

## **OPENING**

The world wants to define us by our messiness. Here's what God does. He looks through the messiness, looks directly at us and says, "That's my child and I love my child." People who are different from us and have different lifestyles than we might have are still people that God loves and pursues. I want to plead with you to live in the tension of grace and truth.

## **SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>**

**John 8:2-6a** "At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. "

**John 8:6b** "But Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger."

**Jeremiah 17:13** "Oh, Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water."

**John 8:7-8** "When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped and wrote on the ground."

**John 8:9-11** "At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.' "

## **OBSERVATION**

Current acceptance of changes in American culture and mores have caused Christians to question what their response should be considering Biblical condemnation of sexual sin. There is a tension between grace and truth.

**Question:** What is the meaning of the word "tension" in this context?

Consider that several definitions of the word tension are:

- the act of stretching or the condition of being stretched;
- a force tending to produce extension;
- mental, emotional or nervous strain;
- a strained relation or barely controlled hostility between persons;

**Question:** What would Jesus say about our changing American culture?

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

## **APPLICATION**

John 1:14, 17 says that Jesus came full of grace and truth. He was the only one who could perfectly balance the two.

**Question:** What is the source of truth?

The tension we feel between grace and truth is love. It is love for God that makes us so devoted to truth and love for people that drives our grace.

Many Christians are just all love and no truth, or all truth and no love. We have to balance the tension between the two.

**Question:** Does grace change truth?

We live in the tension of our faith all of the time - the Trinity, inspiration of the Bible, the divinity and humanity of Jesus, the sovereignty of God and free will, for example.

How we should live in the tension between grace and truth?

- Be known for what you are for, not against;  
We need to leave the "Us vs Them" attitude behind.
- Realize that a theological conviction shouldn't be a catalyst to treat someone as inferior;  
Remember that Christ fulfilled the Law and gave us two new commandments.
- Embrace the difference between acceptance and approval;  
We are called to accept people no matter what, but we don't have to approve of their life decisions.
- Realize the issue is identity, not sexuality;  
Our job is to share the Gospel and let God be the one who changes the heart. Being in the LGBT community is more about identity than sexual experiences. It is about friends, a cause, a movement and acceptance.
- Understand that God never called you to change a person's sexual orientation - He called you to point people to Jesus;

**Question:** Why do we rush to judgment when sexual sins are involved and ignore/accept other sins?

**Question:** What events in your past and present can be considered "messy"? How do you feel about them?

The Church is a beautiful mosaic of broken lives that God has united together to glorify Himself.

**Question:** Who are the people in your life who are different from you and whom you need to love?

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the realizations you have brought to us today. We recognize how easily we fall into judgment instead of love for others who live a different lifestyle from ours. Help us to evaluate our response to them and fill us with your grace and love as we act in obedience to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

The Global Leadership Summit will be held here at The Crossing on August 11-12, 2016, and registration is available at [thecrossinglv.com/gls](http://thecrossinglv.com/gls)

The first of our Summer Serve opportunities is at Westcare on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Skills of all varieties are needed and welcome to join in.