

Individuals, Not Issues

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. (James 2:8, NIV)

I remember when my brother first told us he was gay. For a while, homosexuality itself was the issue. He was anxious for us to understand him and be open to his viewpoint. We wanted him to know that we didn't read the Bible that way.

But eventually, we moved beyond dealing with homosexuality as an issue and got down to personal relationships. The real question for me became, "How do I treat my brother who is gay?"

The answer soon became obvious: I love him like a brother. That's my sole responsibility toward him. It's really that simple.

Then the broader question for me, and for all of us, is, "How do we treat our 'neighbors' who are gay?" And again the answer is simple and obvious: we love them like neighbors. We love them as we love ourselves. We love them as Christ loved us.

The natural concern may be, "But aren't we obligated to let them know we don't condone their life-style?" Believe me, gays are deeply and painfully aware that many of us don't approve of them. They don't need reminders.

The real question for us is, "Have we shown them that Christ likes them and loves them, personally and unconditionally?"

When Jesus was on earth, He was accused of being a friend to those considered morally repulsive. "Religious" people wouldn't get near them, but He hung around with them, went to their parties, and in general seemed to like them and care about them. And they liked Him and gladly listened to Him.

While we tend to focus on issues and overlook individuals, Christ did the opposite. He looked past politics and concentrated on persons.

In that spirit, my point is not political or social, but personal. Our responsibility is not to try to change people. We are not responsible to try to convert homosexuals into heterosexuals. Our challenge is first and foremost to be Christ-like so that people are attracted to Him. And we can't do that as long as we are fearfully shaking our fingers in their faces.

Nothing should ever distract us from showing that genuine, face-to-face love of Christ. Nothing. He is the force that changes hearts, not laws.

Do I pray for my brother? Of course. Daily. I pray for him just as I pray for all those I love: that he would experience all the riches and fruitfulness of Jesus Christ.

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