

## Segment 3:

### Loving Each Other through Difference and Disagreement

There is a great deal of diversity of opinion and perspective on homosexuality in the church today. This has caused painful division. It creates rifts in families and friendships. It breaks down trust and unity within the Body of Christ. And it affects the public witness to the culture at large.

How can we move forward as a church with such brokenness?

The contributors in this segment of the Bridging the Gap DVD share valuable insight from years of pastoral ministry, close personal friendships, willingness to be humbled, and demonstrated love for those with whom they disagree. Their stories and experiences speak a word of hope to a divided church for moving forward with wisdom and grace to honour Christ's prayer in John 17: 20-21, *"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent Me."*

Matt 5: 43 – 48 (the Message)

*You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.*

*In a word, what I'm saying is, "Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."*

Have you heard Christians arguing about homosexuality? Have you read through some of the discussions on blogs that tackle the question of faith and homosexuality? Were you surprised by the kind of name-calling, angry, and arrogant reactions that the topic of homosexuality incurs? This topic offers an opportunity to grow in learning how to navigate relationships with those who disagree with us.

## Segment 3: *continued*

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Justin and Ron are two same-gender attracted men who come to different conclusions about Scripture's teaching on monogamous same-gender sexual relationships. They are also good friends who clearly respect and care for one another. Bruxy and Greg pastor churches that gather people who hold diverse perspectives on sexual ethics. Tony Campolo regularly speaks on the topic of homosexuality with his wife Peggy who holds a more liberal perspective than Tony does. With such a significant point of disagreement, how do these followers of Jesus seek to model His love and grace through difference?

*“The discovery of our common humanity, beneath our differences, seems for many to be dangerous. It not only means that we have to lose some of our power, privilege, and self-image, but also that we have to look at the shadow side in ourselves, the brokenness, and even the evil in our own hearts and culture; it implies moving into a certain insecurity.”* Jean Vanier

#### *Reflection Questions within the screening:*

1. *Humility, Honesty & Acceptance:*
  - a. Why is it important to nurture relationship with those we disagree with?
  - b. How can we express humility in conversations about homosexuality?
  - c. How can differentiating between acceptance and agreement help us?
2. *Friendship & Disagreement*
  - a. How can we honour a fellow Christian with whom we disagree?
  - b. How do we commonly dismiss those who think and believe differently than we do?
  - c. How can we move from being a Pharisee to being more like Christ when relating to gay people?
3. *The Transcendent Love of Christ*
  - a. How can we overcome the negative perceptions of Christians commonly held by those outside the church?
  - b. What impact does this issue have on young people in the church?
  - c. What should our focus be in the midst of conversations about homosexuality?

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*Content:*

1. What can be an outcome of loving your enemies?
2. How should we respond when someone who disagrees with us speaks against us?
3. What does Jesus equate maturity with in this passage?
4. What gets in the way of us living generously and graciously toward others?

*Intersect with DVD:*

1. Do you have any friends who differ from you in your understanding of Scripture's teaching about sexuality? If so, what have you learned from being in that friendship?
2. Disagreement about homosexuality can elicit very strong reactions. Why do you think this is the case?
3. Greg reminds us that, "Nobody needs God's grace more than I do". Do you think that this is a reality that Christians live out? What would change if they did?

*Application:*

1. Do a person's beliefs about homosexuality affect their salvation?
2. What impact does division over homosexuality have on the church?
3. What impact does the division between Christians about homosexuality have on our witness to those outside of the church?

## Segment 3: *continued*

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#### *Optional Activity 1*

Consider the following statements:

- "Jesus never said anything about homosexuality."
- "In Christ, we are a new creation. So a gay person who turns to Christ will be given a new identity and the power to submit their sexual desires to Christ's Lordship."
- "The first thing that was not good in creation (even before sin entered the picture) was that man was alone. Surely it is not God's intention for all same-gender attracted people to live alone."
- "God's grace is sufficient for us and in our weakness He is strong. Same-gender attracted people will discover this grace as they trust God with their needs."
- "Paul said, *"It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."* (I Cor. 7:9) This should apply to same-gender attracted people too. It is better for them to be in monogamous partnerships than to fall into uncommitted sexual encounters."
- "The Bible is clear. None of the Scriptural references that mention homosexual behaviour are affirming of the behaviour."

How you would engage someone who made one of these statements in conversation. How could you build bridges in such a conversation if you disagreed with the statement? How does it make you feel to encounter statements you disagree with?

#### *Optional Activity 2*

Watch the bonus interview with Brian McLaren on "Loving Each Other Through Difference and Disagreement". Discuss the following questions:

1. McLaren draws some parallels to dealing with racism in the church in the past and the contemporary issue of homosexuality. What is helpful about that comparison? Where does the comparison break down?
2. McLaren refers to Romans 14 where Paul gives instruction on disputable matters. Verse 12, 13: "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." Do you think this passage applies to the issue of homosexuality? Why or why not?

#### *Optional Activity 3*

Consider a conversation you've had with when there was disagreement.

- How did the conversation go?
- How did the conversation make you feel? Peace? Frustration? Anger?
- Did you feel you were able to be the presence of Christ in the conversation?