

A LA CARTE

Ps. Antony Njoroge – 13 Sept. 2015

Different Strokes Series

Sermon Notes



Share your secret: Contact us....share a secret

ACTIVITY: Take off your phone and open a note or a new text. Imagine with me you and the person sitting next to you are the owners of “**Strokes Restaurant**” and you need to come up with menu. In the next 30 seconds, I want to see which partnership can come up with the longest list of different types of foods. Starting now... ([Sample a few menus](#))

What you created is what most restaurants would call an **a la carte**. That is a list of options from which to order the meal you want.

We’re continuing our series Different Strokes where we’ve been talking about Sexuality issues. Last week we look at the dangers of Pornography and Masturbation and the steps we can take to free ourselves from this destructive habits. We summarized by saying ‘Today’s pleasures are tomorrows disappointments’. Today we shall look into another different stroke when it comes to sexuality and that is ‘Same Sex Attraction’.

When it comes to sexuality today, the world offers a variety of options – **like an a la carte menu**. There are different sexual preferences, attractions and orientations available to describe different sexual needs. Common orientations include: **Heterosexual** (straight), **Homosexual** (gay/lesbian), **Bisexual** (attracted to bot male & female), **Pansexual** (attracted to all genders/sexes – [Myle Cyrus](#)) A person who’s gender identity matches their anatomical sex is **acisgender**. A person who’s gender identity does not match their anatomical sex is a **transgender person**.

There are more than 15 different forms of sexuality and the ones that top that list or what most of us are familiar with, is **homosexuality** which means, a person whose sexual preference is members of the same sex. Homosexuality is certainly a hot topic world wide at the moment in wider media, especially after the US Supreme court ruling that allowed same sex couples to marry. This has become a common topic in our city, this issue is right in our living rooms with every other movie or series having a gay couple. Some of the people we love are right at the center of this issue- sibling, a friend or a child. These issues are cropping up in our airwaves, schools and social media platforms and we cannot continue assuming the tension that this topic is creating amongst ourselves. And the interesting thing is that the passion and rhetoric on every side of the issue is at an all-time high.

So, where do we start? I’ve got a question that I would like us to answer....How does our society decide what’s right and wrong? 4 things that make people come into certain conclusions.

1. Based on what culture we’re living in and what is deemed right and wrong, legal and illegal? That seems a little relative doesn’t it. People’s behaviour and thoughts about such issues around the world are very different from each other. That doesn’t seem sufficient.

2. Is it about what the majority decide? So, if most people think it’s right, that’s what we go with? But, then – on that basis if you lived in Germany during the world war you may have been quite happy to support what we all seem to say now was evil. That certainly has its problems.

3. Is it based on what gives us happiness or makes us feel good? I can think of lots of things that make people feel happy but aren't good. People take drugs to make them happy. They go on shopping expeditions for things they don't need. Most people don't do wrong things because it will make them miserable. They generally do it because they think it's going to make life easier and better for them.

4. Is it what's most loving? Sounds good, doesn't it? Yet, people get into an affair where people are in love. Yet, that's not good. People get really hurt.

How do we decide what is right and wrong as followers of Jesus? This is where the Bible steps in: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."* - 2 Timothy 3:16-17, (NLT). As a church we are up front that we believe the Bible is our authority in all matters of faith and practice. We even write that in our statement of belief in order to remind us that this is how we make decisions in life ["The inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice."]

Having said that in church you find Christians on two separate sides on the issue of homosexuality. On one hand you find **#TeamTruth**..those that are completely opposed and they say that it is sin and it should be condemned. It is not right, it is offensive to our culture. This is not the biblical way and they are right!

Then on the other side you will find **#TeamGrace** those who feel, that this is not just an agenda, this is not just an issue, these are people we are talking about, these are people like you and me that God loves and he desires to have a relationship with and you know what, they are also right! And then there is the rest of us who are stuck right in the middle, we are not sure which side to lean to thus creating a huge tension. If you are leaning on one side we feel like there is something missing. If **#TeamTruth** were to be honest with themselves, they will admit that there is something missing, yes I know what the truth is but... If you were to ask **#TeamGrace** they will say that yes these are people like you and me but...

And this leads me to why I love the bible and most importantly why I love Jesus. Because when I look at the life of Jesus, *I don't think we can navigate this as Jesus would without tension.* Even when you look at how Jesus dealt with people or how he loved them, it seems there is a great tension there. At times he seems to be forgiving and at times he wants to hold every one accountable. He seems to be kind at times but then harsh. John who was one of follower of Jesus had spent time with him, walked with him and he knew much about this Jesus, and he writes his experience with Jesus and who Jesus was and what He came to do in what we know now as the gospel of John. Right there at the beginning of this account John gives the words that best capture this tension that we are talking about today. John 1:14..*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Full of Grace and Truth...and that is where the tension is. We all know what Grace and Truth is...Truth says you have sinned, grace says you are forgiven. Grace says you are fine, truth says you are a mess. Truth says, you are completely lost, grace says you are on the right path. Truth says you are a sinner, Grace says I love you.

There is a tension right there, and all of us tend to lean on one direction.

And here is what John says, I saw Jesus navigate the intricacies of very delicate situations and as I begin my description of how Jesus lived his life, here is what I saw, that he was absolutely full of both GRACE and TRUTH.

So how do we navigate the intricacies of Homo sexuality? We shall look at 5 Truths about this issue.....

Truth #1: God designed sex to be expressed between a man and a woman in the context of marriage. Any other sexual expression is, therefore, outside of God's design.

To understand God's design for human sexuality, let's go all the way back to the beginning, to the book of Genesis, 2:18: *The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* The Lord God made a woman, brought her to the man, v 24: *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

We learn a lot about God's design right in these few verses. First, God created sex, and therefore sex is a really good thing. Two, He created humans with gender, male and female, and the suitable complement for Adam was a woman. Third, sex was not only designed for man and woman but in this committed relationship called marriage, where man and woman enter into a covenant relationship.

So, God's design for sex was to be between a man and a woman in the context of marriage, as man and woman enter into a covenant relationship. Any sexual expression outside of that design is sinful and ultimately, therefore, destructive. Homosexuality is one departure from that design, because God did not create sex or marriage to be a same sex relationship. Since homosexuality violates God's blueprint for sexuality, it shouldn't be too surprising that when the Bible speaks about homosexuality it describes it as a sinful departure from God's will for us. Leviticus 20:13 says: *"If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable..."*

What does NT say about this issue? In Romans 1:18-28 NLT

¹⁸ But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.^[a] ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

²¹ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²² Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³ And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵ They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶ That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷ And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

²⁸ Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.

It's pretty upfront and graphic. This sinful behaviour arrives because, as Paul says, people have suppressed the truth about God and looked for other things to find what God gives them – identity, security, purpose. Paul picks up on gay sex as an example of what people can do when they suppress the truth about God. So God deliberately "gives them over" to the over-powering of their desires. An expression of that is seen where women have sex with other women and men with men.

Truth #2 Homosexual activity is one of many sins. It is not THE sin.

In Romans 1:28-32: *Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

That's quite a list of sins, homosexuality being one of them...but not *one* in them. Christians often put homosexuality on a sin pedestal so high, that people who struggle with sexual identity issues or who want to work through things, can't. Sins like arrogance, materialism, gossiping, slander, are fine for people to struggle with, but often homosexuality is not even okay to be a struggle. We are all sinners, and all of us on this journey toward wholeness and healing in our lives need to be free to be honest about our struggles and create environments where that can happen.

The message most gay people are hearing is that 'you're gay, so you're going to hell.' But what sends us to hell is the sin behind the sin – this desire to be our own savior and Lord, to find identity in ourselves, security in ourselves, purpose in ourselves.

Truth #3 God's Son – Jesus – died for everyone and we are ALL sinners. This is where #TeamGrace checks in. After Paul summarizes how everybody is sinful and in need of God, he says that in Romans 2:1 *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.* This is not that everyone has the same sin, but that everyone's sin is equally as bad in God's eyes. The danger of looking at someone else's sin and saying that sin is worse than mine and should be handled in a way other than how my sin should be handled is wrong. Consequently, for Paul, self-righteous judgment of gay behavior is just as sinful as the gay behavior itself.

Truth #4 God will always give strength to His people to face any temptation and has power to transform lives. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Sexual temptation is perhaps the hardest to fight, but God's promise is real. He will strengthen us so that we can win over any temptation, and always provide a way of escape. When it comes to same-sex orientation, this does seem to be a very powerful tendency. Over time, can God transform that? Sure he can, and there are stories of that happening, as people pursue counseling and engage loving community, that God actually changes that whole tendency and preference. My own experience with sin is that he has not taken all my sinful tendencies away. What he has done is given me strength to face them, as I am honest with God, honest with other supportive friends, as I flee tempting situations, and then trust God to be faithful

Truth #5 The church is to be a community of fellow strugglers, who authentically and truthfully journey together toward greater wholeness and healing. We are all just a group of fellow sinners and strugglers. We are all just a bunch of messed up people, on this journey together toward wholeness and healing and transformation. God accepts us as we are, and then he begins to transform us. All too often though churches become places that crucify honest strugglers rather than embracing them. Mavuno Kampala must be a place where we can find real community, in life groups for example, where we can be honest and open about any struggle and find help and encouragement and healing and strength for the journey. Yes, it is a walk of obedience based in truth and holiness, but it must be one where we patiently help each other take each step and get back up when we fall. Like all of us who struggle with whatever we struggle with, we point each other toward God, toward a righteous path, and we lovingly help each other take step after step.

For those with a same sex orientation, I admire you for sticking with me, but the truth is we all have some hard truth to hear on this message. But I do want you to hear something in conclusion. If that is your struggle, you are no different than any of us who also struggle with various other temptations and desires. Christ is working on all of us. You are surrounded by bad company here, a big collection of messed up people who are honestly seeking God. God calls all of us to become something we aren't naturally, which is to be like him.

My dream for us as a church is that we would be a 'come as you are' but not 'stay as you are' church community. Let's be about both. Welcoming but not affirming.

We want everybody – regardless of who they are and what they struggle with - to feel at home here in this church community. After all, God welcomes us just as we are. His grace and love is to everyone. He wants to use his body – the church – to lavish that love on others. We are a 'come as you are' church. We also want to see people transformed to be the people God calls us to be. We don't want to be stuck in ongoing sin in our lives. We want to be followers of Jesus and allow his grace and truth to shape us to reflect his image in the world.

In conclusion...

1. God asks those with gay orientation to acknowledge that homosexuality is a result of living in a broken world (not the way God designed). It is a sin. To make a decision to curb sexual activity. It does create a tension. Will you live in it?
2. God asks people with gay family members or gay friends to love them with the love of Christ. To reach out to them or to embrace them if they are believers – even if you don't agree with their lifestyle.
3. God asks churches if they are willing to pursue lost homosexuals the same way as others. The greatest tragedy is not that someone lived a gay lifestyle, it is that that person would die apart from Christ.
4. God asks us to lead in relationship and then discuss the truth. The goal is not first and foremost to help a gay person become straight or to not have same-sex sex, but to come to Christ for salvation.
5. God asks churches to navigate the muddy waters of accepting gay believers into their church (just as you would accept greedy believers or materialistic believers).

Prayer:

- Freedom for those who are struggling or someone we know who is struggling with same sex attraction.
- For Mavuno Kampala to be a center of transformation and healing