amen!

Before we get to the statement that is oftentimes misconstrued, may I stress the importance of building relationships based on God's love. Just as is true with any issue with which we deal, it is beneficial in any situation in which we find ourselves to be in a relationship with people where they know of our love and deep concern for them. It is imperative that we not just rush in, condemn their sin, and rush right out before anything happens. The conversations and topics we are going to deal with in this Bible study are ones that can work best (and possibly only work), when we are in a loving relationship with the other person. Much damage is done when we rush into the life of a person with whom we have no relationship, drop the proverbial bomb on them, and then hightail it out of there to let the pieces fall where they may. It is then that we receive the labels: uncaring, unchristian, unconcerned, biased, out of touch, and many other descriptive words. This is the case with any sin or situation we deal with. It is only as people know that we care enough to love them, to help them, to confront them, that any progress can be made. The same is true with each of us as others love us enough to point out our sins, call us to repentance, offer to us God's Word of forgiveness, and stand by us and work with us while we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to change our sinful lives.

The statement that is so often misunderstood is this: God's Word declares very clearly that acting on a person's homosexual orientation, even though that may feel natural and they may feel that was the way they were born or that God created them, is a sin and like every other sin is in direct opposition to God's perfect will and intention when He created man and woman in His own image.

**Important Note:**

It is the acting upon the temptation that is sin, just like in our dealings with any other temptation and sin that Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh place before us. The message of God's condemnation of all sin, and His offer of full and complete forgiveness to the repentant sinner is the message we are called upon to share both with those who are openly unrepentant, "living homosexually" or "accepting their gay identity and acting upon it," along with those who are repentant, struggling with "same sex attraction" and struggling with their sexuality or sexual identity. In short, it is the acting through thought, word, or deed, on the homosexual temptations and desires that is sin.

Read **Genesis 1:26–31**. \_\_\_\_\_

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

*<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>29</sup> And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. <sup>30</sup> And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. <sup>31</sup> And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

What was (and still is since He is unchangeable) God's intention for man and woman as He created them? \_\_\_\_\_

To be made in His image, e.g., perfect; created, yet will live eternally in God's presence; reflecting the very character of God and representing Him in and to the created world; serving as steward, as caretaker of all that God created and over which He gave them dominion. (Genesis 1:26–27)

To "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

Another source that teaches us about the marriage relationship is the Liturgy of Holy Matrimony (*LSB* page 275). Even though it is not the inspired Word of God, these teachings are drawn from and express very clearly the teachings of God's Holy Word. We read in these words of God's intention for marriage when He created and blessed His creation with this gift from the first marriage there in the Garden of Eden between one man and one woman until death parts them, to this very day.

"In marriage we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the church."

We go on to say in the service:

"The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

"Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another."

"God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear [respect, reverence] and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise."

What is God's intention for man and woman now according to **Hebrews 13:8**? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>8</sup> *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

His intention is the same as it was from the beginning as we read in Hebrews 13:8 that He is never changing, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

What was Jesus' reply to the Pharisees as they asked Him questions about marriage and divorce in **Matthew 19:3–9**? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>3</sup> *And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"*

<sup>4</sup> *He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,*

<sup>5</sup> *and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." <sup>7</sup> They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" <sup>8</sup> He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. <sup>9</sup> And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."*

What is God's teaching on this same subject through the Apostle Paul in **Ephesians 5:31**? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>31</sup> *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*

The same as what was given to us in the beginning at the creation of Adam and Eve. As you see, Jesus brings the discussion back to what truly matters, not whether or not divorce is OK, but how God originally created us. This is where we need to begin and end up as well so that we don't argue what homosexuality is, or what was meant by homosexuality in Bible times as compared to today. It is easy to get off the road and into the weeds when we start trying to deal with all these issues and arguments. Just as Jesus took the Pharisees back to the beginning and the Word, that is where we need to be as well.

What is God's plan for marriage and for His gift of sexuality? \_\_\_\_\_

As we said, the Pharisees wanted to talk about divorce and other surface issues without getting to the heart of the matter. Jesus however took them back to the first marriage there in the Garden of Eden.

First of all, by taking us back to the Garden and the first marriage, our Lord sets His seal of approval, if you will, on that part of creation and God's gift of Adam to Eve, and Eve to Adam, and all that included as he gave one woman to one man, and one man to one woman.

If marriage, along with God's gift of sexuality and who is to be joined together in this lifelong union, is reduced to nothing more than what I think about it or what the government has to say about it, then we once again are letting our opinions and desire inform our decisions and be our final authority.

You see, it was God who made them (us) male and female. It is God who made them (and us) different. It is God who joins us together in "one flesh" unions of male and female. It is God's gift to us for companionship and mutual help. *"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" (Genesis 2:18); for the procreation of children, And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28); and to prevent the abuse of God's gift of sexuality <sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband (1 Corinthians 7:2–3).*

Because He is the creator, His rules apply. (I say that not to give anyone ammunition to blast someone with the Law but to remind us again Who the final authority in these matters is.)

As our Savior brings us back to the Scriptural foundations, He makes it very clear to us that the way God designed us was to be male and female, able to come together in a “one flesh” union.

That is again what we read in Genesis 2:20–25: <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones*

*and flesh of my flesh;*

*she shall be called Woman,*

*because she was taken out of Man.”*

<sup>24</sup> *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* <sup>25</sup> *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

And also in Genesis 1:27–28:

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* <sup>28</sup> *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

We see here the difference in man and woman. There are different sources of creation, but the same Creator. There are different methods of creation, but the same Creator. There are different times of creation, but the same Creator. There are different names given to them at creation, by the same Creator. They are totally different and God calls them together into the “one flesh” union that only men and women can experience and enjoy.

The two becoming one flesh prohibits many things, including polygamy, homosexuality and a whole host of other things. This idea of one flesh also speaks very clearly about something that goes far deeper than our convenience or pleasure or what is socially acceptable or tolerated. God intended for one man and one woman to be united to each other in the bonds of marriage.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for Your gift of sexuality and the Biblical bonds and bounds of marriage that You have given to us in which to enjoy that most precious gift. When we fail to treat this gift as You intended through our thoughts, words, and deeds, forgive us and restore us. Use us to be Your loving messengers to call others to repentance just as we would have them call us to repentance over our sins. Let us be Your spokespeople to a world that does not understand Your will and plan for marriage, sharing with them Your love and Your desire for their lives. We pray this in the name of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!!

**Closing Hymn:** “O Love, How Deep” (LSB #544; LW #275) speaks of our Triune God’s incredible love for us, a love that we are called upon to share with others.

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# WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

## Part 1B



### Opening Prayer:

Dear Father in Heaven, our ever sure defense against temptation and sin, we thank You that You love us enough to give us Your Ten Commandments by which to live and to call us to account for those sins, offering to us the comforting words of the Gospel of forgiveness and life and salvation. Use us as models and messengers of that message of Law and Gospel, of sin and grace, of failure and forgiveness. We ask this in the powerful name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!!

Before we look at the verses from Scripture that deal with the topic before us, it will be helpful to have a refresher course in the three types of Law that are contained in God's Word.

### Ceremonial

These are the laws that were given to the Children of Israel, God's chosen ones. They were given for a specific group of people, at a specific time, and for a specific purpose. These laws are not meant for all people of all times.

Leader: As you read the laws in the book of Leviticus, you will read about many laws, mostly laws dealing with dietary issues and cleanliness, that we no longer follow. They were given to God's people at that time for their health and safety, at time when there were not very good hygienic practices or refrigeration and things like that.

### Civil

The civil law was also given to the Children of Israel. The civil law had a different purpose than the ceremonial and dealt with different matters, especially those matters that pertained to government and citizenship. They too were not meant for all people of all time.

Leader: The civil laws were the laws given to the nation of Israel for managing the civil affairs of the people. These laws dealt with, as do the civil laws of our day, things such as business law, what the punishment for crimes should be, and even how you were to treat each other. These laws do not apply to us in our culture, but many of our civil laws can trace their roots to these Old Testament Laws.

### Moral

The moral law is unlike the other two. It is not for a particular culture or people, but it is for all people. In fact, it was written on our hearts when we were created. The moral law can also be described as the natural law. That does not mean that by nature we want to keep the Law. Instead, according to our sinful nature, we desire to break the Law all the time. It is called the Natural Law, or Moral Law, because this is the way God created the world to operate.

It is this Moral Law that we deal with in the verses below as we talk about the verses from Scripture that form and inform our understanding about homosexuality.

Leader: As we look at these verses, it would be good for the leader to stress how all of the verses dealing with the sin of homosexuality are mixed in with the other sexual practices that we still consider sinful to this day. They are sins that break the Sixth Commandment, part of the Moral Law that God has given to us for all times.

What are those verses? \_\_\_\_\_

### Leviticus 18:22–24

<sup>22</sup> You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. <sup>23</sup> And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion. <sup>24</sup> Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean.

As we read these verses, it must be pointed out that He first recalled the relationship He had with the Israelites and why He could visit with them about these matters. (A very fine point for us to heed in forming relationships with people and then caring enough about them to deal with sin.) He shared with them that they belong to Him, they are His children and so they should not do as the world does since they do not belong to the world.

He goes on to say this is an **abomination**.

As we know from God's Word, as we say in our Confession of Sins and Absolution most Sunday mornings, "we are by nature sinful and unclean." No one is born without an attraction to sin. The Original Sin we are conceived in and born in sees to that. Thus, we cannot say God made us this way. We can say Adam made us this way since we are all descended from him and since he has passed on to each of us this desire to sin.

### **Leviticus 20:13**

*<sup>13</sup> If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.*

God says it again in very direct terms, in case we missed it the first time, it is an "abomination," an outrage, an atrocity, a horror, to have sexual relations with a person of the same sex. The penalty, as harsh as it may sound to our "tolerant" ears is, in God's own words, "*They shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.*" Leviticus 20:13

Here it should be stressed that as God lays out the "penalty phase," if you will, of all these sins, it must be noted that this sin of homosexuality is no different than the other sins against the Sixth Commandment. It may seem harsh that, especially in our day and age, the committing of this sin would call for the death penalty. It may seem just as out of step with society today when we hear that this same death penalty was the punishment for other sexual sins like adultery or incest. One of the points to take from this is how much our Father cares for us and for His creation and His desire for man and woman to live in the joy He intended for us to have as He created us male and female.

### **Romans 1:26–27**

*<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

Here, through verbal inspiration (God the Holy Spirit told Paul exactly what to write, word for word, for our admonition, teaching and encouragement), St. Paul would remind us that God's condemnation of homosexuality is there because men having sexual relations with men, and women with women goes against God's order of creation and His plan for His creation. It doesn't matter whether this misuse of God's gift of sexuality is man with man, or woman with woman, or man on boy, or woman on girl; whether it is "consensual", or now in the bounds of "same sex marriage," it is contrary to the will and plan of God and is not the way God intended for the Crown of His Creation to live and to relate to each other.

### **1 Corinthians 6:9–11**

*<sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

Like the other sins mentioned in these verses, homosexuality it a sin that a person may become a slave to and ultimately be separated from God for time and eternity as Satan can use this sin, like any sin, to put up the dividing wall between us and God.



This laundry list of sins that our Father shares with us through St. Paul contains sins that each of struggle with on one level or another. Each of us is equal in the eyes of God in two ways. First we are all sinners as these and countless other verses of Scripture make very clear. Second, each of us through faith (and it must be remembered that the offer I am about to share with you is an offer made by God to everyone through faith) was *washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Corinthians 6:11). If the person we are concerned about does not know that Good News as their own through faith in Jesus Christ, then that is where we have to begin, letting them know of the price our Savior paid for our sins as well as for their sins.

Then, as they know that Good News as their own, as we will see in a minute in the words of Ezekiel 3 and 33, we are called upon as Christians to warn the impenitent (not repentant, not sorry for their sin) sinner, that like with all sins, unrepented sin will exclude a person from eternal life in heaven. We, as Christians and as the Christian church on earth, cannot condone, bless, or take part in homosexual activity or “same-sex marriages” or “same sex unions”.

### **1 Timothy 1:9–10**

<sup>9</sup> *understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,*  
<sup>10</sup> *the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.*

As we saw in the words of Genesis 1:26–31, which we read earlier, we see in these verses that homosexuality is a misrepresentation or falsifying of God’s perfect desire from the beginning for His creation of man and woman, the crown of His creative work. God’s good and perfect plan from the beginning was for one man and one woman to live together in marriage as husband and wife until death parted them. Homosexuality, by its very nature, would be contrary to His plan for the crown of His creation.

What is made clear in the references above? \_\_\_\_\_

Just as our heavenly Father made it very clear to His Old Testament people, so He makes it very clear to us today that it is an “abomination,” an outrage, an atrocity, a horror, to have sexual relations with a person of the same sex, just as it is an outrage, an atrocity, a horror to have sexual relations with an animal. We see the horror in the latter case, even though we are becoming more and more tolerant and accepting of sexual relations with the same sex, just as sexual relations outside the covenant of marriage is accepted today by most, even Lutheran Christians. He adds that history repeats itself as the nations that lived around the chosen children of God have defiled themselves with these perverted acts.

We are happy to assure the repentant who are struggling against this sin that they have complete forgiveness through the blood of Christ. When Christ died for all of the sins of the whole world, He gained forgiveness for homosexual deeds, for homosexual desires, and for the inborn sinful nature that produces these sins (1 Corinthians 6:11).

With that said, let us look at the promise of the Gospel, which we will flesh out even more as this study progresses.

Sometimes this message of repentance and forgiveness is hard for us and others to hear, and so we choose to say nothing. Sadly, without the speaking and hearing of the message of the Law and God’s condemnation of all sin, there is no chance of repentance and the opportunity to share the soothing message of the Gospel and forgiveness of sins. Yes, it may sound as if we are trying to beat the person up regarding their sin, but only as they and we see our sin and repent of them, do we have the opportunity to know the comfort and assurance of the Gospel. If they (and we) do not see the hope of the Gospel or hear the message of forgiveness, they can very easily abandon all hope, especially as Satan tries to assure them that there is no hope for they are too bad or unlovable for God or anyone else to love. Before we get to that point or allow others to get to that point and believe

those lies of Satan, let us flesh out the good news and the promise of the Gospel, given to us through faith in the One who was “fleshed out” for us: taking on our flesh and blood to be like us in every way, except without sin, so that He could make the complete payment for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

What does God say to each of us, no matter what our sin is, or how great or many we think them to be, in **1 Corinthians 6:11**?

*<sup>11</sup> 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.*

What a privilege, blessing, opportunity is ours to be able to reach out to the person dealing with homosexuality. As we think of people dealing with homosexuality or living the homosexual life style, I think we need to consider two different places people can be coming from. There is the group that is made up of openly unrepentant gay people. We would say they have chosen to “live homosexually” and have “accepted a gay identity.” On the other hand, you have repentant people who are struggling with their homosexuality as they struggle with their “same-sex attraction” or their “sexuality” or “sexual identity.”

As we understand that there are two different groups, we see the urgency to minister to both of them as God gives us the opportunity. We also realize that we will approach each group differently, as we would as we approach people who are struggling with any sin, depending on where they are coming from and where they are in their walk with the Lord. In either case, and no matter what the sin is, St. Paul assures them (and everyone else who is struggling with sin) that there is complete and total forgiveness of all sins, again no matter how big or small, how many or few, we may think them to be through the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to make total and complete payment, once and for all, for all sin. Allow me to say it again, the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for us and for all people on the cross of Calvary gained full and complete forgiveness for homosexual desires, homosexual deeds, sinful heterosexual desires, sinful heterosexual deeds, as well as for the original sin that each of us was conceived in and born in which produces these actual sins we commit day in and day out. King David speaks for all of us in **Psalm 51:5** as he says, *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”*

Why is that important to us? \_\_\_\_\_

What a blessing from God it is when we, as redeemed sons and daughters of Almighty God, are able to assure the repentant who are struggling against this and all sin that Christ died for the sins of the whole world and has earned complete forgiveness for all who believe! When Christ died for all of the sins of the whole world, He gained forgiveness for homosexual deeds, for homosexual desires, and for the inborn sinful nature that produces these sins (1 Corinthians 6:11) and every other sin, yours and mine included.

Important Note:

Even though the expression of homosexual behavior IS a sin, the same is true of every other actual sin. Giving into the temptation and desire to drink too much IS also an actual sin. The same would be true of every other temptation and sin. The giving in to any temptation by thought, word, or deed is where all sin takes place. Our Lord dealt with temptation all the time, and was without sin.

(See **Matthew 4:1–11** and **Hebrews 4:14–16**.)

*Matthew 4: <sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

*<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple <sup>6</sup> and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,”*

and  
*“On their hands they will bear you up,  
 lest you strike your foot against a stone.”*  
<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, *“Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.<sup>9</sup> And he said to him, *“All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”*<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, *“Be gone, Satan! For it is written,  
 “You shall worship the Lord your God  
 and him only shall you serve.”*  
<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Hebrews 4: <sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Remember, the struggle with or temptation toward homosexual behavior is not an actual sin. It becomes an actual sin when we give into and act on the temptation. To give you one other example that may hit a little too close to home: Enjoying fine food (or any food for that matter) is not a sin until one eats himself to sickness or unhealthy weights or obesity. Then it is an actual sin.

How is this made clear in **1 Timothy 1:8–11**? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>8</sup> Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, <sup>9</sup> understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, <sup>10</sup> the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup> in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

These verses, like the ones before it, make it very clear that homosexuality is a sin and that a person who continues in homosexual behavior (just as anyone who persists in any sin) stands under the condemnation of God's Word.

Is this true for everyone caught in sin, no matter what that sin may be? \_\_\_\_\_

Let me be very clear, it is true of anyone who continues in any sin, no matter how great or small we or society or the church may deem that sin to be, stands under the condemnation of God's Word and is subject to the fires of hell. (*“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Romans 6:23) To be sure, this is an unpopular message especially when you start talking about my “pet sins,” but it is a message that is taught to us in the Word of God and that we must hear in regard to our sin and be ready to share with others in Christian love as they are caught in sin, whatever sin it may be.

“OK,” you might say. “Homosexuality is a sin. Those things Paul talks about with Timothy are sins, but I have never slapped my parents, murdered anyone, committed an adulterous act, and/or perjured myself in a court of law. Does this penalty still apply to me?” \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_

Sadly this applies to each of us as even though we may have never slapped a parent, we have probably had more than one sinful thought about them or one evil word to say to them. We have never committed the act of murder, but we have murdered many a person through our hatred for them and disregard for their situation. *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* (1 John 3:15) I have never been in bed with someone who is not my spouse, but Jesus says, <sup>27</sup> *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”*<sup>28</sup> *But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* (Matthew 5:27–28) And perjury? I have never perjured myself in a court of law, but oh how easy it is to lie and break the Eighth Commandment often. *“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”* (Eighth Commandment) *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”* (Exodus 20:16)

You will hear many times in this study that we dare never overemphasize one sin over another, and we dare never make any sin unimportant, even if it is my favorite one and the one I am addicted to. In fact, we should care more about all sin, and all people caught in those sins, including those hard sins to deal with like gossip, over-eating, lack of exercise, over-consumption of alcohol, use of tobacco products, and the like — sins that we no longer consider sins and thus don't deal with because they are sins I enjoy or sins that the members of my family are trapped in.

With that said, understand that there are sins that are more dangerous than others, as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 6:18–20 when he says: *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

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Hear again what God says to each of us, no matter what or how great our sins is, in 1 Corinthians 6:11: *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.*

What a privilege, blessing, opportunity is ours to be able to reach out to everyone who is struggling with sin, no matter how great or how small we may declare it to be and to assure them, just as God through St. Paul assures us, that there is complete and total forgiveness of all sins, again no matter how big or small, how many or few, we may think them to be through the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross to make total and complete payment, once and for all, for all sin. Allow me to say it again, the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for us and for all people on the cross of Calvary gained full and complete forgiveness for homosexual desires, homosexual deeds, sinful heterosexual desires, sinful heterosexual deeds, as well as for the original sin that each of us was conceived in and born in which produces these actual sins we commit day in and day out.

Bottom line: Based on these passages, and despite popular opinion, we conclude that homosexuality is contrary to the express will of God for His creation.

Why is that important to us?

Very simply because we are called by God to address sin, applying the Law of God to those situations, being willing to call a sin, a sin, so that as the Holy Spirit brings a person to repentance, we are able to share with them the saving Gospel message of forgiveness and new life both here on earth and for eternity in heaven through the work of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior through His perfect life, horrendous suffering and death, and victorious resurrection for you, and me, and all people. The bottom line is that we take this position in this situation, as in all situations because we love those God has placed in our lives, not wanting to see them perish, but to see them, with us, enjoying eternal life begun already now through faith in Jesus Christ.

How does **Ezekiel 3:17–21** apply to everyone (us included) whom God has called to reach out to those caught in sin? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>17</sup> “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>18</sup> If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>19</sup> But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. <sup>20</sup> Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>21</sup> But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.”



God is calling upon each of us to be those messengers to share with the world, as hard as it may be, both the condemnation of the Law over our sin as well as the Good News of the Gospel for forgiveness and life for those who repent of their sins and make confession of those sins to God their heavenly Father.

What is the bottom line from God's Word that cuts to the heart of the matter when we stop arguing back and forth? See **James 1:13–15**. \_\_\_\_\_

God would agree with us that many factors contribute to each act of sin. In fact He says to us through the pen of James, *"<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."* (James 1:13–15)

Again, the conclusion based on these passages of Scripture, and despite popular opinion, is that homosexuality is contrary to the express will of God for His creation and is a sin. Let's approach this bottom line once again from another angle that may be helpful.

As we consider what it is that we believe, especially as it deals with sin, especially when it deals with my sins, a very important point to make or question to bring up is, "Do you believe this way because it makes you feel good, lets you stay in your comfort zone, or do you believe it because it is the truth?" As we look at sin, it is very easy to point out the truth of God's Word when it is directed at the sins of those folks around me, but when I am dealing with my own sins, it is very easy for me to want to stay in my comfort zone, rationalizing and explaining away everything that I am doing. When that happens in our life or in the lives of others, we need to understand and help them to understand that even though it may not be comfortable, even though it may not make us feel good, we need to know and hear the truth of God's Word, as painful as that is, so that we can hear the assurance of the Gospel. Just a little story from my youth that many of you have experienced. Whenever we were cut or scraped, it seemed as if Iodine was the answer to our problem. It burned like the devil, to use a colloquialism, but we were assured that it would make everything all better and that it would be OK as Mom "blew on it" to take the pain away. The truth often hurts, but the sin, the hurt, the owie, has to be dealt with so that healing can take place. The treatment for cancer cannot begin until the condition has been diagnosed. Then once the diagnosis is made, the painful treatment begins that will lead to restoration and health. The same is true with any sin. Once it is diagnosed, once there is repentance, then the cure can be offered, the blood of Jesus Christ, and the healing can take place as sinful lives are changed and we rejoice in the forgiveness and new life that are ours only through faith in Him.

As we deal with folks who would like to change these verses around, who would like to say they no longer apply to us today, who will say we don't know what we are talking about because these verses dealing with homosexuality really mean this or that, we most loving lead them away from their subjective and emotionally based and charged arguments back to God's Word, the standard, the final authority for all that we say and do. Once again all of this cannot be done as one pounding them over the head with the Bible (especially as we know how well that works in our lives), but in Christian love, compassionately supporting them in their struggle, sharing with them what the Word of God truly has to say about these issues, just as we would do with any issue that is sin in someone's life.

This does not mean that we excuse whatever the sin may be, look the other way and not worry about it, but instead, as did Christ, love the person enough to call them to account for their sins, offer forgiveness and mercy to the repentant sinner, while also calling upon them to "go and sin no more." See **John 8:1–11** as Jesus deals with the woman who was accused of adultery and those who were accusing her.

*<sup>1</sup> but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup> Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst <sup>4</sup> they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" <sup>6</sup> This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup> And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup> And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was*



left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup> Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>11</sup> She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Again, this goes far beyond just the sins of homosexuality. It permeates every sin and every part and aspect of the life of every sinner. The Gospel message of Jesus Christ, of sins forgiven by His atoning work in our place through His perfect life, death, and glorious resurrection, is the only hope and healing we have to offer to anyone who is struggling under the guilt and fear and shame of sin. And we (Christians) are the only ones who have this message of hope and healing to share. We are the only ones who have a gracious, compassionate, forgiving, loving, living Father who desires to be in relationship with each of us through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

How do **2 Timothy 4:1–5** and **Proverbs 27:7** play into this? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

As with any sin and in the lives of each of us, it is so easy to ignore sound doctrine and to chase after whatever it is that tickles (causes our ears to itch). Again, that is such an easy trap to fall into when I am dealing with my sin because I can so easily justify what it is that I am doing. I can find all kinds of experts and all kinds of Bible verses to justify my behavior. The "sound doctrine" most of us have been taught from little on goes flying out the window when I am dealing with my sin, but comes in very handy while I am dealing with the sins of others.

**Proverbs 27:7**

<sup>7</sup> One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.

As the writer of the book of Proverbs says, when you are hungry, when you are searching even the bitter is sweet. You will reach out for anything. Have you heard of pickle pops? As my daughter works with the soccer team, one of the things they always have on the sideline is dill pickle juice. Someone has even had the bright idea of freezing pickle juice and marketing it. It replenishes your salts and electrolytes when you are dehydrated and cramping up. Now, I must admit that I am too cheap to buy a pickle pop, but I will save the pickle juice from time to time. As you can imagine, if I have just finished a meal, or am sitting in my cool office, or have just come in on a chilly day, salty vinegar is not all that appealing. But come in from a good run or from mowing the grass on a hot, central Texas day, let me tell you that pickle juice hits the spot. I think this picture can go two ways. One, when I am hungry enough to justify what I am doing, anything, even something so bitter as the lies that Satan shares with me look very appealing. That, of course is deadly, just as would be drinking a gallon of pickle juice. (OK, if not deadly, not good for you at all.) The other way to look at this picture is too see that when we are hungry, when a person is starving for a message to sustain them, the Good News of Jesus Christ is what they need to hear. It is, in fact, sweeter even than honey (Psalm 119:103), and gives to us what we need to continue on.

Consider this quote from Roland Cap Ehlke in the People's Bible Commentary, Proverbs, p. 268 (CPH, 1993): "They say that hunger is the best cook. When we have eaten a big meal, nothing looks inviting. When we're famished, anything does. Applying verse 7 to spiritual matters, we need daily to remember our sinfulness and our need for the Savior. Otherwise, we become self-satisfied and foolishly think we need nothing, when in reality we are starving to death." People who self-identify as LGBT seem to want to fill themselves with sexual pleasure, but it is not ultimately fulfilling. In reality they are hungry for God's Word.

What are some examples from your own life? \_\_\_\_\_ Answers will vary.

What are some of these things that Satan, the Great Deceiver (**Revelation 12:9**) and the Father of Lies (**John 8:44b**), uses to tempt and lure and entice? \_\_\_\_\_

These things include: The sinful nature we are born with (Original Sin) and resulting weaknesses in our body and mind; the temptation of the world around us; the temptation and encouragement to sin of those around us, including at times our own brothers and sisters in Christ; our own sinful desires that James talked about; and, the direct temptation of Satan himself, the Great Deceiver (*"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."* Revelation 12:9), and the Father of Lies (*"When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* John 8:44b).

All of these things Satan uses to lead us to sin, be it homosexual sin or whatever sin afflicts us.

Here again is how Pastor Michael Goeke says it as he shares with us a little more of his story.

When we don't deal with the realities of life in the light of God's Word, we will revise God's word to 'fit' our experiences. Head knowledge alone won't suffice when our feelings grow too strong — so we will take our feelings and make God's Word align with them, instead of allowing God's word to enlighten — shine light on — illuminate — give meaning to — our experience. Growing up, I was able to avoid homosexual behavior for a season because I knew right and wrong. But I was not in a place where I had the freedom to be honest about my struggles and bring them into the light, and allow God to help me work through them. When the feelings got too strong, the 'right' and 'wrong' weren't enough - and I found teachers who would teach according to my feelings. My journey back was about being honest with others and with God, and seeing how my identity had been messed up by what I felt and what others said about me, and how I was searching for identity where I would never find it as a child of God. In that honest, real place ... Scripture shined a light on and informed my struggles...rather than the opposite. As we saw in 2 Timothy 4:3–4 (<sup>3</sup> *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,* <sup>4</sup> *and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*) I was so hungry for acceptance and understanding and identity and affirmation that even the sin of homosexual expression tasted sweet - it was poison, but I was so hungry that I didn't care. The false intimacy of sex with other men tasted sweet then - but now, the God-ordained intimacy/friendship with men that he designed for us tastes so much better, and I no longer crave the poison because I am 'full' with RIGHT relationships - with my wife and with other men in godly friendship.

So, what are we called on to do in **2 Timothy 3:16–17**? \_\_\_\_\_

**16** *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

ALL SCRIPTURE is has this usefulness. These words apply to each of us as our Father calls on us to be ready to give the good answer of His Word in season and out of season as we lovingly reprove, rebuke and exhort. The goal always is restoration in Christian love. Notice how Paul implies Timothy had received this application from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (1 Timothy 1:5).

As the Psalm writer reminds us in Psalm 119:103, we have an incredible gift to share, namely the Word of God: <sup>103</sup> *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

### **Closing Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, I am so tempted to qualify and quantify and categorize sins, especially when I am trying to justify my sins to myself and to You. It is so easy to look at the speck in my brother's or

sister's eye, while striving with all of my might to see past the log that is in my own eye. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, working through Your Word, help me to see and deal with the log in my own eye and the sin in my life, so that I may repent of that sin, confess it to You and the one I offended, and hear Your Word and their word of forgiveness. Restore me to a right relationship with You and with them so that I may then help others to see their sin and their need for forgiveness and a restored relationship with you and their fellowman. In the all-atoning name of Jesus I pray. Amen!!

**Closing Hymn:**

"Preach You the Word" (*LSB #586; LW #259*)

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## WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

## Part 2

How Do We Respond in Christian Love?**Introduction:**

Pause for a moment to think about the following statement: Although a sin is a sin, homosexuality is different because it is the only sin that is celebrated and has a movement around it.

With that in mind we begin this study by asking, how do we in Christian love respond to those who say that homosexuals are born that way, in effect that God made them that way and so it is OK and they should be celebrated for their courage to live homosexually? \_\_\_\_\_

Like with any other sin, we are called on to share that every sin, no matter how great or small we may deem it to be, is a result both of our being born with original sin and our choice to act upon the temptation that the devil, the world, and/or our sinful flesh offers to us. Whenever we sin in thought, word, or deed, we are choosing to follow the leading of Satan, our sinful world, and/or our sinful flesh and do something that we think, or know from previous experience, will bring us pleasure, even when there are consequences connected to that sin. Since we take such great pleasure in those sins, we are very quick to make excuses for and defend those choices. Not only are we quick to defend our sins, but we are also ready to convince ourselves and those around us that there is really nothing wrong with what we are doing. As we give in to a particular temptation and sin over and over again we find that we no longer have control over the sin, but the sin has control over us. (This would be the logic behind addictions of any and every kind.) We find ourselves giving in to the sin even when we don't want to and know that it is harming us, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually.

We also need to remember, whatever the sin, that our sinful attraction to sin does not justify anything. The one practicing homosexuality can no more justify himself by saying "I was born this way" than can the person who hates homosexuals justify their ungodly hatred by saying "I was born this way."

Pastor Michael Goeke, the man who wrote the opening words of this study, sharing with us his story, answers the "born this way" arguments like this: "Our fallen nature compels us to many things that God's word calls sin, and our environment can cause our natural sin tendency to go in all sorts of directions. If we trust that He knows best what is good for our lives and that He will both empower obedience and give us joy in the process, we will gladly surrender to Him all that compels us."

So, how do we in Christian love respond to those who try to justify their homosexual lifestyle by saying things like, "How can loving someone be wrong," or "Doesn't every one deserve to be happy and to be in a loving relationship?" \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, many use this approach. Many ask these questions. One way of answering would be to share with them how you love your children or grandchildren or neighbor kids or whomever, but it does not justify sexual conduct with them. The issue is not really love. The issue is sexual conduct. Again we are taken back to the Moral Law, the Ten Commandments — and Commandment Six in particular — as it deals with God's gift to us of sexuality and how we abuse that gift. The Bible in no way condemns love between people of the same sex, but it does say that sexual conduct between those people is sin.

Do you ever feel like the Apostle Paul in **Romans 7:15–25**? What does he say there? \_\_\_\_\_

Share with each other where you have seen this very thing taking place in your life.

<sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>17</sup> So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do

*what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*

Thus the outcry by the LGBT community, that all things are acceptable and should be tolerated (if not condoned) by all. They would say that Christians, especially, should condone such things and be accepting of such things because we are all about “love.” They misunderstand love.

What is the bottom line? Read again **James 1:13–15**. \_\_\_\_\_

With this sin, as with any sin, the bottom line is summed up very well in James 1:13–15: <sup>13</sup>“*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*” (James 1:13–15) We are tempted, we are lured (think fishing lure and its intent to lure the fish to bite the hook so that it can be caught and killed and eaten), we are enticed, we desire what is bad for us, and we sin, which brings about death, physical death at times through illness or disease or tragedy of some sort, and/or possibly spiritual death, separation from God if the desire, the temptation, the sin, becomes our god.

### Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, as I study the verses and thoughts in this lesson, help me to be able to formulate Biblical, loving, responses to those who are living with or struggling with the desire to live homosexually. Then, when You give me the opportunity to speak about the truth of Your Word, especially in regard to this sin, give me the courage to boldly and lovingly proclaim Your will for the lives of all men and women, boys and girls. In the merciful name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

A personal story about this: This Fall the exterminator was at the church and we were talking about how many crickets were coming into the buildings. If you have any experience with crickets, you know that when they die they stink, as we sometimes say in the south, “to high heaven.” I told him there was probably nothing you could do about that and he said there was. There was a product they have just started using, appropriately named, “Intice”. The way I understand it, he puts it around the buildings on the outside. The crickets are “inticed” to eat it and as soon as they do they die, **outside** the buildings. That is the nice thing about “Intice”. The Apostle Paul said the same thing about the temptations we must deal with. We are tempted, lured, and enticed. Desire gives birth to sin, and sin to death. And if we may continue to use the cricket picture, if we die without saving faith in Jesus Christ, we perish **outside** of heaven, living for all eternity separated from Almighty God in Hell.

What “news” do we share with any person caught in sin? \_\_\_\_\_

The good news that through faith in Jesus Christ there is opportunity for repentance, confession, and the reception of His forgiveness and restoration won for each of us and for each of our sins through His perfect life, death, resurrection. We share with them that the Holy Spirit has created in us and nourishes in us this life-giving gift of faith. If they are not Christians we share with them how they too can have the joy of this salvation and forgiveness and life. We also share with them that, according to Scripture and the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can break the cycle, the progression from temptation to death, at any point along the way — again through repentance, confession, forgiveness, and the striving to amend our sinful lives.

What happens when they or we fall into the same sin again? \_\_\_\_\_



Will we fall again? Very probably yes. We assure ourselves, or those we are blessed to minister to in their time of sins, that our God is a merciful and long-suffering Father who will forgive and restore us over and over again.

Doesn't that cheapen God's grace? \_\_\_\_\_ Shouldn't they have to pay for their sin, especially a sin like homosexuality? See **2 Corinthians 5:17–21**. \_\_\_\_\_

We can cheapen God's grace if we have the attitude that I am forgiven anyway, so why not do what my sinful heart desires. But receiving God's forgiveness over and over again as we strive to amend our sinful life does not cheapen His grace at all. And shouldn't someone have to pay? Our Savior did pay and paid in full the price of our sins and the price of the sins of the whole world once and for all.

<sup>17</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

<sup>18</sup> *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Again, one of the key thoughts here as we deal with anyone caught in any sin is that we are Ambassadors for Christ, chosen by God, to make His appeal for reconciliation to others through our witness.

Should we really speak up on this topic of homosexuality, or gay marriage, or abortion or any of those topics that many in the church and world will tell us to keep quiet about because they want us to believe that they are “political issues”? \_\_\_\_\_ Is it safe to speak up about these issues when we will be labeled with names like right wing nut, homophobe, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_ Read **Ezekiel 33:1–9** to hear what our heavenly Father says. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup>*The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, <sup>3</sup> and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, <sup>4</sup> then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. <sup>5</sup> He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. <sup>6</sup> But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.*

<sup>7</sup> *“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup> If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup> But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

Even though we are taught in the schools and on the airwaves of television and radio, through all kinds of social media, and even in old-fashioned face-to-face conversations that homosexuality is a natural and normal expression of love between people who just happen to be of the same gender, and that those who disagree with this are the ones who are abnormal, it is important that we, like Elijah, stand as that watchman “giving them warning from” our heavenly Father. We must also be very sure that the warning we are giving is indeed from our heavenly Father, as He has shared it with us in His Word. We as Christians speak with the greatest love about this issue and the damage it causes. Likewise, no matter what sin it is that we find ourselves caught in, we need to be receptive to hear the warning from God shared with us by our brothers and sisters in Christ. PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS: make the time to discuss these issues with your children and grandchildren in appropriate ways at the various stages of their lives. If we don't, then they will assume that what they are hearing at school, from their peers, and in the media is acceptable.

Do people caught in sin want to hear the call to repentance? Read **2 Corinthians 2:15–17**. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>15</sup> For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, <sup>16</sup> to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? <sup>17</sup> For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

The answer very simply is NO. We don't like to hear the call to repent of our sins, especially our pet sins. Others do not either. And yet, according to 2 Corinthians 2:17, we are commissioned by God our Father, to sincerely speak the truth in Christian love, so that as Paul says, the aroma we smell may change from that fragrance of death that we all deserve, because of Original Sin and Actual Sin, into that aroma of life that is ours, and can be theirs, through faith in our forgiving, redeeming, life-giving Savior, Jesus Christ.

How do we respond to those who say we need to tolerate this lifestyle? \_\_\_\_\_

How do we respond when we think in our hearts along these lines: "I don't agree with what that person is doing and I know it is wrong, but the safest thing is to just say nothing, looking the other way, for what they choose to do is their own business"? See **Galatians 6:1–3**. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

First of all, some say that homosexuality is a genetic condition, that certain people are predisposed to homosexuality, and that there is a gene (even though no reputable studies have ever demonstrated this) that makes a person homosexual (much like there are genes that make us have brown hair or blue eyes). Instead of tolerating the lifestyle or just looking the other way, the loving response would be a course of treatment to help them deal with this situation. If a brother or sister in Christ is an alcoholic, we will help them get treatment so that they can more fully live the abundant life. If a brother or sister is caught in a sexual addiction, we will help them find treatment. If a brother or sister in Christ has been diagnosed with cancer, we will support them each step of the way through the treatment process.

Might I add, just as we love the spouse who is an alcoholic, or the classmate who is addicted to pornography, it is OK to love a gay person and to acknowledge that they are nice, creative, very talented, kind, loving, etc., people. This does not mean that we affirm or accept their decisions and their life style, but in Christian love, whether or not they are a Christian, we reach out to them in a loving relationship with the goal always being, no matter what the situation or sin, to restore a fallen person who we truly care about and are concerned about. Once again, as with any sin, we heed the words in Galatians 6:1–3: <sup>1</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

As we plant the seeds of God's Word in the lives of others, calling them to repentance so that we can share the Good News of the Gospel with them, whose work is the harvest (the change)? See **1 Corinthians 3:5–9**. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

It is up to God the Holy Spirit to take the seeds we have planted, to use the witness we have given, to do His Work in their hearts and to effect a change. You see, God calls on us to prepare the soil, to plant and nourish the seeds of faith in anticipation of the harvest. He is the one that will bring them to germination, root, growth, and eventually harvest. This is what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 3:5–9 as he speaks of the different work our Father gives each of us to do.

How do we respond to family, friends, or co-workers who are gay? \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of Christian witness can we share with them in a loving way? \_\_\_\_\_ How do we respond when they say, “Don’t ask, don’t tell”; or “Don’t pry into my business”; or “What is done behind closed doors among consenting adults is none of your business”; or “If it is not hurting anyone, what does it matter”? \_\_\_\_\_ For help in answering these questions consider: **James 5:19–20, Luke 17:3, and Matthew 18:15.** \_\_\_\_\_

As we mentioned a moment ago, tolerance is the way that many would say we need to go. We have been conditioned to answer those questions in a politically correct way. It is no one’s business, but sadly many people are being hurt, even though no one wants to admit it. It is not just HIV and AIDS, but the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual devastation that takes place in their lives, even though they would have us believe otherwise. Tolerance is not the answer for the reasons we mentioned above, as well as for the fact that we are doing them (and anyone caught in sin of any kinds) a disservice by not dealing with it and allowing them to continue in that sin.

We read in James 5:19–20: <sup>19</sup> *My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,* <sup>20</sup> *let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

And in Luke 17:3 we read, <sup>3</sup> *Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.*

And in Matthew 18:15, <sup>15</sup> *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

It must be made very clear that dealing with this sin, or any sin, is done in Christian love, not hostility or hatred. People love nothing more than to have a Christian “lose it” and go off on someone and then to be able to say, “if that is how Christians respond to these types of situations, I want nothing to do with them.” Instead, in Christian love, the same kind of love in which our Father deals with us and which we have seen our Savior deal with us and all kinds of people in the Bible (woman at the well, Zacchaeus, woman caught in adultery, and countless others), we approach them first to share our love and concern for them, rejoicing in the words of the last part of Matthew 18:15: *If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.* Yes, the process will almost always be a long one, but in love, we are committed to each other to walk with them through the whole process, modeling for one another how God has forgiven us and walks with us each step of the way, even during those times when we may stumble, falter, and even fall again.

Thankfully God has blessed us with the tools needed to deal in love with sin and with those being hurt by it, as our Savior records for us in Matthew 18:15–17 the proper way to care for a person caught in sin. <sup>15</sup> *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.* <sup>16</sup> *But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.* <sup>17</sup> *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

In this whole process, we take each step in love for the one caught in sin. We work through each step as long as that might take. We may go to the person *between you and him alone* many times in our love for them. We may need to *take one or two others along with you* a time or two or three as we patiently work with and minister to our hurting brother or sister. We skip no steps. We pray throughout the whole process that God the Holy Spirit would convict the person of their sin and lead them to repentance, confession, forgiveness, and an amended life.

What does God have to say about the often made statement that “My body is my own and I can do with it whatever I would like,” especially in regard to homosexual sins? See **1 Corinthians 6:18–20.**

<sup>18</sup> *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.* <sup>19</sup> *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,* <sup>20</sup> *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Yes, in God's eyes a sin is a sin, and on the Day of Judgment those sins, not covered by the blood of Jesus Christ through faith in Him, will condemn a person to death. *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:57) Until then though, this is one of those sins that is more damaging to the person and to the community (home, neighborhood, church) in which they live. That is why our loving heavenly Father offers here a stern warning regarding the sins that we commit against our body, *"the temple of the Holy Spirit,"* calling us to repentance and confession and the reception of the forgiveness that He so willingly offers to us through faith in Jesus Christ.

How do we and the church respond to those who say that we "should leave the homosexual person alone because Jesus loved everybody"? \_\_\_\_\_

The answer is, "Yes Jesus loves everybody." As we say that and as we look at the whole idea of "leaving alone" any person caught in whatever sin it might be, we can take as our example and guide how our heavenly Father deals with each of us as we are caught up in sin, whatever that sin is that we so enjoy. You see, our Triune God loves each of us, and all people enough, not to just leave us wallowing in our sins (picture Prodigal Son in the mud and filth and stink of the pig pen, longing to eat pig food), but to call us to account for our sin, bringing us to contrition (sorrow for and detestation of sin, with a desire to amend our sinful life as a response of God's great love for us — or out of fear for the consequences and punishment of that sin), repentance (a turning away from sin, turning around, and turning to God for forgiveness), confession (admitting to God and to those we have offended our guilt and desire to amend or change our sinful life) and the proclamation of forgiveness (the assurance that our sin has been taken away, having been paid for once and for all through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ). As we would say today, He loves us enough to practice tough love with us, calling us to account for our sins so that we are not found now and, most important, on our last day, dead in those trespasses and sins.

He does this because He loves us enough to approach us in love, not to beat us over the head until we give in or give up, but to show us how much He cares that we are allowing the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh to pull us away from Him. We are called to respond in the same way to those caught in sin; not beat them over the head until they cry "Uncle," but as we have opportunity in the relationship we have formed with them to walk them through these very important matters. Whatever we do, we do not want to drive them away from us or from God, losing then the opportunity to witness to them and help them, while making sure that we love them enough not to just wash our hands of them, but to help them deal with their sin. It is a very fine line, but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can walk it.

What is our response as a brother or sister in Christ to the person caught in homosexual sins? See **1 Corinthians 6:9–11** \_\_\_\_\_ and **Matthew 7:3–5** \_\_\_\_\_. What is the bottom line once again in our response? \_\_\_\_\_

As with any sinner, caught in any sin, we want to ultimately assure the person that the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross of Calvary, has paid for each and every sin of every person who ever has been, is now, or ever will be, no matter how big or small we may think that sin is, or how many or few we may think them to be. When Jesus Christ died for sins, once for all, He died for every sin and for every sinner. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, especially verse 11:

<sup>9</sup> *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,* <sup>10</sup> *nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* <sup>11</sup> *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."*



These are the same words to apply to our lives as we look at the sinfulness that is a part of daily living. Many would say, "My sins are not as great as theirs!" and in our ranking of sins, we might be correct, but in God's eyes, all sin, even just one sin, separates us from Him. We see this way of ranking sin all of the time as we say, or at least think, "My wandering eye is not as bad as someone who is committing adultery, my wishing so and so would drop dead is not as bad as the person who murders another, my taking of a few sheets of paper from the office or a pen or two is not as bad as the one embezzling from the company." It is so easy to get caught up in this type of thinking. And yet our Father calls upon us to be unbiased when it comes to pointing out sin. I guess we could say "everyone is an equal opportunity offender."

<sup>3</sup> "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:3-5)

Once again, as our brother or sister repents of sins, confessing those sins, we have the most wonderful opportunity to assure them of Christ's forgiveness and, by His forgiveness, we look forward together to an amended life and that glorious day when we will be in heaven where <sup>4</sup> *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*" (Revelation 21:4)

What is the bottom line once again in our response?

To realize that with any sin, no matter what it might be, we must first work to build a relationship with the person caught in sin so that we can share with them our love and concern over what the sin is doing to them. As always, we must speak the truth in love, just as our heavenly Father does with us through His Word and through the words of those who love us enough to confront us with our sin so that we do not continue down that road to separation from God. Is this hard to do? You better believe it. We don't do it, because deep down we know that we "have done the same or 'worse' things." There are also times in which we just don't want to get involved and don't want to invest the time needed to help a brother or sister. We also may not want the ridicule that may go along with such confrontation, not only from the person confronted, but also from others in the church or community. And by all means, we don't want to seem "holier than thou." So we are content to let the person possibly perish in their sins.

So, without giving approval to the sin, we reach out to others who need to hear this call of the Law of God to repentance so that they can also hear the sweet message of the Gospel of forgiveness that is theirs through faith in Jesus Christ. And through it all we pray that God would use us mightily in their life so that they may know the healing and restoration that you and I have felt through the application of Law and Gospel in our lives by those who love us enough to take the time and risk the rejection and ridicule to point out our sin in the anticipation of sharing with us the Good News of Jesus, sins forgiven, and new life both now and eternally.

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. <sup>2</sup> And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

<sup>3</sup> And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (Mathew 19:1-3)

<sup>15</sup> In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:15-17)

Sometimes it gets very messy, but we are called on by God to love one another so much that we are willing to get messy as we strive to lift them out of the muck and mire, always being careful not to be drawn down into the muck and mire.



How do you respond to people who would say, “Why does the church have to get involved in this? Why can’t we just continue to look the other way and not bring it up?” \_\_\_\_\_

Allow me to give you an answer, using what I often say in regard to Evangelism and our fear of “doing that.” What better place is there to practice our story, to practice our witness, than “on the members of our church or family?” Why, because I doubt they will “let you have it” and I would trust that they will help you in your testimony. The same is true with our response to homosexuality and all those affected by it, from the person who is practicing homosexuality, to their parents and grandparents and extended family, to their friends, to countless other folks. If we are content to say in the church that homosexuality is a sin, the person should know better, or should quit, or the whole situation should be ignored and maybe it will go away, then we will not know how to deal with it when it “hits home,” when it impacts family and friends or even yourself. We will not know what to say or do when a friend confides in us that their son is gay, or when that friend shares that they are gay.

As we said before, it is very easy to say, and it is often very true that the gay people we know are great human beings, we love them, they are our friends, they seem so happy and loving and kind and sensitive, etc. That is all true, but if we and they don’t have a proper understanding of what God shares with us in His Word, we can get the picture all goofed up. If we in the church don’t understand, and choose not to teach or talk about God’s design as He created us male and female, then we cannot expect anyone else to understand what God has to say in His holy Word as He, in His incredible love for all people, set up these boundaries to bless us.

How do **Genesis 2:20–24**, **Genesis 5:2**, and **Matthew 19:4–6** inform and shape our response as the Body of Christ?

<sup>20</sup> *The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made<sup>[b]</sup> into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

<sup>24</sup> *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:20–24)*

<sup>2</sup> *Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. (Genesis 5:2)*

<sup>4</sup> *He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup> and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:4–6)*

Each of these verses, and others, point out very clearly how God designed His creation and how He would have us live as the head of His creation. It is only as the church is ready and willing and brave enough to discuss what Scripture has to say about this matter, and every other matter, that we can effectively minister to all people. This is the reason we cannot ignore the difficult issues, including the issue of divorce that Jesus talked about in Matthew 19:1–3 and following. Just assuming that believing right and wrong is enough, while not being able to share why we believe what it is we believe, is not enough as we are called on to give the reason for our hope that is in Christ Jesus.

How do the church — and we as either family members or friends — minister to the families of those who are acting on their homosexuality?

Let me tell you from personal experience that it is very difficult to approach dear friends, much less family members, regarding this matter. It is tempting and easiest just to say nothing, smile when the stories are told,

and change the subject to something a little less difficult and awkward. But, we cannot ignore the sin, just as we have been saying. We cannot ignore any sin just because dealing with it is uncomfortable.

As children of God and as those who love not only the homosexual, but also his or her family, we are called on by God to state very clearly the sinfulness of the actions of the homosexual person. Not only that, we are called on by God to offer the promise of forgiveness and restoration and life that flows from contrition, repentance, and confession.

Not all that long ago, Christians were embarrassed and ashamed to admit that someone in their family was homosexual. They did all within their power to cover that up. Then there was a time when we tried to rationalize it and make it sound OK. Now we are at a point where anything and everything goes, seeming almost that if you are not homosexual, or at least outspoken in your support of the homosexual lifestyle, then there is something wrong with you. That is why we find it easiest just to say nothing, smiling as we change the subject or go our separate ways.

That though is not what we have been called on by God to do in our Christian love for the homosexual and their family. We are instead called, as uncomfortable as it is, to share our love with both the homosexual person and their family and to share with them, as we said a moment ago, that the homosexual lifestyle is not only wrong according to the Word of God, but is also destructive to them and to others, being even destructive to their relationships, not only with family and friends, but ultimately with God. Never forget, my dear sisters and brothers in Christ, that as we proclaim this, we always, always, always, hold out the assurance of God's forgiveness and our forgiveness not only for this sin, but for all sins.

Is the pointing out and discipling over this sin and every other one a good thing when it causes feelings of guilt in the offender? Read **Hebrews 10:11–18**. \_\_\_\_\_

Yes!

Consider the fact that guilt is a good thing and hearing the Law of God is a good thing because it reminds the sinner that something needs to be done. It reminds them and us that we cannot do it by ourselves or on our own accord, because as we know from experience we have failed and failed miserably to wash away our sins, or remove the guilt and stain of those sins. There is only one answer to this condition and that is found, among many places, in Hebrews 10:11–18 as the writer of Hebrews says about the Old Testament priests, and now our High Priest, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior:

<sup>11</sup> *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

<sup>15</sup> *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,*

<sup>16</sup> *“This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, declares the Lord:*

*I will put my laws on their hearts,  
and write them on their minds,”*

<sup>17</sup> *then he adds,*

*“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”*

<sup>18</sup> *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:11–18).*

Another wonderful portion of Scripture to share would be **Isaiah 55:6–9**. What is our heavenly Father saying to us in this matter through these verbally inspired words of Isaiah the prophet? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>6</sup> *“Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
call upon him while he is near;*

<sup>7</sup> *let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;*

*let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

<sup>8</sup> *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

<sup>9</sup> *For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

He is saying what we have been saying, now is the time to turn from our sinful ways, no matter what they are, to seek the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit, to call upon the Lord through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, to forsake our wicked ways through the leading of the Holy Spirit, and to return to the Lord who loves us and has compassion upon us. Why? Because “He will abundantly pardon.” My friends, it does not get any better than that for us, and what a powerful message of sin and grace that is to share with others we love who are caught up in any kind of sin.

How should we as Christians respond to, react to, be proactive about, regarding the ever more vocal and “in your face” gay rights movement? \_\_\_\_\_

As you are well aware, the gay rights movement operating in our nation, communities, work places, schools, every form of media, and even in many churches today has only one goal in mind: the acceptance of homosexuality (in all its forms, gay, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual, etc.) as a natural and acceptable way for human beings to express their sexuality. We have come to a point where the majority of the population, even though they may not agree with the lifestyle and premise the gay rights proponents are presenting, say it is OK. (A Gallup poll found that 44 percent of Americans believe homosexuality is a “sin,” while 56 percent of Americans consider gay and lesbian relations morally acceptable.” For one example of this [the percentages vary from survey to survey, but all are in this range], read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/44-percent-of-americans-believe-homosexuality-is-a-sin-survey-says-74758/#etbxQxWiUQmiMXd9.99>)

So then, what should be the church’s response? \_\_\_\_\_

The church’s response is to do what the church is called to do, to proclaim the Word of God in its truth and purity and to equip the members of the church to be vocal witnesses to that Word and its message of Law and Gospel, of sin and grace. Its work is to help its members be knowledgeable and well-educated on these matters, especially when it comes time to share their views with their elected officials (and family and friends with whom they are in conversation regarding these matters) as well as when it comes time to choose the elected officials that represent them. The church’s responsibility is to educate its members so that they can be well-informed members of society.

Why do some churches change over time what they teach about homosexuality and many other things?

The simple answer is that it is easier that way. Less confrontation over sin. A seemingly more peaceful congregation. There is also the fact that there is pressure from the inside and from the outside for us to change. We hear more and more that the homosexual community is much bigger than it truly is and that we need to cater to their wishes. When sons or daughters of the congregation are caught in homosexuality, it is easy to turn and look the other way, not wanting to ruffle any feathers or upset a longtime member. The same is true with many other sins. We also have changing attitudes toward homosexuality, and countless other things, as our children are taught from little on to tolerate everything, and as we find ourselves sliding down the slippery slope as more and more things are acceptable. We also have to deal with people, us included, who like to decide what God really meant when He said. . . and whether or not He really said it. Does that ring a bell? “Did God really say?” (Genesis 3:1) It is all downhill from there. So it is very easy to justify just about anything we want to do, and so churches find it very convenient to justify homosexuality and countless other things that are, and still are, and always will be, contrary to the will of God.

Yet another justification for tolerating, and even embracing homosexuality, is the notion that since all sins are equal in the sight of God, then the living of a homosexual life is no different than any of the other sins society and, even at times, the church has deemed as not very serious. It is easy to say that since we don’t deal with these other matters that we no longer refer to or see as sin, then we don’t need to deal with homosexual sins (or any sins for that matter) either.

What is the responsibility and response of the individual to the everyday encounters with people who are a part of the gay rights movement, who are practicing homosexuals, or who see nothing morally wrong with this lifestyle? \_\_\_\_\_

We need to be educated and informed on the issues that surround this whole issue and debate and what is taking place in the civil realm all around us, especially in regard to the beliefs of the politicians who serve and speak on our behalf on the local, state, and national levels. Christians must know what is taking place and must be educated so that they can enter the debate on various levels and make wise and God-pleasing decisions as they cast their vote, once again, on the local, state, and national levels. The Christian must know where the political leaders and those who would like to assume office stand on these and countless other issues.

Where do we turn for education and guidance as we prepare to speak with our voices, with our actions and with our votes? \_\_\_\_\_

The first and obvious place would be the Word of God. Through our study of what God says regarding homosexuality and many other issues, we are better-informed citizens of this great land and we can let our voices be heard. Another place to turn is Bible study with fellow believers, especially with our brothers and sisters in our local congregations, led by our pastors or other qualified teachers. We also turn to our Pastor as we ask for some of his time to share our questions with him and to hear his words of encouragement to the specific situations in which we find ourselves. Another place would be the publications of our church body (for example, the *Lutheran Witness* or by searching the topic on [lcms.org](http://lcms.org)). There are also non-sectarian Voter's Guides that many organizations put out to help the prospective voter understand what the different nominees believe and stand for.

Should the church and we as members of the church be involved in such discussions, or should we, as some would say to us, keep quiet because these are political issues and we should not be involved in them? \_\_\_\_\_

The church can be well-informed, responsible, active citizens locally, as well as on the state and national levels. True, the church cannot support one candidate or the other, but the church can educate its members on the issues of the day so that they can make wise choices as they participate in the political process. That being said, one of our tasks as Christian citizens is to be involved in the political realm and process, working to enact laws and elect representatives who reflect our biblical values, while striving to be the godly citizens and witnesses to the rest of our society that God intends for us to be.

How do we know that the church and we as individuals cannot remain quiet, and how does this play out in our lives?

**Matthew 5:13–16** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>13</sup> *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."*

<sup>14</sup> *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

Our Savior makes it very clear that we are the salt and the light in a very dark and decaying land and world. America may look nice and appealing, but when you consider all that is taking place in these days, we are living in very dark times. Sin is rampant. You can ask your group for examples or you can share examples from your area and from what is taking place not only on a local level, but also on a national and international level as well.

**Titus 3:1** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,* Paul reminds Titus that in his teaching and preaching he is to remind his congregation and all of the people of God, even today, *to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.* That is the reminder we too need to hear and to share with others. We are indeed submissive and obedient to



those God has placed over us (Fourth Commandment), as long as they do not require of us things that are contrary to the will of God. As Peter said so clearly, *"We must obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29). Paul concludes this thought by reminding us to be ready *to do good works that God prepared in advance for us to do* (Ephesians 2:10), even the good work of sharing the truth of His Holy Word, even when it would be easier to "get along," not to "rock the boat," to be tolerant of any and all sins.

### **1 Timothy 2:1–6**

<sup>1</sup> First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup> This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Another aspect of living our lives as Christian citizens in this great land is that we concentrate on *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions*. Instead of joking about, gossiping about, tearing down those in authority, our Father in heaven, through the pen and inspired words of Paul, reminds us to pray for those who are over us. In Paul's words: *for all who are in high positions. Why? So that we can lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way with the end result of all that we say and do, being that we please God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. With our Father, we are about the business of lovingly sharing the Word of God in all its truth and purity, with the end goal being that His kingdom on earth and ultimately in heaven may grow as the Holy Spirit uses our witness to bring many more into a saving and eternal relationship with God our Father through faith in Jesus Christ. That after all is why we love those caught in sin, whatever sin it might be, so much. We desire them to turn from their sinful ways and to be reconciled to God. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:16–21: <sup>16</sup> *From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.* <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* <sup>18</sup> *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;* <sup>19</sup> *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* <sup>20</sup> *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* <sup>21</sup> *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Bottom line: As Christian citizens we are called up and tasked by God to be educated and informed regarding the political candidates and issues that are affecting us and our land at the time so that we can be active in our civic duty, and to the best degree possible, choose men and women who will uphold God's will and plan for the people they serve and represent.

What about the admonition we receive from God's Word that says we should not judge others? You have verses like **James 4:11–12** \_\_\_\_\_, **Matthew 7:1–3** \_\_\_\_\_, and **Luke 6:37–38** \_\_\_\_\_ that people will quote to tell you not to "judge," not even to speak about topics like homosexuality, same sex marriages, abortion rights, pornography, and a host of other things.

### **James 4:11–12**

<sup>11</sup> *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.* <sup>12</sup> *There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?*

These verses first and foremost are dealing with slander as we speak evil against a brother (or anyone else for that matter), not having in mind the goal of restoring an erring or wandering brother or sister in Christ. Verse 12 would also have the aspect of condemning someone unjustly. There is a fine line in each of these passages and in thinking that we should not judge, between taking the easy way out and saying nothing, resting on the fact that we are keeping the law by not judging, while letting the brother or sister continue in their sin, possibly even to the point of their falling away from Christ. We are called upon to lovingly point out sin with the goal



being to gently restore the errant one to the proper path. See Galatians 6:1–2, which says, “*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” This verse would apply to the next two as well.

#### Matthew 7:1–3

<sup>1</sup> “*Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup> Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*”

Jesus is not saying that a Christian should never confront someone with the Law. That would be absurd on many levels. It would show that we don’t care enough about a brother or sister to point out their sins, to look for contrition and repentance, and to have the opportunity to share with them the Good News of the Gospel and sins forgiven as we strive to walk with them in a more abundant life. It would be just as foolish to say that we should never discipline (disciple) our little children to help them grow in their walk of faith and in life in general. These verses often become a copout because we do not want to get involved in the lives of others. And yes, we dare never judge someone with the wrong motives or the sinful desire to “make them pay” or to see them suffer or hurt for sinful reasons. The Lord calls each of us to repentance (verse 3) and to care enough for each other to help them in their walk of faith.

#### Luke 6:37–38

<sup>37</sup> “*Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.*”

One final and necessary comment: Our Savior calls upon us to be long-suffering. That does not mean that we speak once, get no response and fall back on the “long-suffering” terminology, justifying us doing nothing more to help restore the straying or erring brother or sister in Christ. Here He would call upon us not to condemn each other, but to work once again toward a contrite spirit, a repentant heart and a confession of sins so that we can share with them God’s comforting and restoring words of forgiveness (even as we would hope this would happen in our lives as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ love us enough to call us to account for our sins) with the hope that sinful lives are amended (changed) as we grow in our sanctification. The words we studied before apply here as well.

#### Ezekiel 3:17–21

<sup>17</sup> “*Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>18</sup> If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>19</sup> But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. <sup>20</sup> Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>21</sup> But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.*”

#### Consider also the words of **Ezekiel 33:1–9**.

<sup>1</sup> *The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, <sup>3</sup> and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, <sup>4</sup> then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. <sup>5</sup> He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. <sup>6</sup> But if the watchman sees the sword*

*coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.*

*<sup>7</sup> “So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup> If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup> But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

### **If time permits:**

How did God deal with these well-known sinners? (To see how our Triune God deals with many more wayward Bible figures, as well as with us, check out the LWML Bible study resource, **Focus Lost – Focus Restored**.)

Adam and Eve – **Genesis 3, especially verses 8–9, 14–24** \_\_\_\_\_

David and Bathsheba – **2 Samuel 11 and 12, especially verses 1, 13–14.** \_\_\_\_\_

Zacchaeus – **Luke 19:1–10** \_\_\_\_\_

The immoral woman at Simon the Pharisee's house – **Luke 7:36–50** \_\_\_\_\_

The Woman at the Well – **John 4, especially verses 7–15, 25–29** \_\_\_\_\_

The woman caught in adultery – **John 8:2–11** \_\_\_\_\_

Peter – **Mark 14:66–72 and John 21:15–19** \_\_\_\_\_

Paul – **Acts 9:1–19** \_\_\_\_\_

Adam and Eve – **Genesis 3, especially verses 8–9, 14–24** \_\_\_\_\_

*<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

*<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup> He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup> The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

*<sup>14</sup> The Lord God said to the serpent,  
“Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and dust you shall eat  
all the days of your life.*

*<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,*

*and you shall bruise his heel.”*

<sup>16</sup> *To the woman he said,  
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for[f] your husband,  
and he shall rule over you.”*

<sup>17</sup> *And to Adam he said,  
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”*

<sup>20</sup> *The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

<sup>22</sup> *Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” <sup>23</sup> therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Bottom line: In His great love for them, He removed them from the Garden so that they would not eat from the Tree of Life and live for all eternity in this state of sin. He also promised the Messiah, verse 15, who would take away the sins of the world, crushing the very head of Satan on the Cross of Calvary. This is the first proclamation of the Gospel in the Word of God. Yes, the consequences were still there. They were run out of the Garden, things were no longer perfect — sweat and pain and death, just to name three. Yet the promise of the Messiah and the forgiveness of sins they now knew gave them the strength to continue to live in His grace and mercy. Again, He met Adam and Eve where they were. Through the death of an innocent animal, blood was shed, and Adam and Eve were clothed physically with garments of skin and spiritually with the promise of a Savior who would shed His perfect, innocent blood for them and all humanity so we, too, can be clothed in His garments of righteousness. In love, He banished them from the Garden with the Tree of Life so they wouldn't have to live in their sin and condemnation for eternity. God promised a Savior.

## **David and Bathsheba – 2 Samuel 11 and 12, especially verses 1, 13–14 \_\_\_\_\_**

<sup>11</sup> <sup>1</sup> *In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.*

<sup>2</sup> *It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. <sup>3</sup> And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” <sup>4</sup> So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. <sup>5</sup> And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”*

<sup>6</sup> So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. <sup>10</sup> When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" <sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." <sup>12</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

<sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." <sup>16</sup> And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. <sup>17</sup> And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died. <sup>18</sup> Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. <sup>19</sup> And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, <sup>20</sup> then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?' <sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

<sup>22</sup> So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. <sup>23</sup> The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. <sup>24</sup> Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." <sup>25</sup> David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

<sup>26</sup> When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. <sup>27</sup> And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

<sup>12</sup><sup>1</sup> And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man had very many flocks and herds, <sup>3</sup> but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup> Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." <sup>5</sup> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, <sup>6</sup> and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

<sup>7</sup> Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. <sup>8</sup> And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. <sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' <sup>11</sup> Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' <sup>13</sup> David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And



Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord,[b] the child who is born to you shall die." <sup>15</sup> Then Nathan went to his house.

And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. <sup>16</sup> David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. <sup>17</sup> And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. <sup>18</sup> On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm." <sup>19</sup> But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." <sup>20</sup> Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. <sup>21</sup> Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." <sup>22</sup> He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' <sup>23</sup> But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

How did God deal with David through Nathan? He sent David's pastor, if you will, to confront him with his sin. He also gave Nathan the courage to confront the King with his sin so that, following a contrite heart, repentance and confession, he could share with him the Good News of forgiveness and life. Just like with Adam and Eve, the consequences of David and Bathsheba's sin was very evident as their son died, and yet God was there to restore them to faith and comfort them with the Promise that they would be reunited in heaven once again, not as parent and child, but as fellow redeemed in the eternal Kingdom of God in heaven.

#### **Zacchaeus – Luke 19:1–10 \_\_\_\_\_**

<sup>1</sup>He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup>And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup>And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup>And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup>So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup>And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup>And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." <sup>9</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus approaches Zacchaeus, demonstrates His love and His concern for him, tells him what was needed, and goes to the house of this well-known "sinner," caring enough for him and his salvation, knowing full well what the rest of the community would be saying about Him, offering to Zacchaeus full and complete forgiveness, and again seeing the results of that life-giving, life-changing, life-renewing gift of forgiveness as Zacchaeus changed his sinful life, making amends to all those he had cheated.

#### **The immoral woman at Simon the Pharisee's house – Luke 7:36–50 \_\_\_\_\_ (in summary)**

<sup>36</sup>One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup>And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, <sup>38</sup>and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. <sup>39</sup>Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup>And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."



<sup>41</sup> “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” <sup>43</sup> Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” <sup>44</sup> Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. <sup>47</sup> Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” <sup>48</sup> And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” <sup>49</sup> Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” <sup>50</sup> And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Jesus welcomes the lady and builds a relationship with her, knowing her past, and uses this relationship to visit with Simon about his relationship with the Lord. He points out how this lady, who would be rejected and despised by those at the dinner party, cared for her Savior, her many sins being forgiven, more than a man who thought he needed no forgiveness. Her life was surely changed as Jesus shared the good news of the forgiveness He would win on the Cross of Calvary for her. Very possibly the lives of Simon and the other dinner guests would be changed as well, as they would be brought to repentance through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God, being able to know the forgiveness Christ would also win for them.

### The Woman at the Well – John 4, especially verses 7–15, 25–29 \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup> (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), <sup>3</sup> he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. <sup>4</sup> And he had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

<sup>7</sup> A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” <sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?” <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” <sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” <sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Jesus approached her, started a conversation with her, demonstrated His love for her as a valuable human being, and explained to her who He was and what He had to offer. In it all, He held her accountable for her sins and shared with her the life-giving, life-changing, life-renewing, gift of the forgiveness of sins. Her response was to tell all who would hear of this life-giving Savior. We are given the opportunity to do the very same thing.

Again, Jesus came to this lady to call her to account for her sins. In a loving way, He laid out the problem and led her to contrition, repentance, confession, and forgiveness. Her response to this forgiveness was to go and tell all who would listen from her community and many from her community came to faith through the working of the Holy Spirit through her testimony. (John 4:29, 39)

#### The woman caught in adultery – John 8:2–11 \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>2</sup> Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst <sup>4</sup> they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" <sup>6</sup> This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup> And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup> And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup> Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>11</sup> She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

He was teaching them, forming personal bonds with some and strengthening relationships with others who had heard Him teach before. He listened to the request made of Him even though they were asking with wrong motives. He gave them their answer and shared with this woman the life-giving, life-changing, life-renewing gift of forgiveness. She, too, went on her way forgiven, restored, and changed. Would she sin again? Surely. But she knew the assurance of forgiveness, just as do each of us.

#### Peter – Mark 14:66–72 and John 21:15–19 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 14:66–72

<sup>66</sup> And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, <sup>67</sup> and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." <sup>68</sup> But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. <sup>69</sup> And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." <sup>70</sup> But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup> But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." <sup>72</sup> And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how

Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

John 21:15–19

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."<sup>16</sup> He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."<sup>18</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."<sup>19</sup> (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

We know the story well. Peter denies his Lord three times. Jesus, in love, calls him to account for sin, restoring him in the same fashion in which he denied his Lord. Jesus came to the shore to feed the disciples and asked Peter three times if he loved Jesus, and each time Peter confessed his love for Jesus. Jesus then tells Peter to feed His sheep. On Pentecost, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and preached to the people about Jesus. He spent his life proclaiming Jesus' message. Jesus forgave him and restated His call to "Follow me." And follow he did, all the way to martyrdom for his faith. By asking Peter three times if he loved Jesus and each time assuring him that he still had work to do, he knew of his forgiveness and restoration as the Lord told him to feed His lambs and feed His sheep — ultimately giving him the opportunity on Pentecost and the years that followed to boldly profess the name and the message of the One he had denied many times. So, too, by the grace of God we have been restored as Jesus reaches down and pulls us from our sea of guilt and shame, restoring us to a right relationship with Him and sending us to share this Good News with our world.

Paul – Acts 9:1–19

<sup>1</sup> But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." <sup>6</sup> But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup> The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup> Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, <sup>12</sup> and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." <sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; <sup>19</sup> and taking food, he was strengthened.

Once again we know the story well and how our Triune God responded. God, in His love, sent Jesus to appear to him on the road to Damascus, physically blinding Saul so that he no longer was able to rely on himself. As Jesus spoke with him, He shared with Saul the plans God had for him to go to the Gentiles and proclaim the Good News of the Savior. The Lord then sent Ananias to Saul to tell him about the work God had in mind for him to do of making disciples of all nations.



In summary of how Jesus interacts with the folks we have just talked about and how that serves as a model to us, listen again to Pastor Michael Goeke as he sums up these interactions very well. “As we consider how Jesus interacted with sinners, He stood up for the sinner against the self-righteous (woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11) and the immoral woman at Simon the Pharisee's house (Luke 7:36–50)); Jesus loved people first (Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)); Jesus offered people something better than their sin since He didn't just give rules, but gave life, calling them out of their sin. (woman at the well (John 4:1–42)).

**Leader: Here are the verses mentioned above.**

John 8:1–11

<sup>8</sup> <sup>1</sup> but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup> Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst <sup>4</sup> they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” <sup>6</sup> This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup> And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup> And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup> Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup> She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

Luke 7:36–50

<sup>36</sup> One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup> And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, <sup>38</sup> and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. <sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” <sup>40</sup> And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

<sup>41</sup> “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” <sup>43</sup> Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” <sup>44</sup> Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. <sup>47</sup> Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” <sup>48</sup> And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” <sup>49</sup> Then those who were at table with him began to say among[a] themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” <sup>50</sup> And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Luke 19:1–10

<sup>1</sup> He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” <sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has

come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

John 4:1–42

<sup>4</sup> Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup> (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), <sup>3</sup> he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. <sup>4</sup> And he had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.[a]

<sup>7</sup> A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” <sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?” <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.[b] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” <sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” <sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”



Here is a parting word of comfort and encouragement as we realize this is God's work, working through us in the lives of others by the power of the Holy Spirit. Read **Isaiah 55:6–7, 8–9, 10–11, 12**.

<sup>6</sup> *“Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
call upon him while he is near;  
<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

In all of our sin, we heed the words of Isaiah as our Father calls upon us to “seek the Lord” by allowing Him to come to us and turn us from our sin. The Holy Spirit, working through the Means of Grace, brings us back to the Lord so that we may know the full and complete pardon and forgiveness of our sins.

<sup>8</sup> *For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.  
<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

How thankful we are that this is so.

<sup>10</sup> *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
<sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.  
<sup>12</sup> For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall break forth into singing,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

What assurance is ours that as we share God's Word with others in all the various circumstances in which we find ourselves, He will give us the Words to say? See **Exodus 4:10–12** and **Luke 12:11–12**.

Exodus 4:10–12

<sup>10</sup> But Moses said to the Lord, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” <sup>11</sup> Then the Lord said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? <sup>12</sup> Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”

Luke 12:11–12

<sup>11</sup> And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, <sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Not only that, but He promises that His Word will have an impact on their lives, just as it has on and in our lives, whether or not we are blessed to see that impact. So the encouragement is, share that Word lavishly, liberally, and freely.

<sup>12</sup> “For you shall go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall break forth into singing,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Psalm 55:12)

What joy shall be ours, even as Jesus says in Luke 15:7, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

<sup>10</sup> Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

As we conclude this study, I pray first of all that we know without a doubt that Jesus loves everybody no matter what their sin may be. I pray also that we know without a doubt that our Triune God is indeed a God of love (John 3:16), but He is not an enabling God. Our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit never encouraged, overlooked, ignored, disregarded, tolerated any sin or destructive behavior. In fact, our Savior called His followers to higher standards than the rest and He does the same today with you and me. (For examples, read Matthew 5 and 6.) He calls us to live and operate on a higher plane, if you will, than those who do not yet know Him as their Brother, and Savior, and Friend. Once we become a child of God through Holy Spirit-given and -nourished faith in Jesus Christ, we are expected to leave all, to die to all, to endure all and to serve all (See Luke 18:18–30). Will we fail? Without a doubt! But our Father is always ready and willing to welcome us back with open arms as He offers us the forgiveness of sins and the opportunity to continue in His service (e.g., The Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11–32). Without a doubt, the calling of a disciple of Jesus Christ is a high one. To God be the Glory as we through the power of the Holy Spirit strive to live that high calling as we serve one another. Amen!!

Matthew 5:1–6:34

5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

### **The Beatitudes**

<sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup> “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **Salt and Light**

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

### **Christ Came to Fulfill the Law**

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

### **Anger**

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

### **Lust**

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

### **Divorce**

<sup>31</sup> “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

### **Oaths**

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

### **Retaliation**

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

### **Love Your Enemies**

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not

even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

### **Giving to the Needy**

<sup>6</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>7</sup> “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread,

<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

### **Fasting**

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

### **Lay Up Treasures in Heaven**

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,

<sup>23</sup> but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

### **Do Not Be Anxious**

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

<sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? <sup>28</sup> And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup> "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

#### Luke 18:18–30

<sup>18</sup> And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" <sup>21</sup> And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." <sup>22</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>23</sup> But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. <sup>24</sup> Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup> But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." <sup>28</sup> And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." <sup>29</sup> And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

#### Luke 15:11-32

<sup>11</sup> And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.



<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

### **Closing Prayer:**

Dear Father, thank You that in Your love for me and all people, You do not leave me wallowing in the pig pen of my sin, but instead call me to repentance and to a renewed relationship with You through faith in Jesus Christ. Help me to love others in this same way and to care enough about their temporal and eternal welfare that I speak up and share with them the painful message of Your Law so that I can also share with them the comforting, soothing message of the Gospel of sins forgiven and life restored in Jesus Christ. It is in His forgiving name that I pray this. Amen!

**Closing Hymn:** “Take My Life and Let It Be” (*LSB* #783/784; *TLH* #400)

Pastor Heckmann is the husband of Debra and father of Michelle, teacher at Trinity Lutheran, Klein, Texas; Michael (and family Rebecca and AnnaBella), pastor at St. Paul, Plainview, Texas; and Mikayla, Biomedical Sciences Major at Texas A&M. He is Pastor of St. Paul, The Grove, Texas, Circuit Visitor, and a former LWML Texas District, LWML Nebraska District, and LWML Pastoral Counselor. He is author of many Bible studies; including LWQ Studies, the 2016 LWML Prayer Service, and co-author of the 2015 LWML Sunday materials.

## For Further Study:

Rev. Dr. A. L. Barry wrote a “What About...” pamphlet dealing with Homosexuality. This pamphlet along with many other pamphlets dealing with other teachings of the Bible and the church can be found at: <http://www.lcms.org/belief-and-practice>

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has created a document entitled: “A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families” that lists five goals for ministry to homosexuals and their families. I share those five with you here and encourage you to read the complete document at <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=508>.

### Goal One:

To confront the individual with his or her sinfulness and call him or her to repentance.

### Goal Two:

To assure the repentant sinner of forgiveness in Christ.

### Goal Three:

To help the individual to rely on Christ’s love and strength to abstain from homosexual behavior.

### Goal Four

To assure him or her of the acceptance of the church.

### Goal Five:

To help the individual bear his or her burden without fear of recrimination and rejection by his or her sisters and brothers in Christ.

## **Res. 3-12A “To Develop A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families.” Adopted by the LCMS in 1992**

Whereas, Many voices in our society as well as in various church bodies are expressing the view today that homophile behavior is acceptable alternative lifestyle; and

Whereas, The Word of God clearly condemns homophile behavior in Lev. 18:22, Rom. 1:26-27, and 1 Cor. 6:9; and

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention in 1973 stated: "That the Synod recognizes homophile behavior as intrinsically sinful"; and

Whereas, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations document on [\*Human Sexuality: A\*](#)

Theological Perspective, states, "Whatever the causes of such a condition may be ... homosexual orientation is profoundly 'unnatural' without implying that such a person's sexual orientation is a matter of conscious, deliberate choice. However, this fact cannot be used by the homosexual as an excuse to justify homosexual behavior. As a sinful human being, the homosexual is accountable to God for homosexual thoughts, words and deeds." (Human Sexuality, A Theological Perspective, p. 35); and

Whereas, The redeeming love of Christ, which rescues humanity from sin, death, and the power of Satan, is offered to all through repentance and faith in Christ, regardless of the natures of their sinfulness; and

Whereas, The need exists to make available a carefully developed Law/Gospel ministry plan to congregations and other institutions in order to minister to those who are troubled by their homosexuality; and

Whereas, It is necessary for the church to expose and resist the sexual idolatry of our society; therefore be it

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in convention, reaffirms the position it stated in 1973, "That the Synod recognizes homophile behavior as intrinsically sinful"; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the Synod direct the appropriate boards and commissions to develop a plan for ministry usable by congregations, campus ministries, institutions, and agencies in the Synod, for the purpose of providing biblical and Gospel-oriented ministry to persons troubled by being homophile in their sexual orientations and to their families; and be it finally

Resolved, That the goals to be pursued by such a plan for ministry be

1. to offer to our world biblically alternative models of sexual celibacy outside of a committed, permanent heterosexual marriage and same-gender social, but not genitally sexual, deep friendships;
2. to confront the individual with his/her sinfulness, and call him/her to repentance;
3. to help the individual recognize that God can rescue individuals from homosexual orientation and practice;
4. to assure him/her of forgiveness in Christ, contingent upon sincere repentance and faith in Christ, and to assure him/her of the love and acceptance of the church;
5. to assist the individual to rely on Christ's love and strength to abstain from homophile behavior;
6. to help the individual to bear his/her burden without fear of recrimination and rejections by his/her sisters and brothers in Christ;
7. to find ways of ministering to families which include persons of homophile orientation;
8. to do all this patiently, persistently, and compassionately in the love and Spirit of Christ, who says, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

### **Bibliography:**

Lutheran Study Bible  
Conversations with Rev. Michael Goeke