

## ***421 Can we just agree to disagree?***

It's over seven writing-years since I first mentioned<sup>[8]</sup> the gay issue. I had been struck yet again by Philip Yancey's *What's so amazing about grace?* and mused '*I'd be very interested to know Yancey's view, 20 years on [now 27], whether he still holds quite so strongly the wrongness of homosexual practice*'. An amazing book; do read it (again).

After a recent discussion on gay issues with a dear friend, in which we were lovingly able to agree to disagree, I realised that I have six good friends – all male and all of my own generation – who still hold to the traditional view on gay sex. So I thought that maybe a summary might help.

The Bible is clear that marriage is for one male and one female only; no alternative is considered. Intimate same-sex relationships are sinful and immoral. Gay people are welcome in church and we love them, but because of their sin, it is questionable whether they should be allowed to take leadership roles (some of my friends say they should *not* be allowed to lead).

This view is straightforward and consistent, and I respect those who hold it in good conscience, but I have come to view the issue from a different perspective.

First, I'm concerned at the terrible pain that is caused to individuals in our society by ***broken relationships***, especially where children are involved, so my priority is to promote faithful, committed relationships.

Second, I'm concerned that loneliness is at the heart of a great deal of pain and suffering in our society<sup>[420]</sup> – and especially so where aloneness is caused by relationship breakup – so I want to do all I can to promote ***community***.

For whatever reason (we are broken creatures, so it may be a combination of nature, nurture, societal pressure and/or former relationship breakdown), some people seem to prosper better within a same-sex relationship. So I feel that they should be encouraged to form loving, faithful life-bonds, to enable them to flourish and thus to make their own unique contribution to the community, both inside and outside the church.

I believe that we have to agree to disagree, and individual Christians should be allowed to hold their own opinions on this, without being judged by those who hold a different view.

But finally, one practical implication: Friends Alan and Brian (or it could be Carol and Diane) join your church and immediately get very involved. Eventually, someone suggests them for leadership roles, but you (as a leader) discover that they live at the same address. If you feel that constant immoral behaviour should debar someone from leadership, what should you do?

None of this is easy, is it?!

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