

Preparing for Pride *A biblical overview of human sexuality*

In this talk, I want to try and do two things.

Firstly, I want to give you eight things we believe as Christians to help shape your thinking on human sexuality. The key Bible texts are in the handout, so consider going through them slowly later.

Secondly, for each belief I want to give you some *Stone in the Shoe Questions*. Questions that might be helpful as you engage your friends, to help them (and maybe you!) reflect on what *they* believe and why.

So...

Belief no.1: We believe there is a God

Genesis 1:1: 'In the beginning *God...*'

And the Bible tells us God is a moral God, the Judge before whom we must all give account. That means there are such things as *moral absolutes* - things that are wrong for all people at all times (Ex 20:2-17; Ex 34:5-7; Ps 11:4-7; Luke 18:19; 1 Peter 4:5; Heb 9:27).

And given the importance of sex and marriage for individuals and society, it's not surprising that a moral God would give laws addressing those issues.

Of course, while your secular friend will believe that somethings *are* always wrong - like rape, they won't be able to give a good moral reason for that, which might open a door in conversation.

In addition, because we believe in a God who is moral, we also believe in the reality of truth and facts. It's the basis of science. In fact, God reveals himself as 'The God of Truth' (Is 65:16) and Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' (Jn 14:6). (See also 1 John 5:20).

So, it's not surprising that the Ten Commandments give a command not to bear false testimony (Ex 20:16) - to not lie. A commandment repeated in the NT (Col 3:9).

In opposition to that, the Bible tells us Satan began his destructive work by deceiving (Gen 3:1-5) and Jesus called him 'a liar and the father of lies' (Jn 8:44). His currency is what is not true.

And so, what flows from a belief in a God who is both moral and truth itself, is that, as Christians, our speech should be marked by truthfulness. Which will influence how we speak of people claiming to be the opposite sex, or how we use pronouns.

However, God is also love (1 John 4:8) - which is not the same as love being God. And so we're to speak the truth *in love* (Eph 4:15). If we don't, the Bible says we're just clanging cymbals (1 Cor 13:1). So we're to love those we engage with.

So, **some stone in the shoe questions** you might think about and ask:

Do you believe there are any moral absolutes? If yes, where do morals come from?

How do you know whether any behaviour is right or wrong?¹

If you cannot say why something is right or wrong, how can you say someone else's view (for example on sexuality) is hateful or wrong?

Do you think truth and facts matter?

Should a society build itself on facts or feelings?

Belief no.2: We believe we are created not the Creator

Genesis 1:1 again, 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'

Genesis 1:27: 'So God created man in his own image.'

We are not self-created. God is our creator. And he has created us with bodies. And in the Bible, there's no hint that the body is physically bad, or that we're spirits trapped in a body, as Greek or Gnostic thought believed, and as the transgender movement believes.

Instead, we believe the physical body is good and it matters. Christ was raised physically, and we will be too (1 Cor 15:3-4, 20, 42-44) which puts huge value on the physical body. It's integral to who you are.

And because we're not the Creator and our bodies are given to us, we cannot do with them whatever we like. Talking about what we might want to do with our bodies sexually, Paul says, 'you are not your own' (1 Cor 6:19).

However, in Genesis 3, the serpent encourages Adam and Eve to seize the opportunity to 'be like God' (Gen 3:5) - to be their own lawgiver and Creator. But that had tragic consequences for how they saw themselves and their bodies. Before they sinned, Genesis tells us they were 'naked and unashamed' (Gen 2:25) - they felt good in their bodies. But alienated from their Creator they cover themselves (Gen 3:7).

- They're experiencing bodily shame and are no longer comfortable in their own bodies.
- They're experiencing what one writer calls an 'interior disintegration' - a disconnect between 'them' and their bodies. It's a sign of the dysphoria and self-loathing to come.

And so, since the Fall, we've been longing for wholeness, but we'll never find that by damaging our bodies.

Stone in the shoe questions

Do you believe the physical body matters?

Can anyone do anything they like to their body? How do you decide?

Why do we say a white person cannot claim to be black, but say a man can claim to be a woman?

At a time when we're concerned with taking good care of the natural world, and not imposing ourselves on it, don't you think it's ironic that people think we should be able to impose ourselves on our natural bodies?

Belief no. 3: We believe in the equal dignity and value of everyone.

Genesis 1:27, 'God created man in his own image.'

¹ Michael J Kruger, *Surviving Religion* 101, 75

That means everyone bears the divine image and has incredible dignity and value. So we're going to treat them like that - even those who disagree with us.

So, stone in the shoe questions:

We believe that everyone is of incredible value and equal dignity, do you? How do you defend that view?

What about the baby in the womb, or the demented person in an old people's home - do you think they have as much value as the gay or transgender person? Why or why not?

Belief no. 4: We believe men and women are different and made for each other.

Genesis 1:27 again, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'

God has created humanity as two distinct sexes: male and female. So, we're created, and created with sexed bodies. And it's our sexed bodies that determine whether we're male or female.

Then, Genesis 2:18 says, 'The Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."' And 'fit for' means, corresponding to. Like but unlike. Same but different. The animals brought to Adam to find a suitable mate were different but not sufficiently like him. Another man would have been like him, but not unlike him. But the woman is both like and unlike. Same but different. So men and women are made for each other and complementary to each other.

But in Genesis 3, as a result of the Fall, that male-female complementarity becomes conflict. They blame one another and try to cover up their bodily differences.

But, as Christians, we believe those differences are good - because God said they are - and we shouldn't seek to blur them.

In Deuteronomy 22:5 the Lord says, "A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God." He's not saying, 'girls, never borrow your boyfriend's jumper.' He's saying, don't confuse the sexes. Women, don't dress like you're a man and *vice versa*. It's why in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul says it's shameful for a man to appear as a woman and *vice versa*.

Now, the transgender movement sees things very differently. Rather than our physical bodies determining whether we're male or female, it's our feelings. But feelings are notoriously unreliable. Plus, while they want to be whole and have their inner feelings and bodies align - which is a good desire - it's wrong to take a healthy body and maim it to try and achieve it.

Rosaria Butterfield argues that the LGBTQ movement, of which she used to be a part, is driven by envy: the desire to have or experience someone else's life, relationships, body or identity. But envy is a sin, one the Bible tells us eats away at our inner selves.² And the answer to envy is not to feed it. It's contentment: accepting that God, and the body he has given us, are good.

²<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/transgenderism>

So, stone in the shoe questions:

Do you think there are any differences between men and women?

What do you think those differences tell us?

Who gets to say who we are? Can anyone say they are anything?

How can a man know what it feels like to be a woman?

Are a teenager's feelings a trustworthy guide to taking whole-life altering decisions?

Belief no. 5: We believe God has designed marriage between a man and a woman for our good and to tell us about his love for us.

Genesis 1 and 2 root sex, and the purpose of sex, in the marriage relationship of a man and woman.

Genesis 1:28: 'And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'"

So, according to Genesis 1, the purpose of a man and a woman coming together in marriage, and having sex, is reproduction. It's why the Lord says about marriage in Malachi 2:15, 'Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring.'

That's what our complementary, sexed bodies are designed around - making babies. And the use of contraception tells you, that's what sex is designed for. You have to take active steps to stop it happening!

But same-sex sex and marriage cannot hope to achieve that primary purpose.

Then Genesis 2 adds another purpose of sex: to profoundly deepen the bond between a man and a woman in marriage. God brings Eve to Adam, who is stunned at her being like and not like him, and then Genesis says, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become *one flesh*.' (Gen 2:24). So their physical, sexual union cements their emotional, relational union. They're one flesh.

Turn to the Song of Songs and you get an incredible poem describing a man and a woman doing just that: delighting in one another physically.

But in Jewish and Christian thinking, the Song has long been seen as pointing to something more. And what's implicit in the Song becomes explicit in the prophet Hosea, as Hosea's relationship with his wife Gomer is directly compared to that of God to his people. And the prophets repeatedly use adultery as an image of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. The point being, God is the husband and Israel is his bride.

It's why when John the Baptist describes Jesus as the bridegroom in John 3:29 he's saying something remarkable: He's God, come for his bride.

And so, in Ephesians 5 (22-25, 32), Paul says that all along marriage has been pointing us to Christ's relationship with the church. That our sexed, complementary, same but different bodies, brought together in marriage, are symbols of God's love for his people. And to complete the picture, if the Bible opens with the marriage of Adam and Eve, it ends in Revelation with the marriage of

God and his people, as John sees the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (21:1-2).

So marriage has always been pointing us to something higher. It's why Jesus says there will be no marriage in eternity (Matt 22:30). There won't be any need for it - the reality will be upon us. But same sex marriages can never paint that picture. A marriage between two men would be a Christ-Christ marriage. A lesbian marriage would be a church-church marriage. Only a complementary, like but unlike, man and woman marriage can mirror Christ and the church.

Stone in the shoe questions:

What do you think the point of marriage is? How do you know that you're right?

Do you think our bodies tell us anything about the point of sex and marriage?

Belief no.6: We believe sex is reserved for heterosexual marriage

The Bible is clear: sex is for marriage between a man and a woman, and all other sexual activity is condemned.

In Genesis 19, God destroys Sodom and the implication is that it's because of their homosexual sin... which becomes clear in the the New Testament where Jude states that Sodom was judged for its sexual immorality and pursuing 'unnatural desire' (v7). (Cf Ezek 16:49)

Then, in the sex codes in Leviticus 18 and 20, all sex outside of heterosexual marriage is forbidden, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Specifically in 18:22 and 20:13 the Lord says 'you shall not lie with a male as with a woman.'

Someone might say, 'But Jesus never mentioned homosexuality, so why make such a big thing of it?' Well, in Jesus' Jewish culture homosexuality was clearly condemned, so to change that, he would have had to say something very clear *in favour* of homosexuality. So rather than his silence being an argument in favour of homosexuality, it's against it.

But the apostles, who *were* interacting with a Greco-Roman culture that *did* accept some homosexual relationships, *did* address it and did so clearly.

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul addresses both male and female same sex relationships, and says both are 'contrary to nature,' 'shameless' and wrong. Then in 1 Cor 6:9-10 he lists sexual immorality (the word is *porneia* - which I'll explain in a minute) and homosexual practice as examples of sins that exclude people from the kingdom of God.

Then, in 1 Tim 1:9-10 Paul gives sexual immorality (again *porneia*) and those who practice homosexuality as behaviours that are against both the law and the gospel.

But let's come back to the question of whether or not Jesus addressed homosexuality, because I would argue he did. In Mark 7:21 Jesus describes sexual immorality - *porneia* - as one of the sins that defiles us, and is evil. And *porneia* is an umbrella term for *all* sexual activity outside of *heterosexual* marriage. Same sex and opposite sex.

Then in Matthew 19:1-12, when asked about divorce, Jesus restates the creation mandate that marriage is between a man and a woman, but then goes on to talk about eunuchs - men who either can't or choose not to have sex. And the implication is clear. It's either faithfulness in heterosexual marriage or chastity in singleness. Having sex before marriage or outside of marriage, homosexual relationships or hooking up, none of them are an option for the follower of Christ.

Plus in the Sermon on the Mount, he raises the bar (Matt 5:27-30). It's not just what we do with our bodies sexually that's a problem. It's our thoughts. So when it comes to sex, Jesus is infinitely more strict than the Old Testament, because he goes for our hearts.

All of our hearts. Straight, gay or bi. As Rebecca McCloughlin, who herself experiences same sex attraction writes, 'Saying yes to Jesus means saying no to sexual freedom.'³ It always has. And the message of today is 'be yourself', but Jesus' message is, 'don't be yourself, deny yourself.'

Stone in the shoe question:

Do our physical bodies tell us anything about who should be having sex with whom?

Our natural bodies seem to be telling us something. Should we be going against nature in the area of sex?

Belief no.7: We believe we are saved by grace

So, Jesus makes it clear that we're all sexual sinners. But the wonderful news is, sexual morality is not the gospel. And being a hot-blooded heterosexual, and getting married and having children is not the gospel.

The gospel is: Christ died for our sin and rose from the dead and one day will put everything right. And we're saved by putting our faith in him. As Paul says, 'By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.' (Eph 2:8-9).

Stone in the shoe questions:

It seems to me that secular culture is very intolerant of those it disagrees with. Why is that do you think?

Christianity has a lot to say about grace and forgiveness. Is there grace to be found in your world view?

Belief no.8: We believe there is hope

In 1 Corinthians 6, having listed the sexual sins that keep us out of God's kingdom, Paul writes, v11, '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.'

Such were some of you - but Christ has washed you clean! And in Christ there is hope for all of us. And ultimately, the Bible holds out the offer of life, not condemnation, but we have to come to Christ to get it.

³ Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, 161.