

First printing: June 2004

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ISBN: 0-89221-582-8

Library of Congress Number: 2004106647

Printed in the United States of America

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MY SINCERE DEDICATION . . .

of this book is to my church,
the First Baptist Church of Springdale
and the Church at Pinnacle Hills in Rogers,
Arkansas, for their unwavering commitment to God's
Word, the Bible, and their loving support to their senior
pastor, yours truly, as I have the privilege to proclaim
it as the Only Truth for today. In partnership,
we proclaim it to northwest Arkansas,
America, and the world.

I GIVE THANKS . . .

To New Leaf Press for its willingness to publish and turn around this project in jet speed. As soon as the idea was shared and discussed, they embraced it quickly. They have done what few other publishing companies would have been willing to do . . . throw out the normal rules of timelines and do a project that is needed in our country. Thanks to all the faithful workers at New Leaf Press and for paying the price to help get this needed word out to the world.

In my new relationship with this company, it has been a joy to work with Tim Dudley, president. He has become a friend, an encourager, and a partner in sharing words of assistance to all those who want to hear. Thanks, Tim, for all you have done for me and the success of this project.

I give thanks to my writing friend, Jim Fletcher, of New Leaf Press. He has provided me with outstanding assistance in this project, adding so much to it. So Jim, you know all you have done and thanks so much for everything. Your spirit of cooperation was refreshing.

I am also thankful to Laura Welch for her work in the publicity area. She has been wonderful to work with us, especially her work with my assistants here.

Those assistants who have helped along the way are Gayla Oldham, Melissa Swain, Becky Fletcher, and Delores Breeding. They are always encouragers in my life. Additionally, my young summer assistant of 2003, Chris Johnson, provided me with some initial research that launched this burden God had given to me.

So many other people in our organization assisted in areas of television and providing materials for publicity . . . you know who you are and I say thanks.

I also thank my great wife, Jeana, for her willingness to let me work at nights on projects such as these. As well, for the willingness to stand courageously with me on a project like this, realizing it might eventually alter a few things we do along the way.

Finally, to my dear Lord Jesus Christ, I say thanks. Thanks for Your words of life given to us in the Bible . . . our authority for life. We join Him in the effort of upholding genuine family in this nation and world.

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DEEPENING DIVISIONS

The scene on my television astonished me.

During one episode of a popular primetime drama, the “president” of the United States berated a woman portraying a conservative talk show host. He had taken exception to her views on homosexuality. My eyes widened as his anger rose.

“I like your show. I like how you call homosexuality an abomination,” he said sarcastically.

“I don’t say homosexuality is an abomination, Mr. President,” she replied. “The Bible does.”

“Yes, it does!” he shouted. “Leviticus 18:22.” He was just warming up. “I wanted to ask you a couple of questions while I had you here. I’m interested in selling my youngest daughter into slavery as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. She’s a Georgetown

sophomore, speaks fluent Italian, always cleared the table when it was her turn. What would a good price for her be?”

Their eyes locked and he continued: “While thinking about that, can I ask another? My chief of staff, Leo McGarry, insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly says he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself or is it okay to call the police?” The radio host shifted uncomfortably. “Here’s one that’s really important, ’cause we’ve got a lot of sports fans in this town. Touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean, Leviticus 11:7. If they promise to wear gloves, can the Washington Redskins still play football? Can Notre Dame? Can West Point?”

The scene ended with the host humiliated and the president proudly defiant. He had taken a stand for an aggressively promoted but biblically condemned lifestyle. His barrage of questions had left his speechless opponent looking foolish. More than that, it cleverly advanced an agenda that increasingly has me worried.

Far beyond a single scene on one television program, a much more pervasive problem covers our land like a dark cloud. It seems that everything you see these days, everything you read, and everything you hear, is about the gay lifestyle.

This issue is dividing homes, churches, and an entire nation. Families are devastated. Church denominations are being ripped apart. Protestors rage at each other across picket lines. These divisions cause untold grief.

I hope you are aware that what once was whispered in the shadows now roars like a lion, as brazen and threatening as anything our culture has ever seen. I do not speak of a skirmish or a conflict or a disagreement here; I speak of a war. The proponents of the gay lifestyle have declared war against our culture, and they have an agenda. Charles Colson has said regarding the fight over same-sex marriage, “The Mother of all battles in the culture. Today people want personal autonomy and sexual freedom.”¹ We need to be aware of it and to be prepared to make a decision regarding it.

The television program dialogue quoted above illustrates the goal of this sophisticated agenda: the effort to gain not just tolerance, but acceptance, and even celebration, of the gay lifestyle.

I agonize over the culture war raging across our land. Shriill and counter-productive voices on both sides of the divide demand to be heard. And in the midst of all the shouting, liberal causes have made great strides.

Gay marriages and same-sex ceremonies seem to have bloomed suddenly across the length and breadth of the country — but the forces preparing the ground have been at work for a very long time.

John Shelby Spong, the infamous and happily radical Episcopal bishop, has long advocated gay rights. In his autobiography, *Here I Stand*, Spong alludes to a scholar who mentored him as a young seminary student at North Carolina. This scholar had

postulated that the apostle Paul had been a repressed gay man; hence, the reformed Pharisee's railings against homosexuality!

Spong has no way of knowing, of course, that Paul was homosexual or not. Yet this fact doesn't deter him in the least from making the gross assertion. When you read his works, it quickly becomes clear that he reached his conclusions, not through careful biblical study, *but via his feelings and political leanings*. No doubt he feels genuine compassion for the ostracized of our society. At least on that point, I'm there with him.

But we part company when he leaps to a radical re-thinking of traditional family and marriage. He demonstrates that the goals of a few threaten the freedom of many in America today.

Unprecedented events occurring in our nation and shameful episodes taking place in the courts and churches of our land have caused me to speak out about the Gay Agenda. I speak out of brokenness, bearing in mind the many families who have lost precious ones to the gay lifestyle. Only a person who has no love in his heart would fail to be moved by the horrific stories of suffering and dying AIDS patients. Social isolation and loneliness is another common aspect of this lifestyle — and the unhappiness and misery of its deceived adherents make me sick at heart.

*The goals of a few threaten
the freedom of many in
America today.*

It saddens me to see fathers and sons separated because of homosexuality. A young man “comes out” and the resulting years of silence destroy what once was a vital relationship. I grieve when a mother simply stops mentioning what’s happening in the life of her lesbian daughter.

The divisions are deepening in our families.

Those pushing the Gay Agenda do not have the right to impose their chosen lifestyle on the rest of society. If left unopposed, their efforts to mainstream the lifestyle will annihilate the family as we know it.

I feel a great burden to issue a warning to proponents of traditional marriage: the Gay Agenda is dividing families. It is dividing an entire nation. And it is beginning to win some major battles.

The courts are deluged with same-sex cases. Politicians stagger all over the map, uncertain where to stand. Students, moved by compassion and tolerance, are asking their parents just why the gay lifestyle is incompatible with the concept of healthy, traditional families.

In the Christian community, the dividing lines feel especially painful. The Gay Agenda is now making major advances into the Church. According to *USA Today*, five of the major denominations in America are openly ordaining gay clergy and blessing same-sex unions.

Recent episodes at the annual meeting of the Episcopal Church have especially ignited this issue. When the Rev. V.

Gene Robinson, an openly gay clergyman, was elected as bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire, both rejoicing and lamentation broke out in that denomination as never before.

In March 2004, a United Methodist Church court charged an openly gay minister with violating the denomination's *Book of Discipline*, which states clearly that homosexuality is at odds with the Bible. The jury acquitted her, claiming a lack of compelling evidence!

The divisions are deepening among Christians.

Imagine the surprise (okay, outrage!) of a mom and dad in North Carolina who recently saw an egregious example of what passes for the education of their first-grade daughter. Michael and Tonya Hartsell "couldn't believe it" when they read about Prince Bertie, a character in the book *King & King*, who from a group of eligible marriage partners chooses . . . Prince Lee! The Hartsells complained, but received only a lukewarm response from school officials, who said that the book had been on library shelves for more than a year. "What might be inappropriate for one family, in another family is a totally acceptable thing," said the school's principal, Elizabeth Miars.

The divisions are deepening in our schools.

Parents, be warned: in our culture, moral relativism is king. "Truth" is whatever one wishes it to be. As a result, your children have become vulnerable to world views that can do them great harm.

The strategy everywhere in our culture is to get you to see the gay lifestyle or gay couples as no different from anyone else. The agenda is also trying to desensitize you to their verbiage and their lifestyle. In other words, *If you get used to us, you will eventually ignore us or accept us.* The bombardment is working; a great deal of the desired desensitization already has occurred. Meanwhile, the gay lobby continues to sing its theme song of inclusiveness.

The Gay Agenda is finding a place throughout our schools, textbooks, and media, straight into the hearts of children and young people. Beware, administrators, teachers, students, and parents! The gay lifestyle is being actively promoted in books, by speakers, in seminar themes . . . in fact, it's everywhere. And struggling to figure it all out is that oldest of human institutions, the family.

Make no mistake, two irreconcilable agendas are at war.

Where do you stand in this great divide?

A MARRIAGE OF TRUTH AND LOVE

The German port city of Lubeck, like so many European towns, boasts an exquisite beauty. The waters of the Baltic Sea lap its shores, and in springtime flowers paint tree-lined boulevards. Young and old enjoy the cultural richness.

If you could transport yourself back to the 1930s, however, you wouldn't see such an idyllic Lubeck. Hitler's national socialism had filled the city with ugliness, like vast fields of diseased crops blighting the town. Nazi ideology affected all aspects of life. Into this gloom walked Friedrich-Paul von Groszheim, a young gay man.

In 1937, police arrested von Groszheim, along with 230 other men. A year later, he was arrested again. This time, torture preceded an ultimatum: life in a concentration camp, or castration.

Staring at “life” in a camp, von Groszheim chose castration. He survived the war and told his story only in 1992. He described how an unknown number of homosexuals were arrested in Nazi Germany, where laws enacted by Hitler’s courts condemned this minority population to prison. Once released, they found post-war conditions not much better:

The 1935 version of Paragraph 175 [from an earlier part of the 1871 Criminal Code, now targeting homosexuals] remained in effect in the Federal Republic [West Germany] until 1969, so that well after liberation, homosexuals continued to fear arrest and incarceration.¹

In fact, homosexuals often have been singled out for persecution. Such harassment has come from many sources: the Nazis, secular groups, even from within the Church. The 1998 beating death of Matthew Shepard, a gay university student in Wyoming, illustrates that such deadly hatred can rise up in our country just as easily as it did in 1930s Germany. As Matthew’s mother, Judy, outlined in a *USA Today* column, violence against gays has not abated since her son’s death:

- Sakia Gunn, a teenage lesbian, was stabbed to death in New Jersey in 2003.
- F.C. Martinez, another teenager (“transgender”), was murdered in 2001.

- In Hayward, California, prosecutors are preparing a case against three young men who beat and strangled another “transgender” teen, going so far as to describe the crime as an execution. Eddie Araujo, 17, was murdered in 2002 after having sex with two of the accused killers. They became enraged over the apparent deception used by Araujo, and confronted the youth one night. After being choked, hit with a skillet, punched in the face, tied up, and strangled, Araujo was buried in a shallow grave near Lake Tahoe.²

Godless hatred of homosexuals does not always lead to murder, of course. In Kansas, well-known pastor Fred Phelps, a militant opponent of gays, Jews, blacks, and other minorities, is a local celebrity. He travels the country, staging protests of gays and lesbians. Phelps has gone so far as to erect an offensive “monument” to Matthew Shepard, in a local Wyoming park. And Phelps has his allies. Recently I opened my paper to see an article about same-sex controversies. The story featured a photograph showing hate-filled protestors holding a sign that read, “Homosexuals Are Possessed by Demons.”

This kind of loveless tactic does nothing positive. It only reinforces stereotypes of Christians as hateful bigots.

By now, I suppose you may be asking yourself, *Why mention these sorry episodes at the beginning of a book on the Gay Agenda?* I

recount them because in our staunch opposition to sin, we must take care never to cross the line into hatred of the sinner — and as sinners ourselves, that’s often easier said than done.

And yet it must be said.

So, before we go any further, let’s remind ourselves of one clear and unalterable fact: the Bible gives absolutely *no* sanction to homo-

*In our staunch opposition to sin,
we must take care never to cross
the line into hatred of the sinner.*

sexuality. None. Never does God approve of it. Never does He endorse it. Never does He smile at it.

Nevertheless, God loves the Friedrich-Pauls and Matthew Shepards of this world. He loves all of us, even though all of us are broken and sinful.

INTO HOT WATER

I firmly believe it is possible to stand on God’s truth at the same time that we love broken and sinful people. I believe there is a way to practice that which God wants us to practice. I believe, in other words, that there is a way we can love the sinner even as we oppose the sin.

Would you believe that such a conviction has gotten me into hot water with a lot of angry folks? These days, I find myself in the odd position of being attacked by both the right and the left.

On the left, secularists and liberals take exception to my clear opposition to the gay lifestyle. They tend to ignore the assistance

that my church and I provide for gay individuals and their families.

On the right, some interpret any ministry to those involved in the gay lifestyle as “liberal” and “compromising.” But I never apologize for our stance that practicing homosexuals can attend our church; in fact, I pray that they will, because in time I believe the Holy Spirit of God will convict them of their sin, they will see the need to change, and God’s grace *will* transform them.

I believe the gay issue really comes down to the nature of truth and love. I don’t see how we can win without equally embracing both. If we serve a Savior “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), then how can we opt for one over the other? God does not call us to speak the truth without love, but to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

I maintain that the two must go hand in hand. But before that can happen, we first have to understand what we’re talking about.

WHAT IS LOVE?

If you could count the number of grains of sand on a beach, you could count the number of definitions for love.

The entertainment industry presents “love” as adultery, lust, and sexual perversion. A sports enthusiast “loves” a particular athletic event or league. We “love” certain foods. And the definitions continue.

In a 2001 issue of *Open Hands: Shaping an Inclusive Church*, the Rev. Chip Aldridge invited young people to “claim and name”³ their sexual preference. Among the questions he asked: “How can you really know if you’re gay?” and “Can you still be a Christian if you are queer?”

Aldridge, director of admissions at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C., is an ordained United Methodist minister. The theme of the *Open Hands* article is God’s love. Aldridge claimed, “God loves us queer folk, too!”

So much for Aldridge’s view of what love is; the Bible has a very different take on it. An often-overlooked passage from God’s Word tells us exactly what true love is:

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands (2 John 6).

Jesus said the very same thing: “If you love me, you will obey what I command. . . . Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. . . . If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (John 14:15–24).

Both of these New Testament descriptions of “true love” line up with the picture given in the Old Testament: “And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the

LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?" (Deut. 10:12-13).

Make sure you don't miss the amazing claim God makes in that last passage. Why does God tell us what to do? Why does He give us His instructions? He gives us His "commands and decrees" *for our own good*. That's what true love does; it wants only the best for the beloved.

Do we need to recall what happens to people when they don't follow God's commands? Did the Israelites know what real love was when they started worshiping the golden calf in the wilderness? Did young German men know what real love was when they fell under the spell of Hitler and began slaughtering defenseless men, women, and children? Do Hollywood actors know what real love is when they live or promote a gay lifestyle?

Because God loves us, He delights to walk into the lives of young girls who have determined that they are of a lesbian lifestyle. He loves to walk into the life of a young boy who determines that he is of a gay lifestyle. He loves to walk in when sociologists say that homosexuality is normal and that the world and the culture has accepted it. God loves to walk in and turn things around. He loves to do what looks humanly impossible. He loves to do what is best for us — and that includes directing us away from a homosexual lifestyle.

Do you know the main reason why the gay community is growing? It's growing because children and students want to be accepted

and *loved*. All of us hunger for love. We want to feel valued. We want to feel cherished. And I think God's church has a lot of room for improvement in this area. We have a lot to learn about how to love those we may find unlovable.

God loves to walk in and turn things around. He loves to do what looks humanly impossible.

What is love? I believe that to answer the question accurately, we must tie it to another famous query, from Pilate to Jesus: "What is truth?"

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Former Senator Bob Dole is known for his dry humor. When he's asked to comment on an issue, often he'll answer with a laconic, "Whatever." Now, I don't think Dole is *that* uninterested; he's just trying to get a laugh. But such a *whatever* attitude well describes the post-modern mindset of this country. And it's dangerous.

Postmodernism has been described as a room without walls, floor, and ceiling. It has no boundaries, no limitations — anything goes. Such a "whatever" mindset says, "You have your truth, I have mine. You believe what you want to believe, I'll believe what I want to believe." In other words, there is no absolute truth. And that means that truth is up for grabs.

The Rev. Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, a liberal Episcopalian pastor, says she is certain that the Bible is not the source of absolute truth. Her 1996 sermon, “Can You Believe It?” is all about the human inability to find truth. As odd as it may sound, she says she is certain that truth is not certain.

Her sermon outlines several reasons why she believes we cannot rely on God’s Word as an infallible record of real history and real truth. Following this thinking to its logical conclusion, she insists:

Whether you’re attempting to discern the spiritual discipline appropriate for you or to discern your moral judgment of a sexual act, you’re not going to be able to “follow the Bible” to the letter. Even people who think they do, they don’t. It’s not going to provide you with answers without your having to use your head. And, since most of us respect our own judgment and want to use it as best we can, this is just as well. To a great degree, we are on our own in making ethical decisions, in evaluating our histories, in comprehending the meaning of them. We will not find easy-to-follow recipes for our behavior in Scripture. Our primary tool is our own intelligence.⁴

Is this really how we are to determine the right path to follow? A creed based on feelings or on limited human intellect?

God forbid. I know that one day I might “feel like” following a radically different course than I “feel like” another day.

No biblical Christian can accept a definition of truth that relies on changing feelings or on the human ability to decide what is right and wrong. The Bible tells us that God “does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17) and that the Lord remains forever the same; in fact, that is why we can trust that He will never change his mind about saving us (Heb. 1:11; Mal. 3:6). Because the words God speaks reflect His character, they also do not change and will last forever (Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:25).

This explains why Jesus could say, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” And that explains why He could add, most appropriately for these difficult days, “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17–19).

As with every other aspect of life, if we follow scriptural guidelines, we will follow the path of truth. We’ll know how to treat others. We’ll know what ethics are. We’ll know what true love is (and not what Britney Spears or Madonna tell us it is).

While many choose the gay lifestyle today because it “feels right,” God has outlined very clearly how we are to view this lifestyle:

Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up, given a fresh start by Jesus, our Master, our Messiah, and by our God present in us, the Spirit (1 Cor. 6; MSG).

Anyone who does not believe that the Bible is God's Word is like the person who tries to live in a room with no walls, floor, or ceiling. Those who embrace the gay lifestyle feel the dread and fear that comes from living without a moral anchor. Floating about in space is not the most secure place to be. For some, the gay lifestyle really does seem like free-fall, and it terrifies them. Contrary to Ms.

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without a moral anchor.*

Cawthorne Crafton, I'm quite certain that I am not speaking truth if I leave a gay person in such a terrifying position.

Of course, my critics on the left repeatedly tell me that I am divisive because of my stance on homosexuality; they urge me to "be more loving." But I am completely unwilling to abandon the truth. I am not willing to separate a sinner from his God, who can save. This is in stark contrast to the Rev. Cawthorne Crafton:

What we do not have is certainty. Is there a way I can know beyond doubt that my actions are in accordance with the will of God? Will I find respite from the uncertainties of modern life in the pages of this holy book? Can I fully understand what the truth is and know beyond doubt that I am not in error? No. All I can do is try, knowing before I begin that my effort will be less than perfect. That I won't get it all just right. And being gentle enough on myself, and humble enough before others, to accept my limitations. I can never be absolutely sure, but I still must try to understand, because one of the things that makes me a human being is trying to understand.⁵

How can we then be sure of anything? How can we know what truth is?

Syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer, writing in *Time*, indicated that he understands where post-modern thought

— elastic truth — can take us. In a piece about same-sex unions, he says:

In other words, if marriage is redefined to include two men in love, on what possible principled grounds can it be denied to three men in love?⁶

He poses a valid question. We can take it another step. What could eventually prevent a person from marrying, say, an animal? Or an inanimate object?

This is the logical progression for a society that no longer understands what truth is. A generation ago, this was not only unthinkable, it was “un-thinked” (if I can invent such a word!).

Don’t misunderstand; I’m not advocating a return to a “Golden Age,” whatever that might have been. But I do know that at one time, society knew what truth was. Some might not have liked it, but they knew what it was. Now, however, we live under an entirely different set of circumstances.

Our job as Christians is to point the way back to truth. And to do it with love.

JOINING TRUTH AND LOVE

While the Gay Agenda strives to divide the family, to alter and destroy it, at the heart of our ministry must flourish both love and truth. Therefore, I will not stand at the door of our church and bar a gay man from entering. I also will not let him grow comfortable with a watered-down message from God’s Word.

I once heard it put very well: “I am not showing love to a homosexual if I stand by while he practices his chosen lifestyle. In fact, the person who affirms and enables a person in the gay lifestyle in reality hates him. Why? Because while it is easier to let him continue in his sin, such a road leads only to destruction. It is much better to confront in love.”

The son who returns home on a holiday and reveals to his father that he has a gay lover drives a wedge between himself and his parents. The clergyman who sermonizes that Paul affirmed homosexuality (the opposite of what he really taught) takes that church in his hands and rips it apart. The gay lobbyists in Washington who plead for same-sex marriages tear in pieces the fabric of our country.

If we have a genuine desire to heal these divisions, then we should happily minister to gays and their allies in both truth and love.

That’s why our church has a ministry called HOPE (“Heal Our Pain, El Shaddai”). It was created by a couple in our church to provide hope for those who have a family member in the homosexual or lesbian lifestyle — a devastating thing for the entire family.

This support group meets weekly to allow its members to encourage one another and pray for one another as they stagger their way through this difficult challenge. It meets in a private and non-threatening setting.

Our church also has provided venues of ministry for families struggling with homosexuality. We have attempted to assist those in the gay lifestyle as well as those who are affected by it.

Do you know why we're doing this? We are neither condoning the gay lifestyle, nor are we shunning those involved. We strive to walk in obedience to God's truth *and* act in His love.

We have helped, are helping, and will continue to help people involved in the gay and lesbian lifestyle, as well as their families. We will

With one hand we will hold up God's truth and with the other hand we will hold up God's love for all people.

love them. With one hand we will hold up God's truth and with the other hand we will hold up God's love for all people. Our ministry is dedicated to closing up wounds, dismantling walls of separation, and leading with love and truth.

God loves all people; this I do know. He offers His unconditional love to each one of us, regardless of our sinful choices, even the sin of homosexuality. Still, although God unconditionally loves us, *that does not give us the right to disobey His commands and live however we please.*

With one hand, therefore, we grasp the truth of God, while with the other we take hold of the love of God. When those two are synthesized, the result ought to reveal the heart of every Christian and every Church in America.

THE HEART OF CHRIST

I think the church in America is faced with the continual question, “WWJD?” — What Would Jesus Do? All of us must answer this critical question.

God’s Word, the Bible, makes plain what Jesus would do. Jesus would hold in one hand His truth, and in the other hand, His love. This is the heart of Jesus Christ. And it should be our heart, as well.

Bob Stith, a Texas pastor, learned how to minister to gays as he saw up close the misery unique to those trapped in a homosexual lifestyle.

I’ve discovered that in ministry to homosexuals, *being* is often more important than *doing*. I share biblical truths, but most say what helps the most is having someone who simply loves them and will be there for them when they struggle and when they fail.⁷

As we decide how to deal with this great cultural divide at the beginning of the 21st century, it is vital that we maintain a biblical perspective. Dare to speak the truth! Dare to love! They’re meant to go together.