

### **355 FF5: Pastor, what should I do?**

Warning: This is a spade-a-spade article.

Let's suppose you're a church pastor (maybe you *are* a pastor), and Chris comes to see you with a practical question. What will you advise? Chris has followed your thinking and believes, too, that the Good News is way bigger than 'how I get to heaven'; the important point is that Jesus' victory on the cross, with the resurrection and ascension, makes Jesus the Messiah, the Lord of the Universe, and one day that lordship will be fully seen, as heaven comes to earth. Praise God! Let's bring heaven to earth now, as and where we can!

Here's the practical issue: Chris has fallen in love and says, 'I'm gay; what should I do?'

I know from my discussions that some of you are really not sure, some are nervously exploring the idea that maybe God really is wanting us to rethink the traditional view. But others are adamant, and some say that their churches will not allow Christians in gay relationships to take leadership roles.

Now I want to ask you to consider this not as an issue of biblical interpretation, or indeed of how our attitude affects how not-yet-believers relate to us – to the church – important though those are. How does this affect real people who know and love God, and who long to serve God with their lives?

I think I would now say to Chris something like, 'Take care in your relationship with your friend; make sure you pray together; don't allow your feelings to lead you into intimacy unless and until you believe that God wants you to be partners for life, then make a solemn commitment before God and before your friends and family.'

So if you hold the traditional view, and therefore gay couples are obviously sinning, what would you say to Chris? (Interestingly, what would you say to Christian couples you know, who are not married but are living together?)

Would you say, 'It's not really love, Chris, it's Satan trying to tempt you to sin, and you must resist'? And maybe add, 'Chris, this love for your friend can be agape-love and filial love, but you'd best avoid situations where you are alone together, lest you fall into sin.' Well, what else could you say, should you say?! Difficult, isn't it?!

And what if I'm wrong? Suppose all gay sex really is sinful. How will God judge me for the advice I have given to Chris? Think what damage I could be doing! Paul says we should actively flee from sin, and I'm encouraging Chris to consider living a life of ongoing sin! Difficult, isn't it?!

And what if *you* are wrong? What if Chris really *is* gay and only feels that attraction to people of the same sex? You're telling Chris to suppress any feelings of physical attraction, and you're saying, 'Sorry, Chris, you simply have to live a celibate life.' Difficult, isn't it?!

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