

239 When feelings run high

The sum of what I've been thinking and writing over these past few years is that because God **IS** relationship (God is Trinity) therefore relationships are of first importance for human beings in general and Christians in particular – relationships with God and with one another (and with creation).

In interpreting the Scriptures, I've tried to look at the way Jesus related to the (Old Testament) Scriptures and the way he related to people, and I have therefore come to the conclusion that too unbending a view of 'what the Bible teaches' is unhelpful. People are people.

But I wonder if you feel that what I've been saying about the Bible's view of sexuality is that feelings within a relationship are paramount and so, basically, if it feels good it's OK. If that's what you think, I would ask you please to go back and read what I've actually written, albeit that my views have changed with time. Better still, read what David Gushee has written.

Now, I don't enjoy talking about gay sex; I don't enjoy thinking about gay sex; I definitely don't enjoy disagreeing with some of you about gay sex, so let's see what we can agree on.

We can agree the supreme importance of human love at an individual, family and societal level, and the huge damage that can be caused when those relationships break down.

We can agree that the sexual drive in humans is very strong, and dangerous if misused. I hope we can agree too that, within a marriage, sexual intimacy can be very beautiful and can cement a relationship because of the high level of mutual trust and commitment it engenders and nurtures. It is very special and is God-given, which is partly why misusing it is so serious.

I think we can agree that society has, to its detriment, lowered its view of sex within marriage, such that sex has become a form of recreation or a commodity. (Coming from a dysfunctional family, but having got to know my sister again after decades of not bothering, I have seen first hand some of the terrible effects of that.)

We can agree that if sex is ever non-consensual or manipulative, even within marriage, it is definitely wrong (and maybe we could include manipulation by withholding sex). We're talking about some very strong feelings here, and feelings that have the potential to destroy lives, which is why we need to talk about this.

But maybe we should stop a moment to check our own feelings. What are your feelings about gay sex, especially about male gay sex? How strong are those feelings? Personally, mine were pretty negative and fairly strong, which of course made it difficult for me to look objectively at the Scriptures, but I have persisted, and I am continuing to write because I think our reaction to this whole issue could be crucial for the advancement of the kingdom.

So let's keep talking – your turn next.^[240]

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