

## **238 When push comes to shove**

I really didn't mean to get drawn into specific arguments about biblical interpretation,<sup>[237]</sup> but my great friend 'Pete' made it clear that gay sex is, according to the Bible, sexual immorality. The thing is, I have several Christians friends who are therefore, in Pete's view, sexually immoral – so I was pushing back, sorry. And through work, I've relatively recently met gay people in Norwich and beyond, and have discussed their relationship with church. These are real people.

In this journey, I've introduced you to some of my friends (as well as some theoretical people). There was the work colleague's uncle who, despite having castigated his brother for converting from Anglican to Catholic, some time later did the exact same thing when Anglicans began to allow women to be leaders in church.<sup>[233]</sup> He felt that he could not stay in a church that went against the Bible teaching: women should not preach. (David Pawson agreed.<sup>[153,154]</sup>)

Yesterday, I learned from Pete that when he was divorced and left with two children – and he met and married someone who also had two children – they were shunned by his church (and by his family members who were part of that church) because of the Bible's clear teaching on divorce and remarriage.

In discussions with another friend,<sup>[229]</sup> I've learned that the policy of his church is that gay people are welcome to join in their church activities, but they are not allowed to have up-front ministries if they are in an active relationship.

Now, as my missionary friend said, 'If sinners are banned from leadership, I'll have to pack up and come home', so presumably this particular sin is bad enough (and it is in Paul's list of heinous sins<sup>[237]</sup>) – and because they are deliberately doing it – that it warrants laying down a rule. Then again, there's no rule about being persistently greedy or arrogant or selfish.

So, in each of these three cases, the church in question is saying that, on the basis of their biblical interpretation, they will not be pushed by the world's agenda into compromising their beliefs.

Sticking up for (your interpretation of) biblical standards is good, but when we get it wrong, it can cause human suffering – and I didn't even need to cite apartheid in SA and segregation in USA, both justified on biblical grounds.

If you (and your church?) think that, in all situations, gay sex is... is what? a sin? evil?<sup>[231]</sup> sexually immoral? corrupting our young people? If you are adamant that David Gushee's interpretation is wrong, what should you (your church) do?

How should you treat gay people in your church (or on your Alpha course). Yes, I know, I've heard it many times: 'Hate the sin; love the sinner', but what does that actually mean in practice?

Sorry to prolong this, but it's real, it's growing, it's serious, we need to talk about it. Getting it wrong (either way) could have serious implications.