

# Grace Notes

## A Theology of Sexuality

3.09.10



***So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God  
He created him; male and female He created them.  
Genesis 1:27 (Amplified)***

From *USA Today*, Feb. 22, 2010:

Is anybody really surprised that Elton John might think Jesus was gay? The openly gay British musician's comment to *Parade* magazine along with a wide-ranging interview over the weekend is stirring up the religion blogosphere, of course.

Here's John's quote on the subject: *"I think Jesus was a compassionate, super-intelligent gay man who understood human problems. On the cross, he forgave the people who crucified him. Jesus wanted us to be loving and forgiving."*

Frankly, John is a musician I've always admired, regardless of his lifestyle. Michelle and I went to see him when he performed the very first concert in the, then new, *United Spirit Arena* here in Lubbock over 10 years ago. His skills on the piano are extraordinary.

Elton John's comment doesn't surprise me. It's certainly nothing new. Satan's been attacking the character/attributes of God ever since the Garden of Eden. Had John said something to the same effect about Islam or its prophet, Muhammad, we would probably already be watching the beginnings of a Holy War. But Satan's not at all concerned with blemishing the name or reputation of just any man - only Jesus.

Jesus Christ does not need me to defend Him. All I desire to do is to, hopefully, help give you a theological framework regarding homosexuality. Because, if it hasn't already, Elton John's recent comment will most certainly provide great opportunity for dialogue in the workplace and at home with your family.

Elton John, regardless of how little He knows about Jesus Christ, has never professed to have saving faith in Jesus Christ. So, it's easy to dismiss John's comments

However, in 2008, Christian singer/songwriter, Ray Boltz, announced he was gay. And, according to him, God made him that way. Boltz, (writer of popular Christian songs like *"Thank You"* and *"The Anchor Holds"*) announced to the world his decades-long struggle with his sexuality.



Mark Moring, of *Christianity Today*, writes of Boltz' "coming out" in this Sept. 12, 2008 article:

Ray Boltz, who sold about 4.5 million records before retiring from Christian music a few years ago, came out of the closet Friday to announce that he's gay.

*"I'd denied it ever since I was a kid," Boltz, 55, told the magazine. "I became a Christian, I thought that was the way to deal with this and I prayed hard and tried for 30-some years and then at the end, I was just going, 'I'm still gay. I know I am.' And I just got to the place where I couldn't take it anymore..."*

Boltz also told *The Blade* that he doesn't want to get into debates about Scripture... For him, the decision to come out is much more personal.

*"This is what it really comes down to," he says. "If this is the way God made me, then this is the way I'm going to live. It's not like God made me this way and he'll send me to hell if I am who he created me to be ... I really feel closer to God because I no longer hate myself."*

I suspect there's a reason Boltz doesn't want to get into debates about Scripture. He would be forced to reconcile Scripture with his conviction that God made him gay.

It wasn't too long ago (Oct., 2005) when *Texas Tech* superstar athlete, Sheryl Swoopes, another professed Christian, during her "coming out", told ESPN, *"I know there are going to be some negative things said, too. But it doesn't change who I am."*

What do you do when self-proclaimed "born again", high-profile Christians not only go public with their homosexuality but then begin to state that that's the way God made them? Do we ignore it? Hope it will go away? Write hate mail? Make fun of them?

We love them.

Before I continue, let me make something perfectly clear. God hates heterosexual sin every bit as much as He hates homosexual sin. Our modern Christian culture tends to ease up on the former while blasting the latter. David Kinnaman, in his outstanding book, *"UnChristian,"* quotes Shayne Wheeler, who wrote, *"The Bible is clear: homosexual practice is inconsistent with Christian discipleship. [It's sin.] But there is not a special judgment for homosexuals, and there is not a special righteousness for heterosexuals."* Kinnaman comments, *"Rather than articulating a biblical perspective and living out a biblical response to homosexuals, [our] research demonstrates how inconsistent and uncompassionate we have been."*

Our mandate was given to us by Jesus 20 centuries ago: *"Love the Lord will all your heart, soul, and mind..."*, and *"love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments."* Translation: ask the Holy Spirit to help you engage in intelligent, compassionate dialogue where this divisive topic is concerned.

### **A Brief Theological Framework:**

- First of all, homosexuality is nothing new (think: Sodom & Gomorrah). And, it's not the unpardonable sin. It is sin, though. The Bible's clear on that.

- In addition to the Genesis 18-19 passage dealing with Sodom & Gomorrah, the Scriptures – both Old & New Testaments – clearly categorize homosexuality as sin: *Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:10; Romans 1:18, 24-25, 26-28, 32.*
- Beyond specifically addressing homosexuality, Scripture is replete with God's abiding principle and plan for romantic relationships. From Adam & Eve to Abraham & Sarah to Ruth & Boaz to Joseph & Mary, God's natural design for dating and marriage has, from the beginning, been male and female.
- I've listened to homosexual advocates state, "*Jesus never addressed homosexuality. So who's to say it's wrong?*" For those topics Jesus might not have addressed we have only to turn a few pages in either direction. Paul wrote that "*all Scripture is inspired by God.*" (2 Tim. 3:16) Jesus is the authority not only for the Gospel accounts, but for the other 62 books of the Bible as well.
- To further the above point, Jesus *did* make it perfectly clear that the only physical, romantic union that honors God is one between a man and woman. Jesus, quoting Genesis 1:27, said to the Pharisees "*Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*" (Matthew 19:4-6) Paul reiterated this truth in Ephesians 5.
- Gay & Lesbian religious leadership often cite David's relationship with Jonathan in 1 Samuel, specifically 20:17, as an example of biblically approved homosexuality. However, there are a few fundamental problems with that interpretation:
  - First of all, that interpretation is blatantly inconsistent with the rest of God's Word regarding the issue of homosexuality. Anyone can develop an entire doctrine out of a single passage or verse. Cult leaders do it all the time. It's imperative we interpret "Scripture in light of Scripture" i.e. "*the whole counsel of God.*" (Acts 20:27)
  - Just because the Bible records something in a story doesn't necessarily mean God approves it. 1 Samuel 28 records the story of Saul seeking out the Witch of Endor. Does that mean God approves of sorcery, the occult or communication with the dead? Of course not. To think otherwise is a completely irresponsible handling of Scripture.
  - Professor of New Testament at Wheaton Graduate School, Dr. Douglass Moo, states: "*To cast the relationship between David and Jonathan in a homosexual light is to simply reach for something that isn't there.*"
- Another passage Gay & Lesbian clergy will use to justify homosexuality is found in Romans 1:26-27. Below is the text followed by commentary by Dr. Moo, who authored the *NIV Application Commentary* on the book of Romans:
  - *Rom. 1:26-27—"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."*
  - Dr. Moo's response: *Gene proponents & gay churches will argue that those whom Paul condemns here (in Romans 1:26-27) are only those who practice homosexuality when it is against their "own" nature. In other words, it would be wrong for a person of heterosexual orientation to engage in homosexual relations, but not for a person with a "natural" homosexual orientation.*

- *Moo continues: The problem with this view is a (1) a failure to understand Paul's "nature" language against its proper background, and (2) a failure to understand Greek. Paul is using this word as other Jewish writers did, to refer to the natural order of things as ordained by God. "Nature" in this passage refers not to individual nature or orientation, but to the world as God has made it. Engaging in homosexual activity is to violate God's created intention in making human beings male and female.*

### **The Gay Gene Debate:**

- In 1993, *Science Magazine* published an article claiming that scientist, Dean Hamer, had discovered the "gay gene" providing a "eureka!" moment for the gay community.
- But, only one year later, the same publication, *Science Magazine*, printed an article stating that the "gay gene" discovery was unfounded:
  - *Time and time again, scientists have claimed particular genes...are associated with behavioral traits, only to withdraw their findings [when they discover they were wrong.] "Unfortunately," says Yale's Dr. Joel Gelernter, "[these theories are] announced with great fanfare; all greeted [without argument] in the popular press, and now in [disgrace.]*

### **No Gay Gene! Case Closed! But It Isn't That Easy...:**

- I've counseled Christian teens in former youth groups with what psychologists call "gender confusion." In other words, they begin genuinely experiencing an attraction to the same gender. This is a hugely fragile issue with which to deal.
- "Where does that attraction come from?" they ask.
- On April 4, 2007, Dr. Francis S. Collins, one of the world's leading scientists who works at the cutting edge of DNA, had an article published by *The National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality*:
  - Dr. Collins succinctly reviewed the research on homosexuality and offers the following: "An area of particularly strong public interest is the genetic basis of homosexuality. Evidence...indicates that sexual orientation is genetically influenced but not hardwired by DNA, and that whatever genes are involved represent predispositions, not predeterminations."
  - In other words – in regard to homosexuality – a person is gay not, as Ray Boltz advocates, because God made him that way, but instead, because of very complex environmental, biological and psychological contexts. There are a myriad of contextual factors that can work together to convince a person – child or adult - that he/she is gay.
  - Having worked with so many teens over the years, I've visited with a number of professional counselors on this very topic and fully agree with them that, just as one person may have a propensity toward alcoholism, another person may have a propensity toward homosexual – or heterosexual - sin.
  - Unfortunately, our propensity to sin in any way is the result of when we, in essence, told God to shove off in the Garden of Eden and let us do life our way.

## **Some Final Thoughts:**

As I mentioned before, I have a close relative who is gay. And, although they know exactly what my convictions are regarding homosexuality, they also know I love them with all of my heart. And whenever I see them, I embrace them.

In his award-winning book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, former *Christianity Today* editor, Philip Yancey, includes a chapter entitled "Grace-Healed Eyes." Below is an excerpt:

I knew no one who lived with more verve and abandon than Mel White. He was generous too a fault. Mel had a devoted wife and two children. He taught at Fuller Seminary, served as pastor of a local church and wrote best-selling books for Christians. More than anyone my wife and I knew, Mel made us feel fully alive. We had been friends for about five years when I got a call from Mel asking if we could meet. When we met, Mel shut his eyes, breathed deeply a few times, and began our conversation with a sentence I will never forget: "*Philip, you've probably already figured out that I'm gay.*" The thought had never once crossed my mind.

I learned from Mel that homosexuality is not the casual lifestyle choice I had blithely assumed it to be. As Mel spells out in his book, *Stranger at the Gate: To be Gay and Christian in America*, he felt homosexual longings from adolescence, tried hard to repress those longings, and as an adult fervently sought a "cure." He fasted, prayed, even went through exorcism rites. He tried aversion therapy and chemical treatments. Above all, Mel wanted desperately *not* to be gay.

It occurred to me that my own life would be much simpler if I had never met Mel White. But he was my friend – how should I treat him? What would grace have me do?

A TV interviewer asked Mel's parents, on camera, "*You know what other Christians are saying about your son? They say he's an abomination. What do you think about that?*"

"Well," the mother answered in a sweet voice, "*he may be an abomination, but he's still our pride and joy.*" That line has stayed with me because I came to see it as a heart-rending definition of grace. I came to see that Mel White's mother expressed how God views every one of us. In some ways we are all abominations to God – "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" – and yet somehow, against all reason, God loves us anyhow. Grace declares that we are still God's pride and joy.

My study of Jesus' life convinces me that whatever barriers we must overcome in treating "different" people cannot compare to what a holy God – who dwelled in the Most Holy Place, and whose presence caused fire and smoke to belch from mountaintops, bringing death to any unclean person who wandered near – overcame when He descended to join us on planet Earth.

A prostitute, a wealthy exploiter, a demon-possessed woman, a Roman soldier, a Samaritan with running sores, and another Samaritan with serial husbands – I marvel that Jesus gained the reputation as being a "friend of sinners" like these.

We may be abominations, but we are still God's pride and joy. All of us in the church need "grace-healed eyes" to see the potential in others for the same grace that God has so lavishly bestowed on us. "*To love a person,*" said Dostoevsky, "*means to see in him as God intended him to be.*"

***Soli Deo Gloria, Nick***