

265 *Arguing past each other*

When our son Tim was doing A-level philosophy, I remember how impressed his teacher was: when Tim was arguing in favour of some moral or ethical principle, you couldn't tell whether that was what he *actually* believed, or whether he thought the opposite. That ability to understand and appreciate the other person's views is very important – something I'm clearly not good at.

Tim is not a churchgoer, but I have chatted to him a fair bit, having begun to change my mind on the gay sex issue. Yesterday, I had a particularly frustrating discussion with a friend and, when Tim rang later, I poured out my frustration. Thankfully, he could see it from my friend's perspective and explained why we were arguing past each other.

What I was trying to concentrate on was the plight of gay Christians, and I was trying to argue that... well, you know what I've been saying! But my friend kept saying that if we give in to gay Christians and allow them to marry, then we're opening the door to all sorts of other things. So I kept saying, 'Please stop throwing in all these other issues; I just want us to focus on this one issue: can gay Christians not be allowed to follow their consciences?!'

I just couldn't see why he wouldn't take a more generous attitude to gay Christians, given the terrible struggles that many have had/still have. To me that seemed un-Christlike. Grrr!

Tim pointed out that what I was saying was an *irrelevant argument*, a total red herring. Their argument starts from the basic principle that any gay behaviour is deviant; they see that as a biblical principle. That is what the Bible teaches, full stop, so there simply is no point in talking about what gay Christians should do – they shouldn't! That established, let's talk pastorally.

Tim's understanding was really helpful. Clearly my friends and I have nothing to discuss, and I see now why they think badly of me: I am arguing against a fundamental biblical principle that man and woman were created complementary (which I very much agree with, by the way) and *therefore* any kind of gay sexuality is wrong. So, yes, I am a false prophet. Even by saying that gay Christians should be allowed to go with their consciences, I am saying that bad is good.

So we'll have to agree to disagree – albeit very strongly.

Ironically, my argument that, 'We've changed our minds on women in leadership, so why not on gay marriage?', isn't helping. I've checked with three of my friends, and they all said that, based on the biblical principle of complementarity, women should *not* lead churches; preach and pastor, yes, but not lead – that's man's calling. And one pointed out that if men had lived up to their God-given responsibility to lead, we wouldn't be in half the mess we're in now.

So let's agree to disagree, and continue to spread the love of Jesus wherever and whenever.

Paul Bev. 16.4.23