Overview

Timothy Keller once said that, “Truth’ without grace is not really truth, and ‘grace’ without truth is not really grace.” If a pastor only preached messages on God’s truth and how to live moral and holy lives then he would be missing the point of the cross. The same is true if a pastor only preached on grace and never mentioned God’s truth or to grow to be more Christ-like in your thoughts, feelings, and actions. With any subject there needs to be balance. Paul understood this when he wrote in Romans 6:1, “shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?” He understood that no matter the sin it needed to be approached with both truth and grace.

This balance between grace and truth becomes immensely apparent when dealing with sexual sin. Throughout history the church’s historical response to sin (specifically sexual sin) has been “just stop it.” Although this might be true in its intent it lacks understanding and grace. The boldness of Christians to speak out against a sin is often equivalent to their proximity to it. The further you are removed from a particular sin the more likely you are to speak out against it.

This is particularly true when dealing with the issue of homosexuality. Those who are the loudest voices against homosexuality are those who are not tempted by same sex attraction or don’t have any friends or family involved in homosexual relationships. Collectively we tend to lean strongly on God’s truth and justice when the sin doesn’t affect us or those around us. The reverse is also true. If the temptation is personal or we have close association with someone involved in homosexual relationships we tend to lean strongly on God’s grace.

Where is the balance? Is it possible to stand firmly on both truth and grace against sexual sin? The answer is yes. The approach to any person caught in sin needs to be love. This doesn’t mean you pander to them by saying their behavior is okay. Nor does it mean you condemn them on God’s behalf. Unfortunately in our society, standing up against the issue of homosexuality means you are a bigot. It has become politically incorrect to firmly stand up for what you believe. Through the eyes of love it is possible to adamantly be against homosexuality and yet full of grace to the person involved.

Jesus spent most of His ministry hanging around sinners and the outcast of society. This doesn’t mean He condoned their behavior, but He went where the truth and grace needed to be heard. Some of His harshest words throughout the gospels were directed toward the religious leaders. Jesus didn’t soften His message to whoever was listening. At one point in His ministry numerous people stopped following because they found His teaching too hard. Jesus is the balance between truth and grace. The more we learn to approach people like Him the more balance we will have.

Bible Study: Genesis 2:24-25, Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13, Romans 1:26-27

1. Read Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, and I Timothy 1:9-11. Based on what you just read what is the Biblical view point of sexually immoral and homosexual behavior? (passages on page 2)

2. Discuss ways that First MB can embrace both truth and grace when dealing with the homosexual community.

3. Sexual sin in general is celebrated by society. In particular, popular opinion is on the rise when it comes to homosexual relationships. In what ways have you seen the topic of homosexuality become popular in entertainment, education, and politics?
4. “If you don’t support homosexuality you must hate homosexuals. If you don’t hate homosexuality then you must support it.” How are both of these statements wrong? How can the church protect itself from such polarizing opinions?

5. Read Romans 6:23. All sin leads to death. Not just certain sins. Do you believe that sexual sin and homosexuality are greater sins? Why or why not? When dealing with any sin why does the focus need to be on the gospel and not the severity or perceived non-severity of the sin itself?

6. John 8:3-11 offers insight into truth and grace. A lady caught in adultery is brought to Jesus. The story ends by Him telling her that He doesn’t condemn her and then He says go and sin no more. This is grace before truth. He didn’t say go and sin no more and then I won’t condemn you. How can you let people know that homosexual behavior is wrong, but they are still loved?

7. Timothy Keller wrote: “The more you see your own flaws and sins the more precious, electrifying, and amazing God's grace appears to you.” In what ways does recognizing your own sin help show more grace to all of God’s people?

**BIBLE REFERENCES**

*Leviticus 18:22* “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.”

*Leviticus 20:13* “If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.”

*Romans 1:26-27* “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”

*1 Cor. 6:9-11* “Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

*1 Timothy 1:9-11* “We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10 for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine 11 that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.”