

429 What really matters – people

More discussions, more thinking – thanks, dear friends! We need to keep talking, because what *really* matters is people coming to know the love of God in Christ Jesus, right?!

Three friends have shared wonderful testimonies: the lives of gay people turned around (you can find them by Googling). But the third friend graciously added, ‘I realise this will probably annoy you’. No, quite the contrary!

If gay Christians become happily celibate, or a gay man is happily married to a woman and has three children, that’s great news! Lives have been changed for the better by God: they can radiate God’s love. This isn’t about who is right or wrong but about enhancing people’s lives.

Again thinking of people’s lives, another friend wrote: ‘The battle for the lives of gay people is won or lost in their minds’. Wrongly thinking she meant *persuading*, I countered with, ‘Jesus told us to be *witnesses*, not *barristers*: tell people the gospel (i.e. relate what actually happened) and model Jesus to them; don’t try to *persuade* them of specific beliefs.’

When she quoted: *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*,^{Rom 12:2} I asked if our minds were renewed by persuasion.

Having just finished a long course about God’s power, she asked if I had received the gift of tongues. I haven’t, so she explained that if I received the Holy Spirit I’d be able to do miracles that could change people’s minds: *My message and my preaching were not with wise persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.*^{1 Cor 2:4-5}

Maybe I’m jaundiced, but when I saw my friend Ray doing miracles, I foolishly took it as proof that he was ‘right’. But he led me and others into an unhealthy dependence, which damaged people’s lives; it nearly broke my marriage.

If we think we are right and ‘they’ are wrong, and we see our job as setting others right – whether by miracles or by persuasion – then I’d suggest that it’s *our* minds that need renewing.

I think this attitude of ‘My way is right’ actually *is* the ‘pattern of this world’ – everyone thinks he is RIGHT. That’s why the world is in such a mess. And, as I’ve recounted before, I spent 40+ years deciding what is Christianly ‘right’ and then trying to persuade others.

But hang on! Isn’t this **me** trying to persuade **you** that **I’m** right! No, I’m just arguing for a less literalistic, less prescriptive approach to the Bible: hold fewer fundamentals more strongly, and agree to disagree on some issues. Go especially easy on ‘biblical principles’ when people’s lives are being damaged.^[428]

Given the pain caused to gay Christians and their families, maybe we should consider the broader Genesis principle that *it’s not good for people to be alone*, and let them decide for themselves?