

## **HOW TO ENGAGE LGBT PEOPLE – 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-7**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Homosexuality, sexual identity, and sexual orientation continue to be a major issue in America's culture wars.
2. Several polls and studies over the past few years estimate that around 4.5% of adults in America identify themselves as LGBT people.
3. Most of us probably know someone at work, school, or possibly even a family member who identifies themselves as an LGBT person.
4. There may even be brethren here among us who are struggling with this issue in some way.
5. How does the gospel address this issue and how can we as Jesus' disciples engage with LGBT people to help them come to Christ?

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **I. SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE LGBT PERSON**

- A. When we get involved in a discussion with an LGBT person there is always the risk that we will misunderstand each other, talking past one another.
  - i. Our terminology and assumptions can create roadblocks toward real and honest communication.
  - ii. Stereotypes and biases can get in the way both for the Christian and the LGBT person.
- B. But if we love all people the way Jesus does, then we must be willing to reach out to them in compassion, grace, truth, and love (**Rom. 5:8; Matt. 9:10-13**).
- C. As many have observed, this issue really is about a struggle for identity and each person may be in a different place in their struggle.
- D. So, when we get into conversations with our friends and neighbors who might identify themselves as LGBT, we need to listen carefully to them to figure out where they are really coming from.
- E. Remember, seek first to understand and then to be understood.
  - i. That means we must be willing to engage in a give and take, seeking common ground and understanding (**Acts 17:16-17**).
  - ii. Be quick to listen (**Jas. 1:19**).
  - iii. Give an honest hearing before answering (**Prov. 18:2; 19:27**).
- F. Ask good questions to figure out what it is that draws them to their feelings and behaviors about sexuality.
- G. Taking the time to truly understand where the LGBT person is coming from will hopefully lead to more fruitful and effective discussions (**Prov. 18:13, 15; Eccl. 3:7**).

#### **II. ENGAGING THE LGBT PERSON**

- A. When we start listening and learning, we are well on the way to having good engagement with people, no matter who they are or what their issue is.

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- B.** As we seek to engage the LGBT person, we should emphasize what we have in common – Gods love us all and all need Jesus (**Rom. 3:23; 5:8; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4**).
  - i.** Try to stop the “us versus them” mentality by explaining that while we may have different struggles, we all struggle with desire, temptation, and sin.
  - ii.** Help them to see that you do not think you are better than them, but you are the same in your need for God’s grace.
- C.** Help them to navigate their feelings and desires and see that they have a choice and are responsible for making it (**Rom. 7:21-25; 1 Cor. 9:27; Jas. 1:14-15**).
  - i.** One of the things that we need to combat is the devil’s lie that one’s sexual desires define their identity.
  - ii.** Help them to see the difference between experiencing same-sex attraction, orientation, and identity.
  - iii.** Having attraction or even orientation doesn’t mean you are “gay.”
  - iv.** It’s our choices that define us, not our feelings and desires.
- D.** Help them to see God’s will for human sexuality is not LGBT relationships (**Gen. 1:26-28; 2:24; Rom. 1:24-28**).
  - i.** This will not be easy for some to hear or accept, but we must speak the truth.
  - ii.** Even as we reach out with grace, we cannot celebrate their sin or endorse their lifestyle.
  - iii.** Assure them that you say it in love by how you say it and about how you relate to them (**Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:5-6**).
- E.** Help them to see that humanity can only find their true identity in Christ (**2 Cor. 5:11-6:1; 1 Cor. 6:9-11**).
  - i.** God made us in His image to be a part of His family.
  - ii.** Sin mars that image, but in Christ it is restored (**Rom. 8:28-30**).
  - iii.** In Him, God can transform us and bring us back into a relationship with Him.
- F.** Help them to see that you will continue to love them, be there for them and help them on their journey in faithfulness to Christ (**Gal. 6:1-2; Heb. 3:13-14; 10:24-25**).
  - i.** Some people may continue to struggle with same-sex attractions and orientations.
  - ii.** The loss of intimacy must be filled by godly friendships with brethren.
  - iii.** Some may have to continue to serve the Lord as a single person and we must be there to support them (**Matt. 19:10-12**).
- G.** Above all, continue to work on your relationship with them and be patient with them and with yourself (**2 Tim. 2:24-26**).

## **CONCLUSION**

- 1.** God’s desire for all people is that they be saved (**Acts 17:27; 1 Tim. 2:4**).
- 2.** That includes our friends and neighbors who are LGBT people.
- 3.** May God help us to be like Jesus and reach out and share the gospel with them.