Pastor Stef’s Book Review – May 2015

Why is it wrong for two people of the same gender to get married if they love each other? Our son came home from college and told us that he is dating a guy, what should we do? My neighbours are lesbians and they have invited us to their wedding in a couple of months, should we go? It is not uncommon for me to be asked these questions by Christians attending Bethany.

One of the biggest social issues in Canada today is homosexuality. It is on the news, in our politics, in the movies, in the public school and celebrated with parades. So how are Christians to respond? Two unhealthy extreme positions, which thankfully are rejected by most Christians, is the “God Hates Fags” banner waving Westboro Baptist Church and the “we are open to a variety of sexual expressions” More Light Presbyterians churches.

Homosexuality has split a number of mainline denominations like the United, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist churches and the questions around it are cropping up in many evangelical denominations. As Christians, we cannot afford to be silent, uncomfortable, or full of simplistic and unstudied answers on this topic. A good place to start your education is Stan Grenz’s book, Welcoming but not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality (1998). The title states Grenz’s position which, I think, is the correct one.

Grenz acknowledges that, while the church has historically stood by not affirming homosexuality it has not always done a good job on the welcoming the homosexual. Grenz acknowledges our broken world and the affect this has had on developing people with a homosexual orientation but, just as an orientation to heterosexual promiscuity doesn’t justify practicing promiscuity, so homosexual orientation doesn’t condone homosexual behaviour. Though no one needs sex, we must have extra compassion and support for those who may have to face the extreme difficulty in never being able to act on their desires if they want to maintain God’s standards for sex.

By looking at the Biblical evidence, Grenz concludes that God design for sex is that it is exclusively for heterosexual marriage. (Even the polygamy practiced in the OT only describes what people did and was never approved by God). Though I agree with Grenz’s conclusion, I did not find all of his arguments to support it convincing. One example is that he reduces sex to male/female genital intercourse and, from this argues that, because homosexuals do not (cannot) do this, what they do is morally wrong. But, if this is the case, then heterosexual, married non-intercourse sex that results in orgasm is also immoral. This is the Catholic position, but it has never been a Protestant/Evangelical one.

Stan Grenz’s book is good, but not the best on the subject. In fact, the following online article by John Stott is both stronger and more succinct: http://www.bibleteacher.org/hmarriage.html