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"Don't sweat the small stuff."

ON FAITH - WASHINGTON POST - WILLIS ELLIOTT

"Don't sweat the small stuff."

Abortion and same-gender equality--are they small stuff? "Small" signals that the question's category is *size*. When conversations hit a question of size, I frequently recall my father the judge saying, "*In comparison with what?*"

The longer you stare at something, the bigger it gets. Not in your eyes but in your mind. It's the psychology of attention. If it makes you sick, it's the pathology of attention.

An ancient prayer for wisdom put it this way: "Lord, give us right judgment in all things." Proportion. Balance. Reality. Truth. Fairness. Justice. Yes, intelligent Love. This Peace Prayer was influential in ending Europe's Thirty-Years' War and Britain's Puritan/Restoration bitterness: "In essentials, **unity**; in non-essentials, **liberty**; in all things, **charity**." Essentials are big stuff; non-essentials are small stuff; and mutual love prevents differences of sorting from becoming hot-button destroyers of community.

As a Christian, I am saddened, distressed, even frightened by Christians who sicken their minds and societies by single-issue passionate polemic for or against something, anything, whatever. Jesus came preaching "gospel" (Middle English for "good news"), and some of my Christian brothers and sisters moralize the gospel down to their notions of proper behavior and politicize it to their petitions for the use of public power to force their points of view on all who disagree with them. We Christians can't use the excuse that "Everybody does it": Jesus *didn't* do it.

So what do I "think of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's vote to urge its bishops to refrain from disciplining clergy who are in 'mutual, chaste and faithful committed same-gender relationships'?"

The question is concentric. Moving from the outermost to the central circle, it is (1) institutional, (2) historical, (3) biblical, (4) pragmatic, (5) theological.

1 It's institutional. A Georgia bishop, within his specified powers, dismissed a pastor for openly living with his homosexual partner. The denomination's gay lobby, within its rights, pressured the denomination's annual assembly to "urge" (not instruct) the bishops to loosen up and "refrain" from exercising the expulsive power which that Georgia bishop exercised. Result? The ELCA loosened up. The whole process was decent and in order.

2 It's historical. The traditionalists, opposing this latitudinarianism, warned that the vote was one further erosion of the historic Lutheran standards--culture swamping church--paralleling the denomination's erosion of theology and of church membership.

3 It's biblical. While the Bible is not clearly against abortion, it *is* clearly against homosexual intercourse. (Robert Gagnon's magisterial work on the issue is conclusive as well as compassionate.) Any victory for homosexual intercourse--same-sex "marriage," gay/lesbian ordination, sexually active gay/lesbian pastors/deacons/priests/bishops--is a bypass of the Bible and thus a weakening of biblical respectability & authority.

4 It's pragmatic. I'd have to add to the decisional calculus the data on how that openly gay pastor and his people were getting along (or not!) together. This means that the issue wasn't just ideological and doctrinal--it was personal, interpersonal, human. Yes, and in the light of the full spectrum of human rights and values, how good was that bishop's judgment?

5 Finally, it's theological. God sent Jesus as Good News. Truth without love is cruel, love without truth is sentimental: what resolution of the ELCA dilemma--a dilemma now in all mainline Protestant churches--would best serve the interests of both love and truth? In theological language, what process of decision-making, and what decision, would most please, honor, and give glory to God?

In the early 1830s, Tocqueville remarked that America was protected against such a violent upheaval as the French Revolution by the fact that Americans, in their voluntary institutions, especially their churches, learned to handle nonviolently what we now call hot-button issues. I add that we fail, in both church and state, when--frustrated over the difficulties of resolving such issues by deliberation--we call upon coercive power, the government, to "solve" them for us. Debate is messy, coercion is clean. Let's live, as lovingly as we can, with the hot-button messes in our voluntary associations--and keep the government out of them, and out of our bedrooms and operating rooms.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | AUGUST 23, 2007; 9:22 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:
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Comments

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My, but it does appear that you ALL are pushing the boundaries of how many useless words can proceed from the mouth (keyboard) of simpletons. If ONLY you could read your own words without your preconceived ideas. What a lot of drivel.

POSTED BY: OTHER | NOVEMBER 3, 2007 3:06 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

And, to encapsulate all that:

No, gay rights and equality in marriage and society are *not* 'Small stuff.'

Your reasons for feeling it's a holy mission to deny them, however...

Are.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 30, 2007 4:33 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Swinging back in, too, speaking of the panelist chiming in... I have to call the columnist on the bit quoted in the header:

He says: "Abortion and same-gender equality-- Small Stuff?"

The implication is that they are 'both mortal sins' and both, rhetorically, 'Big stuff.'

But, no. Not really.

False equivalency.

Christians insist that 'abortion' (or any contraception they can be convinced *is* abortion, whether it is or not, ...or contraception itself for that matter,) ...is "murder."

Now, I don't happen to think so, there:

I don't think something soul-defining-and-magical happens when straight people have sex-that-will-later-result-in-conception--that-means-condoms-or-abortion-is-murder, or that the soul-experience of a blastula or possibly embryo constitutes 'human life' in the same sense that we speak of when we speak of murder, but...

...As much as I think that the anti-abortion-rights argument is irrational, and a particular, unsubstantiated, and highly-superstitious religious view of things, I accept that to some Christians, that 'abortion' is 'tantamount to murder.'

But, I say:

Failure to oppress and hurt and marginalize and disenfranchise and exploit and harm gay people for loving each other in committed ways and wanting the equal protection promised by the Constitution...

If that's tantamount to 'murder,' too, then something's very wrong with your 'value of human life.'

This is about civil and social justice.

And the arguments why it's so awful for people to be gay are both thin, debateable even by Christian standards, unjust, manifestly harmful, and manifestly against the spirit of the American constitution.

If you think simply *not using the power of government to oppress gays* is in any way equivalent to what you call 'murder,'

Then your idea of what murder *is* is messed-up.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 30, 2007 4:28 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

To Lep,

Beautiful hymn. Thanks.

To Willis E. Elliott:

God be praised, a panelist chiming in! Yes, the process of question/answer must continue. The Bible is not a closed box, but a series of doorways to truth beyond. I am Episcopal, and it is an unwritten rule among us that if you do not doubt, do not question, you will not progress in your belief.

Please continue to be here, and God bless.

POSTED BY: ARMINIUS | AUGUST 28, 2007 7:41 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Jesus taught LOVE and He lived it and He died for it. Jesus said if you are to be His disciple to, "Come follow Me". A lot of people who think that they are His disciples aren't and a lot of people who don't think they are, actually are. Think about it. Sincerely, Thomas Paul Moses Baum.

POSTED BY: THOMAS BAUM | AUGUST 28, 2007 7:13 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I have a question:

What?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 28, 2007 6:16 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

GJKBEAR & LEPIDOPTERYX:

Love that "We have questions for your answers!" How UU can you get! But bring me your questions, & I'll answer them, That will free you to hop on & ask more questions. It's the way God made you, & us, & everybody.

BEWARE when anybody stops the process--either at questions or at answers.

For some years I (an evangelical-liberal Christian) preached an annual sermon at a NYC UU atheist church: "theist Sunday," some of them called it. One of those Sundays I took a poll & found that over half of the folks were born (whether or not "born-again") Southern Baptists. When Southern Baptists, they stopped at the answers. As UUs, they stopped at the questions (but not so completely as to stop asking me to come question their questions).

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | AUGUST 28, 2007 4:50 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

GJKBEAR:

I am a UU - We have questions for your answers.

The final verse of one of my favorite UU hymns goes something like this:

We seek elusive answers to the questions of this life.
We seek to put an end to all the waste of human strife.
We search for truth, equality, and blessed peace of mind.
And then, we come together here, to make sense of what we find.
And we believe in life, and in the strength of love
And we have found a time to be together
And in our search for peace, maybe we'll finally see:
Even to question, truly is an answer.

It speaks to both my Pagan and UU sides.

POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | AUGUST 28, 2007 12:40 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Tim, my question to you is WHY? If you believe that God made you and formed you and gave you a brain - why should you believe also that any group of people are more intelligent than you? Why should church leaders be able to read or interpret the Bible any better than you? So, why should you not question their interpretation? Even when you read the Bible, by yourself, you read it through what your Pastor says - is what it says. You never question what a passage says - whether it is literal or allegorical. You never think about whom translated it to begin with and what version they translated nor from which language it was translated. When you point out that the Greek means thus and the Hebrew means this you use biblical scholars that interpret the text the way YOU do.

Why not debate? Why not question? I just can not bring myself to believe that a GOD who was savvy enough to make all that is, would not be able to make humans not attracted to each other if he thought it was an abomination. I know that there is free will; but I also believe that if GOD gave you intellect and a brain, that HE expected us to use it - and not just blindly follow along what someone else tells us that something means.

But then; hey, what do I know? I am a UU - We have questions for your answers.

POSTED BY: GJKBEAR | AUGUST 28, 2007 11:05 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Anyway, Tim, forgive me if I lecture a Christian on Christianity, but taking this in the spirit of some Jesuit ancestors, and hoping I don't mangle it too bad:

"then we Christians should save ourselves a lot of time and energy on the problem child."

Why does it seem the 'good shepherd' 'lost sheep' metaphor is called in when it comes to trying to go coerce someone who wants out back in.... but when it comes to resolving the ongoing damage, it's not worth Jesus' time?

" They should be lovingly admonished and then the church can move forward with more important things."

I think this is a big sticking point, actually: to you, *the entire lives and marriages of real people* are just a 'sin' to you. Stomp it out, make it go away, everyone will supposedly be happy.

These are people's *lives* you're talking about like an abstraction to be waved away, if not condemned.

These are people who love each other.

Are you going to seriously walk up to *me* and say that my committed relationship that's lasted through ...Gods-is-it-only-six years of great difficulty is... "Oh, just something to admonish them about, ostracize them and make them hide,"

Maybe that's all that is to you. Maybe, in fact, all Christianity could give a crap about, and that's your business.

Just don't come telling me how uch more 'moral' you are.

Ever again.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 25, 2007 7:21 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Since actually more Churches than states actually solemnize gay marriages in your God/s' names, Tim, it's probably not me you should be looking at about 'simple definitions of 'sin.'

There are a lot of nasty things in that Bible that with much struggle and resistance and human misery, your churches have, leaving fingernail-trails in the dirt all the way... Gotten over, or at least de-emphasized.

Personally, I don't much care about the Lutherans' lackluster determination to 'not be as mean to gays as we could,' ...it's the fact that other Christians insist, 'You should be meaner, and here's the objectively-debunked reasons for this attitude that we keep saying, anyway.'

Personally, yes, your 'sin' idea is something I find alien to humanity, and if you wanna be the good guys, I wanna see your preachers lose some weight (Wasn't 'gluttony' a terrible sin, too?) before trying to cut social programs, never mind tell me what my motivations are to have sticked with my sweetie through a lot of travails that just so happen to have been considered 'righteous' by the Lutherans involved. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 25, 2007 7:06 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Paganplace says, "One soon learns that there's more to being human than the 'base motives' painted up to be this huge problem."

Hey, we agree on this and a lot of things, PP. I just can't think of them right now :)

I guess the dividing line is on sin and the need to repent. To me this whole Gaygate thing is just way overblown and taking away too much energy that could be spent on other things. It is a sin in our rule book, the Bible. The church founders figured this out for us Christians and we should open our guide, the Bible, and stop debating. Some things in our Bible are clearer than others and when something is clearly identified as a sin, then we Christians should save ourselves a lot of time and energy on the problem child. They should be lovingly admonished and then the church can move forward with more important things.

POSTED BY: TIM | AUGUST 25, 2007 5:40 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hrm. OK, Rev. Elliot.

That's a little more considered, than usual, I'd say.

Problem here is this:

"Any victory for homosexual intercourse—same-sex “marriage,” gay/lesbian ordination, sexually active gay/lesbian pastors/deacons/priests/bishops—is a bypass of the Bible and thus a weakening of biblical respectability & authority."

When everything about anyone being gay becomes a zero-sum 'victory' or 'defeat' for someone's view of Christianity, things cease to be about justice, perspective, or even, the right thing to do under any given circumstances.

It becomes another 'war,' not, 'what's right' or 'how to live,' or, especially when it *doesn't* involve a church's internal matters...

A referendum on Christian political ambitions.

Your Bible does *not* gain respectability or authority by singling out gay people as 'sinners' and third-class citizens, when so many other 'sins' are let slide, or even actively-defended.

On this, Tim, here's the perspective gap, as well as the respectability gap: you say:

"America is to preoccupied with our own pleasures. We we are just to lazy to do the heavy lifting."

You still characterize peoples' lives and loving, lifelong relationships as mere 'empty pleasures.'

You're taught that gay people are 'sin,' and that's all you see.

It's *straight* people and Christian oppressors who try to promote the idea that, "Anyone that doesn't obey us is having *more* 'fun' ...we call it 'illicit fun' than we deny ourselves."

This is about people's *lives.*

Take it from a Pagan. Theoretically, I can have *all the 'fun'* I want: acts of love and pleasure are in fact sacred to my Goddess: but, well... One soon learns that there's more to being human than the 'base motives' painted up to be this huge problem.

...Frankly, we do sometimes get folks who come along thinking that empty pleasure and permissiveness is all we're about, try to embrace that, then eventually realize that *our* religion, *our* lives, ..anyone's lives and loves, are in fact about a whole lot more than 'forbidden fruit' fetishizations.

That, in fact, the 'pleasure' you fear is just not all it's cracked up to be, either as a 'prize' to be guiltily-envied or a 'demon' to be eschewed.

In judging someone's *lives,* if you think you get to judge, well, you need to see past the idea that people are in committed relationships just for 'empty pleasure.'

If it's empty, you ain't doing it well.

If only you could hear yourselves, you'd see who's *really* focused on sex acts and 'rebellion.'

You guys. Who see it as an 'enemy' ...that anything good for gay people is bad for Christianity.

These are people's *lives* you're talking about.

And trivializing with talk like they go bucking your system and trying to serve *your* God while being told they're nothing but undisciplined sex fiends.

You're the ones that miss out.

Bon appetit.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 25, 2007 4:23 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I believe that if you are born straight, you are also born gay, and that gray area inbetween, bi. I was raised in the the Lutheran church, but the doesn't mean I go along with all their rulings. So I am not a member in good standing.

POSTED BY: LYN | AUGUST 25, 2007 10:17 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Canyon, Amen.

John the Baptist said to repent because Christ was coming. He was preparing the way for Christ. For when one repents then and only then can they be receptive to the healing power of Christ.

Jesus healed those people who repented and he still does. Jesus warns to go and sin no more.

The job of the church is to tell people too repent - to turn away from their sins. Once they do this then Jesus heals them. The the work of the church is to hold those born again accountable, lest they fall into sin again. All this is work.

America is to preoccupied with our own pleasures. We we are just to lazy to do the heavy lifting. Church's, like the Lutheran Church, just don't care enough about people to spend the time and effort to help them and to face the prosecution and rejection that comes with representing the Truth. This is hard work. For it is a lot easier to say "I love you, go in piece" than to say "I love you but you need to repent and turn to Christ, my brother, because what you do is wrong."

I might add that we don't care enough to address those in the world who do not know Christ. As long as we have our salvation and our nice comfortable life style, then if someone is in India, Iran, or on the streets of America in dire need of Christ, we just don't care. The implied sentiment is this: "Let them all go to hell as long as my live is comfortable and convenient."

The Lutheran church is just taking the easy way out. As Cal Thomas said on this subject they are into trendiness. Trendiness gets you approval. Trendiness, using love as a cover-up, keeps the peace at the cost of the Truth. Trendiness is the easy way.

POSTED BY: TIM | AUGUST 25, 2007 7:12 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

if gagnon expose was so clear, did he reveal the essence of the spirit of homosexuality that would cause it come against the fruit of the spirit and the spirit of christ and love your neighbor as yourself?

POSTED BY: FEETXXXL | AUGUST 25, 2007 2:06 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

From the Gospel of ASLANDIUS, Chapter Two:

And Jesus, because He could not, in his kindheartedness, bear to return to the earth in its present condition, asked his Father in Heaven to take on that task.

God the Father descended to earth, saw what was going on, and proclaimed:

"Of all the abominations current on this planet, the so-called Christian Church is the greatest abomination of all.

"Pagans, though sometimes witches, are better followers of My Jesus, the Christ, than those who claim to follow the cruel dictates of the "Christian" Church.

"Therefore, it is necessary to revise a portion of my holy scriptures to now read as follows:

"THOU SHALT NOT SUFFER A "CHRISTIAN" CLERGYPERSON TO LIVE. STONE THEM, STONE THEM, STONE THEM!

"LET THE PAGAN WITCHES LEAD THE CONGREGATIONS."

AND IT WAS DONE.

[Coming to a House of Worship near you in 2009]

AMEN

Here endeth the reading of the holy revised text.

SIGIL: ANGELIUS GABRIELUS ATTESTARI *****

POSTED BY: NORRIE HOYT | AUGUST 24, 2007 8:48 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Labech,

In re your post:

The Letter Killeth, but The Spirit Giveth Life.

Shame on you for your comments about the Atlanta Pastor. How could he get married in Georgia? He couldn't, so the issue for him was not sex before marriage but being gay.

Yes, you knew the rule, too, but you could have gotten married and had sex. The pastor couldn't get married and couldn't ever have sex under the rule. Having sex is a natural right, intended by God.

Christianity (unlike Christ) is sadistic.

POSTED BY: NORRIE HOYT | AUGUST 24, 2007 8:12 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The Lutheran Churches, and all other religious organizations, would take a great leap forward toward peace, harmony, and enlightenment, if they simply adopted The Ham Sandwich Principle in relation to gay issues.

The Principle is this:

Spend no more time debating or being concerned with gay issues than you do debating and worrying about what should be done with clergy and parishioners who eat ham sandwiches.

Eating ham sandwiches, and being gay or having gay sex, have the same cosmic significance.

Act on that Principle and you'll be closer to attaining Salvation.

POSTED BY: NORRIE HOYT | AUGUST 24, 2007 7:56 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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POSTED BY: NORRIE HOYT | AUGUST 24, 2007 7:55 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Canyon:

****Therefore we know that God created man and woman, in a complementary role, to show the relationship between the Lamb and His Bride, the church.****

Unstuck in time again, are we? At the time of the "creation," there was no church. Just a big garden. (That's actually more of a Pagan idea of church - wandering naked through the woods, living off the land, etc.)

****The husband and wife covenant brings forth children, just as the Lamb and church do.****

Not all married folk want children. Some take measures to ensure that they don't bring any forth. Does that nullify their marriage?

****The husband and wife enter into a lifelong covenant, just as the Lamb and His Bride will never be separated.****

Sometimes people choose the wrong spouses, and some unions NEED to be dissolved.

****The husband and wife have defined roles, just as Christ and His church.****

Yeah, yeah - husband the head of the wife, wife submissive in all things, not to speak in church, but ask her husband to explain to her at home and trust implicitly in his explanation, but no proviso for what to do if hubbers doesn't know the answer - heard it before, not my cup of chicory. I don't do submissive, and I'll ask questions of anyone I choose.

****There is no room in this illustration for homosexuality.****

And you wonder why BGLT people leave Christianity? They've been shown the door and told not to let it hit them on their way out.

So your GOD of infinite love decrees the same penalty - eternal death/hell - for plucking an apple from my neighbor's orchard without his permission, for telling my daughter that she was not getting Leaves of Grass for her birthday when I already had it wrapped and hidden, for thinking "Damn, he's hot!" when I met my husband for the first time, and for garotting and dismembering the 68-year-old mobility-impaired woman who lives next door and dumping the remains in the Atchafalaya. Oh, yeah, I'm feeling the love - not. Such a god is not worthy of my worship.

POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | AUGUST 24, 2007 7:26 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dr. Elliott, once again an interesting article and examination of the question. The only place I think you might have done better is to quote a bit of Scripture instead of claiming Jesus "didn't do it."

Paul answered the question concerning if we should allow sin within the church;
"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

There is a huge mistake EVERYONE makes to try to figure out how God fits into this world, assuming God stumbled upon this world and took over. Rather, God created this world, the Heavens show His glory and the firmament shows His handiwork. Therefore we know that God created man and woman, in a complementary role, to show the relationship between the Lamb and His Bride, the church.

The husband and wife covenant brings forth children, just as the Lamb and church do. The husband and wife enter into a lifelong covenant, just as the Lamb and His Bride will never be separated. The husband and wife have defined roles, just as Christ and His church.

There is no room in this illustration for homosexuality.

But more importantly, the dulled conscience of the ELCA is so caught up in their sins that they cannot recognize even the big ones.

Try to explain to a fish what water feels like. He is so immersed and consumed in water that he doesn't realize he is even wet.

These sins create what is commonly called the "slippery slope", starting with one little sin, when God doesn't strike you dead immediately the sins escalate, finally you find yourself in a lifestyle of sin and you don't realize how sinful your life has become.

An example of this is consider how many lies you may have told this past year. Most people think they've told relatively few lies in their lifetime; start counting them. I recently did and found on a good week I would catch myself in one about every other day. That is over 150 lies a year. That is roughly 3500 in my lifetime, and that's assuming only a few a week. The Bible says that all liars will have their place in the lake of fire, that lies are an abomination to God.

Now count things you've stolen. As far as I know, I can count these on one hand. But one murder results in the title, "murderer", and so is it with stealing, one occurrence makes you a thief.

Something that is rampant in the United States is blasphemy. There are many words that can be used in blasphemy, God, Jesus, Word, Christ, Crikey, Goodness, Man Alive...the Bible says that God will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

Finally, a little closer to the question at hand, the Bible says "Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery." Adultery is defined as sex outside of marriage, included in this is fornication or cheating on your spouse. But Jesus brought the reins in even tighter; He said, "Whosoever looks on someone to lust after them has committed adultery with them already in their heart." God is concerned with the thought life as well as those done in deed.

The Bible says that it is appointed once for a man to die and then the judgment. You have to face a perfect and holy God someday, will you be innocent or guilty? The Bible promises that deeds done in darkness will be brought to the light.

For these transgressions our punishment should be Hell; a transgression against an infinite God requires an infinite punishment.

But God doesn't want you to perish, and He has made a way in which you might be saved. 2000 years ago God became manifest in the flesh as the man Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, where He lived a perfect, sinless life. He was tempted but He didn't succumb, and He offered Himself up as the propitiation for our sins. We broke the law and Jesus paid our fine. He was beaten and bruised for our iniquities, and He died on the cross in your stead.

In order to receive this gift of life, God demands all people everywhere to repent, to turn from your sins, forsake them, not just the easy ones, but ALL of them, turn towards holiness and thirst after righteousness.

Then place your full trust in Jesus Christ to save you from the punishment you have so rightly earned.

God will create a new heart in you, you will know you are forgiven because you will be born into the family of God.

Once you have this heart that thirsts after righteousness and a right relationship with God, then the answer to this question will be clear, because you want to glorify your Lord, Jesus Christ.

POSTED BY: [CANYON SHEARER](#) | AUGUST 24, 2007 7:04 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I appreciate Pr. Elliot's attempt to deal with this issue. As a Lutheran pastor, it has been difficult for me.

In my previous parish, I had a gay couple with children. Their faith, their desire to raise their children in faith, the discrimination they faced daily touched me a great deal. It was a real learning experience I vowed to myself never to forget. I promised myself I would not forget the humanity of their plight. As I thought about Jesus in the gospels, he tended to respond to the human situation that people were in even when he didn't subscribe to it.

Finding our way through these issues is difficult. I wish I could just bluntly say that the Bible condemns homosexuality and be done with the issue. But, in our own time, many of us pastors have backed down from such judgments on significant issues like divorce. (Clearly condemned by Jesus.) It was only after fully understanding the human carnage of divorce that we stopped making people's lives more difficult by condemning them for a mistake they themselves wished they had not made.

I am also keenly aware that the Bible and even the New Testament has been used to justify slavery. Nowadays, I think 99% of American Christians understand that Jesus' teachings about the value of every human life by God makes slavery abhorrent. So, I understand the desire of my national church body to decide not to decide. Not to force a controversial issue.

However, I do not have a great deal of sympathy for the gay pastor in Atlanta. He was told from the beginning that entering into a sexually active relationship of any kind prior to marriage would require his resignation. I, a single heterosexual was told the same. And, like him, I agreed to this as a condition of my willingness to serve, to be called by a congregation, and ordained. I understand from the members of his congregation that this pastor was very well thought of in his congregation. However, he knew what would happen when he announced that he was in a committed sexual relationship with a man. Instead of resigning, he chose to push to the issue and "rally the troops." His bishop, with reluctance and recognition of this man's gifts as pastor, required his resignation, as his position as bishop required of him. There are all kinds of issues and perspectives that one could take on this issue. Right now, I do not know how we will come to clarity on this issue. I trust that we will. The conservatives can say whatever they want. If they had their way, we would still discriminate against Jews, still own slaves, and still run the divorced out of churches. I am glad I do not live in a land where the government, or even a temporary majority, will decide this for me. It is my issue as a Christian and pastor to grapple with.

POSTED BY: [LBECH](#) | AUGUST 24, 2007 12:37 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)