



JACOB'S
WELL
CHURCH

Dear Jacob's Well Family,

On June 26, 2015 our nation's Supreme Court ruled same-sex marriage a nationwide right. Since that decision, many people from our congregation have been asking how we should respond to such a verdict. Before we address this verdict, it is important to recognize that we do not believe the church should take a stand on political issues; however, in obedience to God and the scriptures we must take a stand on overlapping moral issues (such as abortion) that face the church today, and so we seek to humbly address this matter from a moral (and not a political) perspective.

We believe the Church (universal and local), as well as Christians (including us), have often erred in two major ways when addressing the topic of same-sex attraction and homosexuality.

The first error has been a response of "truth without love." Many in the church today who heed the biblical warnings against homosexual activity have sadly sought to shame, bully and alienate those with same-sex attraction. This response is not glorifying to God and must be repented of to God and to the individuals that were recipients of such hatred. This attitude is not only repulsive to God, but also arrogantly forgetful that none of us are sexually "straight." All of us are broken, perverse, fallen and sinful in our sexuality as well as all other aspects of our being.

The second error is the opposite of the first, which is "love without truth." In an effort to love people of all sexual orientations, many in the Church universal have chosen to ignore God's prohibition of homosexual relationships and have embraced the tidal wave of cultural support for an action that is detestable to God and disobedient to His Word. Such love without truth shows that we have undermined scripture as our only authority and have made ourselves and our shifting world the gods of truth. Love without truth is not love at all, because if we ignore God's commands, then we are simply allowing people to wallow in their own self-destructive behaviors.

The third response, which we believe to be the Gospel response, is "Truth and Love." In Ephesians 4:15, we are commanded to speak "*the truth in love.*" In 1 Peter 1:22 we are encouraged to purify our souls by "*obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.*" 1 John 3:18 tells us to "*not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*" In 2 John 1:1 and 3 John 1:1 we see the model to "*love in truth*" and in 2 John 1:3 that we are to receive "*grace, mercy and peace... from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.*" From these passages and others, it seems that a gospel response to the topic of homosexuality, or to those struggling with same-sex attraction, or to those engaged in a homosexual lifestyle, is a response of *TRUTH AND*

LOVE. We must not neglect truth or love, for if we neglect one over the other, both are lost. And so what does it look like for us to respond in truth *and* love?

First, the **truth**. Truth is not determined by our desires, nor is it determined by the culture we live in. There is only one authority on truth, which is the LORD God who speaks His truth through His Word. We must not attempt to conform His truth to our version of truth; rather it is our duty to conform our version of truth to His.

The first truth we must acknowledge is that all men and women were created in the image of God (“*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*” Gen. 1:27 ESV) This means that every human being, regardless of sexual orientation, is precious to God and worthy of honor and dignity. Therefore, we must not reduce a person to their sexual orientation but understand that their primary identity is as an image-bearer of God.

The second truth we must acknowledge is that while temptation toward same-sex attraction is not a sin, to lust after and practice same-sex sexual relations is a sin. This is apparent in Genesis 17 when God brings judgment upon the city of Sodom because of their unashamed and unrepentant sodomy. In addition, in Leviticus 18:22 when the LORD says to Israel, “*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.*” God’s disapproval of homosexual relationships is not limited to the Old Testament, but also apparent in the New Testament, such as in Romans 1:26-27 which declares these practices unnatural and dishonorable, “*For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; (27) and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*” (See also 1 Tim. 1:8-11 & 1 Cor. 6:9-11)

These two truths (that man is made in the image of God and that the practice of homosexuality is a sin) are timelessly true regardless of what the political powers declare. While scripture calls us to submit to our governing authorities (Rom. 13), we must respectfully disobey these authorities when their laws contradict the laws of our higher and supreme authority, which is God Himself (Daniel 6). At this time, according to the Supreme Court decision, religious organizations are protected from having to perform same-sex marriages, but if this is to change, we want to make clear that Jacob’s Well Presbyterian Church seeks to submit to God and the scriptures as our ultimate authority and will never perform same-sex marriages or support homosexual relationships. Furthermore, our denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America, continues to give their unwavering affirmation that marriage is only to be between one woman and one man (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5).

The second necessary part of our Gospel response to the topic of homosexuality is **love**. Radical, counter-cultural, Christ-like love. Jesus calls us to love all people, even those that persecute us (Mat 5:44), and so we are certainly called to love those who have same-sex attraction and those who practice a homosexual lifestyle. Every person, regardless of sexual orientation, is looking for the love of a Savior and we are called to model and live out that love toward them.

What does this love look like? According to 1 Corinthians 13, Christ-like love is patient and kind, it is not arrogant or rude, it is not irritable or resentful, it also does not rejoice at wrongdoing,

but rejoices with the truth. This Gospel love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and this love never ends. In addition, in John 15:12-14 Jesus says of love, "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are my friends if you do what I command you.*"

Maybe you don't stand on street corners with shaming signs, but do you avoid people with a different sexual orientation (intentionally or unintentionally)? Or do you distance yourself from them wanting to dodge any potentially awkward situations? We the Church have much to learn about loving people of every sexual orientation and also have much to repent of in not loving as we should. The deepest need of someone with same sex attraction is not to "become straight," their greatest need is the same as ours...Jesus. We must show the love of Jesus to all people, regardless of sexual orientation, political affiliation or voting record. This means we must also love, honor and respect those in government by not slandering them but by praying for them and challenging them through the means they have appointed. (Rom 13:1-7).

Finally, we must acknowledge that there are two types of people who have same-sex attraction (as well as those with opposite-sex attraction). The first are those who are comfortable & unrepentant of their sexual sin. The second are those who have "unwanted" sexual sin and are repentant of their sinful lusts and actions and seek to put them to death.

There are members of our church who have and do struggle with "unwanted" same-sex attraction and I'm assuming there are some reading this who would identify themselves with these same struggles but have kept it a secret. I want you to know, we love you and you do not need to hide your struggles any longer. We want to walk with you in your struggles and brokenness just as we need you to walk with us in our struggles and brokenness. We promise to strive with the love of Christ to not reduce you to your struggle, knowing that your identity is as a person made in the image of God, and if you have been born again, you also bear the greater identity as a son or daughter of God and as a brother or sister in Christ. If you struggle with same-sex attraction, please let us walk this battle with you by sharing it with a pastor, elder or another mature believer in Jesus Christ so that you don't have to walk this journey alone.

There is much more that could be said on this topic of homosexuality, but let me just end by asking you to pray for Jacob's Well. Pray that we would be a place where sinners are safe, but sin is not. Pray that we would be a family humbled by the love and grace of God towards broken people such as us. And finally, pray that God would continue to guide us, correct us, strengthen us and lead us as we seek to walk in the light of the Gospel with *truth and love*.

In Christ,

The Jacobs Well Elders