

## 285 *Standing against the moral slide*

One of the strongest counter arguments I hear about gay marriage is that we need to stand against the moral slide. This idea was behind an article I was just sent, which showed the early church's distinctiveness, and the author concluded:

*In as much as marriage reflects Christ's love for the church, Christians' commitment to marriage is a mean[s] of proclaiming that love.*

My response was that this is a reason to *encourage* gay marriage, which supports what the author was advocating – faithful, monogamous, loving, committed relationships.

Now, when the New Testament was written, there was no such thing as a committed, loving gay relationship (as far as we know), so we have to take the principles given to us by Jesus and try to apply them to the current situation.

The easiest approach is just to take the literal approach of, 'Well, it says in the Bible...' and continue to say that any gay sex is a sin, full stop. But if we had continued to follow purely literal interpretations of the Bible, we'd still be insisting that the sun rotates around the earth, that the earth is 4000 years old (or whatever), and a lot more besides.

No, we need to ask what the Bible actually says and then see how it applies today. And we know how Jesus saw, in his day, that people were being hurt by the Pharisees' (albeit well-meaning) literal interpretations, so he broadened people's views (and he often got in trouble for 'breaking the rules'). And Paul did exactly the same sort of thing, writing about how we should understand the (OT) Scriptures in terms of the life and teaching of Jesus.

But one starting point for me is to ignore the arguments of those who see being gay as some form of 'condition' that can be 'dealt with'. I accept that some people are, by nature, sexually attracted to people of the same sex, and I then – along with them – ask what is best for them as people, given the Bible's view that 'it is not good for humans to be alone'.

And we should probably also apply Paul's pragmatic advice in 1 Cor 7, including v9, 'But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.'

These discussions aren't easy, but they are important because if we blindly accept the church's traditional view on gay relationships, people are being hurt. As I said,<sup>[284]</sup> gay Christians are being forced to live lonely celibate lives, possibly having to avoid close relationships with people of the same sex, lest they fall in love and be hurt (and hurt the other person).

Those who, like me, no longer accept the traditional view on gay sex are nevertheless keen to maintain the exact same moral stance that the Bible advocates for heterosexuals, and that's our distinctiveness. That's why I support gay marriage: it's part of standing against the moral slide.