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January 16, 2022

Biblical Sexual Ethics

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, again, we thank you, we praise you, we bless you for the gifts that you've given to us, not the least of which is your Son. And Lord, this morning we also want to praise you and thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Lord, we have an especially difficult message this morning, there's an awful lot going on, and so I want to pray especially for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would be guiding us, opening up our eyes and ears and giving us your truth in a way that's of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we've been doing a series on 1 John and we ended up last week by quoting John's assessment of how we know that we know Christ. This is 1 John 2. It says: *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he*

walked.

Last week I tried to point out the difference between obedience as this newfound drive that all new creatures in Christ receive and the obedience that religion demands. One comes from within, the other comes from a whole host of outside sources including religion and tradition and culture and media. One drives us effortlessly in ways we don't even perceive, sort of like the very act of breathing. The other drives us to seek the path of least resistance, constantly counting the cost. One is God's Holy Spirit, the other is everything else, what scripture calls the world, the flesh, and the devil. And these two forces are constantly at war, they are the cutting edges of the two kingdoms that have been at war since before the Garden of Eden, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, and this battle goes on endlessly on the macro and micro level. The macro level represents the political, the wars, the clashes between kingdoms and cultures that have gone on for centuries. The micro level represents the personal, that's the individual battles that you and I face every day as believers in Jesus Christ.

We are at a unique point in the micro-macro battle where the political and the personal have merged to attack one particular area of what it means to be a Christian and to believe that the

Bible is the source of all truth, and that area is what we refer to as sexual ethics. Now what is unique about this area is that the pressure is coming both from the external and internal sources. The external sources are not just a culture which has avowedly taken a stand against biblical sexual ethics, it's also a government which has now more and more aggressively promoted the other side's version of sexual ethics, and they do that by proclaiming the notion that any critique whatsoever of LGBTQ mores is an attack on human decency. In addition to the external pressure, there's an internal pressure based on a significant portion of the Christian church no longer seeing the scripture as either binding or accurate when it comes to sexual ethics.

This past week we've seen some of the external things come to a head politically, and I have to say it does not look well for our future. As of January 8th, pastors can be facing real jail time in Canada for sharing a gospel perspective on biblical sexual ethics. Just this week Canada passed legislation banning conversion therapy, and this therapy which attempts to change a person's sexual identity from gay to straight was also known as "pray the gay away," it was universally critiqued as exploitative, as theologically the equivalent to a prosperity gospel, but the Canadian government's decision to weigh in legislatively draws no distinction between conversion therapy and sound biblical

counseling. It outlaws completely any discussion that views LGBTQ issues as anything less than morally equivalent to heterosexuality. They are both now by law considered to be equal. Well, the gist of the issue is contained in a letter that was sent out to pastors by Pastor John MacArthur. In that letter he quotes Andrew DeBartolo, this is a Canadian teaching elder who writes about this bill:

"Bill C-4 passed through the House and the Senate without opposition. Not a single dissenting vote was cast by any member of the conservative party." I should point out the conservative party in Canada is nothing like the conservative party here. It's quite liberal. "It received Royal Assent on December 8, which means it will come into Law after January 8, 2022. The Bill will amend the Criminal Code in Canada to ban conversion therapy. It will criminalize, among other things, 'causing another person to undergo conversion therapy; promoting or advertising conversion therapy.' In the Preamble of the Bill, it says that the belief that 'heterosexuality, cisgender gender identity and gender expression that conforms to the sex assigned to a person at birth are to be preferred over other sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions' is a 'myth.'" Understand what they're saying, "According to Canadian law, as of January 8, 2022, the belief in God's design for marriage and sexuality will now be seen as a myth. The Bill defines conversion therapy as, 'a practice, treatment or

service designed to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual; change a person's gender identity to cisgender; change a person's gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth; repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behavior; repress a person's non-cisgender gender identity; or repress or reduce a person's gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned to the person at birth.' The definition is intentionally broad, and it can clearly be used against any preacher or elder who either speaks against homosexuality/transgenderism or who counsels a person to obey Christ and abandon their homosexual/transgender actions and lifestyle. This means as of January 8th" -- last week -- "2022, it will be against the law to preach, teach, or counsel regarding God's design for marriage and sexuality. 'Everyone who knowingly causes another person to undergo conversion therapy - including by providing conversion therapy to that other person'" -- that can mean simply a conversation -- "'is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than five years.' Similarly, 'Everyone who knowingly promotes or advertises conversion therapy is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than two years.' On January 16" -- that's today -- "2022, faithful men across this country (and many in the United States as well) will be preaching on God's design for marriage and a biblical ethic of sexuality. We will be

doing so illegally" -- not here, but there -- "declaring to the State that there is one God and one Lord over His church, and that Christ alone gets to both define marriage and dictate what is required in the pulpit. We are honored that our American brothers will be joining us in this."

Al Mohler in his podcast *The Briefing* on January 30th, he was speaking of this, the bill's language. He said this: "If you were looking for just one series of words that would encapsulate the entirety of the modern rebellion against God's order, well there you have it. The main thrust of this legislation is towards outlawing any kind of therapeutic context that would make a moral judgment consistent with Christianity in this case. But the bigger threat is, of course, that this will be extended throughout society, inexorably, unavoidably, to every other context, including Christian institutions, Christian organizations, and even Christian churches. This is legislation that no one in Canada wants to admit is directed to the pulpit, but make no mistake, it's directed to the pulpit." And it is this pulpit along with hundreds of others in Canada and the United States that feels compelled to respond.

Now we spent much of last week looking at John's description of what a Christian's attitude should be towards the conviction of the Holy Spirit. 1 John 2:3 says: *And by this we know that we have*

come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Well this morning we want to examine this through the lens of biblical sexual morality where the commandment of God regarding sexuality is being redefined in some instances and in other areas just completely ignored. John says those who claim to know Christ but fail to keep his commandments are in fact liars. I mean that language is incredibly stark, particularly when it comes to areas of sexuality where the culture is so deeply into the church's understanding that you could make the argument that people don't even know what God's commandments are regarding biblical sexual ethics. And so this morning I just want to, I want to take some time to, number one, clearly state what those ethics consist of; number two, why they matter; and number three, how we should respond.

So first what is God's will with regard to sexual ethics? Well just allow me to state in general terms what the scripture has to say about such things. This is *1 Thessalonians 4:3*. It says: *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality. Ephesians 5:3* says: *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of*

impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says: Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Well, the Greek word for sexual immorality that we've seen those three times, that Greek word is "porneia." You hear the familiarity, it's the word we get pornography from. Porneia refers to any illicit form of sexuality and it distinguishes between two particular types: Sexual immorality between unmarried people is called fornication, sexual immorality between married people is called adultery. Same conduct, different circumstances.

The third area of sexual ethics that we're going to look in that obviously has become a huge part of our cultural landscape is homosexuality. The scriptures that refer to it in the New Testament are explicit, they leave very little room for an alternative explanations although many have been offered. And in addition to 1 Corinthians 6 a statement that -- quote -- "men who have sex with men will not inherit the kingdom of God" is Romans 1:26-27. It says: *For this reason God gave them up to*

dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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.

Now there's obviously many, many other areas of human sexuality that we could be expounding on but you have to understand, those areas don't have five-year jail sentences attached to preaching about them. And so on solidarity with our brothers in Canada we want to highlight what God has to say about biblical sexual ethics in some certain particular areas. We do so for fear that there are those who've never even heard God's word on this. And to that end we can state that one great area of God's concern obviously is adultery, so much so that he made it one of the commandments.

Exodus 20:14: "You shall not commit adultery." Now our culture at least at this point still frowns on the idea of adultery because its root is still seen as cheating, as denying somebody something that most people feel they're entitled to, and that's faithfulness.

Cheating is still frowned on in this culture and faithfulness is still at least for now considered a good thing, but what about the idea of fornication? I mean who's being harmed when two people decide they're going to live together before getting married? I

think if you ask around you'll find that this has gone from an outlier kind of behavior to mainstream, where the vast majority of folks now assume that it's right and it's proper to live together, then get engaged and then get married. In fact Pew Research says: "Young adults are particularly accepting of cohabitation - 78% of those ages 18 to 29" -- 78 percent -- "say it's acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together, even if they don't plan to get married." Well, that's the direct opposite of what Paul said in *1 Corinthians 7*. He said: *To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.* I've even heard some folks offering the suggestion that Christian couples who decide -- quote -- "to marry rather than burn," as Paul puts it, were all now kind of re-evaluating that decision, having been married for two or three years now. They were wondering if their decision to marry was the wrong one based on the fact that they were so anxious to have a physical union they really never developed the time and space to decide whether marriage was right on any other level. I found it stunning that not only is cohabitation, which God clearly labels as sinful, now being held out as the wise course. But now folks who went about it biblically marrying rather than living together are considered to have made the unwise choice, having jumped into marriage prematurely because they didn't take the time

or effort to live together ahead of time. Well, in answer to that first, I would say it's just about every single couple that's been married for two or three years experiences questions of whether or not this was the right choice. Believe me, if you've been married, you've been there, particularly since this choice is made for life. The decision to get married is a decision to enter into a lifelong covenant without the benefit or the freedom of being able to walk away. The difference between living together and living together under the covenant of marriage is that one leaves the back door open and the other leaves that door locked and bolted, although with divorce being as easy as it is today, those locks and bolts are not quite as strong as they used to be. And I'm curious to know how much people have lived together previously and then got married also began to question after a few years the wisdom of that choice. I suggest to you it's probably similar. What I do know is that there is a significant statistical difference between those who live together with and without the benefit of marriage.

Again, this is according to Pew research. They say: "Majorities of married and cohabiting adults express at least a fair amount of trust in their spouse or partner to be faithful to them, act in their best interest, always tell them the truth and handle money responsibly, but by double digits, married adults are more likely than those who are cohabiting to express a great deal of trust in

their spouse or partner in each of these areas. Married adults also express higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship. About six-in-ten married adults (58%) say things are going very well in their marriage; 41% of cohabiters say the same about their relationship with their partner."

It's also interesting that the levels of satisfaction rise among people who get formally engaged rather than those who are simply living together and it points out that as the level of commitment grows, the satisfaction in the union seems to grow. But all of this talk about statistics and satisfaction belies and ignores the basic point that John was talking about in our scripture this morning. I mean what is God's input into my life and how does it affect how I live my life particularly within this context of sexual ethics. Again, it says in *1 John 2:3: And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* You see, if you have genuinely come to know Christ, if you have by faith accepted that God himself came in the flesh, lived a perfect life and then offered that life up on a cross in exchange for your life of sin and so by faith you are now a new creature in him. And because of that you have a different set of drives and priorities that are governed not by the flesh but by the spirit. Your primary drive, your primary goal is

pleasing him, obeying his word and advancing his kingdom, even if you don't fully understand why God does what he does. That obedience today is hard to come by.

Folks are always asking themselves well, who am I hurting? Who do I hurt if I decide to live together with my fiancé before getting married? Well, I think we can answer that by saying both parties spiritually hurt and damage each other because disobedience on that level mocks the sacredness of the institution itself. You see, marriage is designed to represent Christ's relationship with his church. This is a relationship based on sacredness and purity.

Ephesians 5:25 says: *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* Well, living together as husband and wife when in fact you are not makes a mockery of those words, even if none of your peers see it as a big deal.

And that leads me to my second point this morning and that is why does it matter? I mean, why does it matter whether or not I choose to live together with someone I'm going to marry? Well, let me give you three reasons. Number one, our culture looks at the idea

of marriage almost exclusively as a cultural rather than a spiritual phenomenon, so this idea of sacredness is lost on the average person. But as a child of God, as one of his sheep, you are not the average person. And the second reason I would give is very basic, very simple. It's because God said so. And the third reason is something that grows the more you understand God's plan and design for his world, this world and his kingdom. You see, marriage is the defining institution in all of creation. It is so sacred that those who obey God's sexual ethics simply because God said so, they wind up reaping the benefits of a creation ordered around the very idea of marriage even if they don't fully realize what it is they're benefiting from. I mean think about the very first reference to marriage. When does that happen? When does that occur? Go right back to the very beginning. Go back to creation itself, to God's acknowledgment that it was not good that Adam was alone. *Genesis 2:20: 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. 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. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 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." Therefore a man shall leave his*

father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

See, God clearly organizes all of creation around this idea of complementarity. That's C-O-M-P-L-E-M-E-N-T, not C-O-M-P-L-I-M-E-N-T. A compliment is somebody saying nice things about you. C-O-M-P-L-E-M-E-N-T means something that completes and enhances you. Complementarity is the idea that by design maleness and femaleness are incomplete in and of themselves and they are completed only through their union. A wedding where two or more become one flesh is the guiding principle that God uses to organize his entire creation, from Genesis all the way through scripture to the very end of time in Revelation where what do we observe? Another wedding, the wedding feast of the Lamb. You see, all of life on earth from the very dawn of creation to the very end at judgment day is defined by the idea of marriage, first between Adam and Eve and finally between Christ and his church. I mean Christ himself, when he was questioned about divorce, he instantly referred back to Genesis for the organizing principles of how this world was created.

There was an incident that took place in *Matthew 19*. Let me just read to you about it. It says: *Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea*

beyond the Jordan. And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" Well, Jesus took the opportunity of the Pharisees' question to go back to Moses' words in Genesis and then he compared two very different scriptures, one from Genesis 1: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And the other was from Genesis 2: Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And so Jesus linked those two scriptures together to make a statement about how God has organized all of creation. It says: He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 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'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Well actually you find out that Jesus, he's astounded and he's astounded that these so-called religious leaders, they don't even understand the organizing principles of creation. He says: "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female." I think it's safe to say that the organizing principle on which all of creation is based is the complementarity

of maleness and femaleness, that each part of those God has chosen as his image bearers is incomplete on its own and is only completed when it's united with its complement becoming one in the flesh resulting in advancing God's first command: *"Go forth and multiply."* Singleness is a separate state. It's a separate and unique blessing, one that obviously is unique and sacred in that Christ himself took on the mantle of singleness. But God's organizing principle for his image bearers is that they should enter into a covenant that is, number one, gendered, that is it's male and female. *He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female."* Number two, it's complementary: *'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?* And number three, it's permanent. *"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."* So God's organizing principle for his creation is both gendered and complementary and permanent, and that alone is enough to make the idea of homosexuality one that is outside the design of God for mankind. They're outside because male and male and female and female could never represent the fullness of complementarity of God's creation.

Well, you know, you can also ask the same question of same-sex relations that you could ask of couples who are living together, I mean, okay, who does this hurt? Well, I think you first have to

ask far more basic questions than that. Does violating the ordering principle of creation hurt me or God or society or the kingdom? I would say all of the above. Well let's just -- let's ask that question about us personally. Does it hurt me and how? Well, that answer requires another question, the most basic question there is and that is, okay, what am I doing here? I mean what is the point of all of this? Why do I exist? Well the answer for Christians is found in the first question of the Westminster Catechism: What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. We believe that implicitly. And so outside of that pursuit we believe that life famously becomes a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying absolutely nothing. Our culture has a different answer to that question. When we ask our culture what is the chief end of man, the answer that it now comes out, the answer that it now champions is one word and that one word is "freedom." And when freedom, particularly all forms of sexual freedom becomes the new chief end of man as it has in our culture, it winds up instead becoming this idolatrous substitute for God and a brand new source of oppression and tyranny. It's the Canadian legislators' blind pursuit of freedom from anything that challenged their view of the order of creation that has produced legislation that's probably going to wind up putting Christians in prison.

I think it was Sean McDowell who described the vast difference between the concept of freedom from and freedom to. You see most people today when they think of freedom, they only think of it as freedom from something. Freedom from rules, freedom from regulations, freedom from anything that would restrict or constrict my desires. But there's also another higher freedom, and that is the freedom to. It's freedom in the direction of something. Paul longed for freedom from the law, from the flesh but he also longed for a freedom to the spirit where we freely choose to do what the law demanded. *Romans 7:6: But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.* And so when we ask the question, what is genuine freedom, you can say it's the freedom from the flesh and to the spirit. That's the freedom to embrace who you truly are in Christ. That's why Christ himself said, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* If you truly are a new creature in Christ, you've had your stony heart transplanted with a heart of flesh and a new Holy Spirit driven desire to obey God and keep his commandments, which goes right back to the text we spoke about last week and referenced this week, that's John saying: *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.*

So let me boil John's words down to their bare essence when it

comes to biblical sexual ethics. We know we've come to know him when we recognize all of God's will as revealed in his word as good and proper and something we seek to obey, and that certainly doesn't mean that we do it perfectly but it does mean that we acknowledge the very least when God says about what is right and what is wrong and we seek to address it. We don't pretend that his word is optional. We know: *Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* So anyone who has the Spirit of Christ in him who embraces sin without it affecting him in any way, shape, manner or form, they have every reason to question and suspect that they're really not a child of God, because sin and God's Holy Spirit cannot coexist peaceably. If God's spirit lives within you as he does within all of his sheep, then that sin within you will become an issue you will feel compelled to deal with.

Just look at the life of David. David was a man who God himself said was a man after his own heart and yet he's a man who failed repeatedly through lies and adultery and eventually murder. I mean David represents how extremely broken in sin we can become, but David sought and found God's forgiveness. And the reason that we know that David was one of God's own is because the spirit within him could not abide with the sin of adultery and murder that he was seeking to justify, and the spiritual pressure of leading this duel

life, eventually it got to him. When Nathan the prophet finally confronts David, he breaks down and he repents and he acknowledges his guilt.

Speaking of that time when he was in active rebellion towards God, this is what David says in *Psalm 32*. He says: *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* What David is saying is God's spirit within David had done its full and complete work and it brought him to that place. So we say, I mean, can culture and bad teaching and peers dull the senses and make it difficult to truly perceive how far down a pathway we've gone? Absolutely. But that's why preaching from the pulpit is so critical in this area, I mean it may well be the Nathan to somebody else's David. And that's why the folks in Canada recognize it as such a threat that they're threatening to imprison people who even go in that direction.

And finally there's part three. I mean we've seen in a limited sense what God's biblical ethics are with regard to sexuality. I think, I hope we've seen why they matter and now we want to examine how we respond to someone who's caught in such a sin. Well, you know, someone once asked me would a gay couple be welcomed to your church? Well, my answer to that was, well, that depends. You have to understand the big picture here. The big picture is this: Every single person in this church, myself included, is broken. Every one of us is broken in one way or another, broken by sin. Sexual sin is simply an evidence of that brokenness. And we are about the business here of recognizing that brokenness by seeking God's grace to address that tyranny by affirming God's way through God's word. Now there are three different churches right here in Port Jervis who don't see sexual ethics the way we do and they are considered gay-affirming churches. Some of them fly rainbow flags right out in front of the church. If somebody was looking for a church to affirm their life-style, I would probably point them in that direction and pray for them because affirming is something we cannot do. If someone is willing for someone to lovingly confront them, recognizing that each of us is uniquely broken in hundreds of different ways, then of course they would be welcome. And again, I go back to the prophet Nathan. I mean he knew how deeply in sin David was, I mean, he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then he had her husband Uriah murdered. I mean Nathan also knew

what a great risk it was for him to confront David, but his love for David, his love for God, and his hatred for David's sin compelled him to seek God's wisdom and confront him.

Let me just read to you the story. This is the story that Nathan decides to tell David. This is 2 Samuel 12. It says: *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. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 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. 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."* 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, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."* 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. 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. 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'."

See, I think what Nathan did there was one of the greatest acts of love in all of scripture. You got to understand something. At the point where Nathan confronted him, David was so locked into sin, so consumed by his guilt that any attempts to confront him would come at extremely high risk to Nathan, to his friendship with David, to his office as prophet, to his very life. Yet Nathan loved David enough to take that risk. Sometimes we have to do things that are not pleasant, sometimes we have to do things that are risky, sometimes we have to do things that are going to cost us greatly.

Fast forward thousands of years to this present day. I have a very dear friend whose daughter left her husband and four children for another woman. This person was established in a conservative evangelical church, the woman she is partnering with was also established as well. What this woman wants now more than anything is her father's approval. That's something that my friend, with many, many tears, is not able to give her. And my friend confronted his daughter with these words. He said, "I love you. I

will never stop loving you. But I will always love God more." And now before you react to that statement, allow me to quote another one, this one by Jesus himself. This is *Matthew 10:34*. He says: *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."*

Jesus put it in brutally stark terms. He said there's a hierarchy of love that all of us are under, and the only way it gets ordered properly is if God occupies the number one position. And the key to loving others, our family included, will always be loving God more. And because my friend loves God more than his own daughter, he cannot agree to let her pursue a freedom from rather than a freedom to. And his daughter desperately wants freedom from. She wants freedom from God's order, from God's law, and especially from God's conviction. At this point she can't see the value in pursuing freedom to God's grace. So what do we do? We do the best that we can.

I can think of two cliches which are now universally detested as glib throw-aways that also happen to contain profound truth. The very first one is W-W-J-D. We ask ourselves, okay, what would Jesus do? I mean this much I know, Jesus always spoke the truth in love. It was never one or the other, it was always both. And I also know that he loved all of us as sinners but he detested our sin, so much so that he was willing to die to separate us from it. When it comes to areas of same-sex attraction, people think the only way you can love the sinner today is by loving his or her sin as well. But God will never love those things that go against the very order of his creation, so we can't, we don't, and we won't.

At this point, practically speaking, I would recommend surrounding myself with men and women who have been faced with the exact same choice concerning their same-sex attraction and have decided to pursue not the freedom from but the freedom to. Men like Sam Allberry, Wesley Hill, Beckett Cook and Christopher Yuan; women like Rosario Butterfield, Rachel Gilson, and Jackie Hill Perry, all of whom have written extensively about the grace that they have found in pursuing the freedom to. And I would weep with those who weep. Both those who are struggling with same-sex attraction and those who are affected by it, it's an agonizing, crippling affliction that the enemy has laid on us. It's part of the macro-micro war that every single believer has been conscripted

into. The only solution is God's grace, God's love and God's wisdom which, thank God, is still available to anyone who asks for it. Let's pray.

Father, I just again, my heart goes out to all those who are struggling in this area. It's not easy, it's incredibly hard and it's a cross. Christ says we are to take up our crosses and follow him. I think also of the cross of many, many churches in Canada. Lord, my guess is they're going to ignore many of the hundreds of churches who defied them today and probably pounce on one or two to make an example of them. Lord, I pray for whatever individual is selected that way, I pray for each of the churches in Canada, and I know it's coming here. I know it's just a matter of time. And I want to make it clear, make it public where we stand before that even arrives. I just pray for your grace, your strength, your insight and your wisdom for each and every one of us. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.