

BUC FAMILY

A Publication of the BUC Family, Children and Possibility Ministries

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Pride and Prejudice: A Gospel Dilemma

Pr Les Ackie

I must confess that I breathe a metaphorical sigh of relief at the beginning of July because it marks the end of 'Pride Month' with its aggressive promotion of LGBTQIA+ propaganda. However, the month merely represents an intensification of a trend in Western culture to normalise 'queerness' by intentionally saturating society with LGBTQIA+ ideology. Few areas of life remain untouched. Large corporations place profit over integrity with empty virtue-signalling marketing. Politicians bend over backwards to legislate not only 'protections' but also privileges for the 'historically marginalised.' Classrooms from primary to university have become centres of indoctrination. Entertainment media is permeated by an overt agenda to showcase the breadth of LGBTQIA+ behaviour as natural expressions of human sexuality.

These trends present us with a dilemma. On the one hand, we are responsible for pushing back on the flagrant assaults on biblical morality. On the other hand, we have a mandate to love our neighbour as ourselves. Our challenge is heightened because our Christian worldview is increasingly portrayed as phobic, hateful, and bigoted by hostile LGBTQIA+ protagonists. The burgeoning 'progressive Christianity' movement seeks to address this dilemma by reinterpreting traditional understandings of biblical passages about homosexuality and gender expression. Even within Adventism, we see similar trends toward making the church more relevant for those with LGBTQIA+ orientation.

Historically, we have always held a clear line, refuting attempts to reinterpret the Bible, unequivocally rejecting the practice of same-sex relationships. However, in our attempts to defend our moral standards, it is possible to lose sight of the fact that we are not just dealing with an issue, but we are dealing with people. There are members of our churches who are hurting and often confused; people who hide behind masks of pretence for fear of vilification and rejection; people who need compassion, not condemnation; people who need a safe place to work through their inner turmoil. Ask yourself this question: 'If a member of your church openly admitted that he or she was struggling with same-sex attraction, how would that individual be received?' I recall sitting in a meeting where the question was raised regarding how we should relate to those within our church who struggle with same-sex attraction. I overheard a senior church elder whisper to another, "Burn them!"



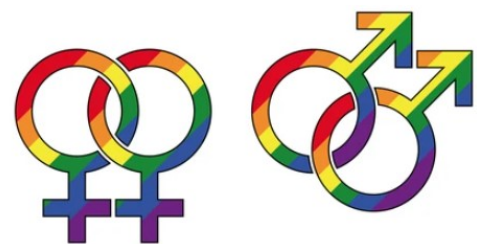
Now I am quite sure this does not represent the majority view of church leaders, but it represents a disturbing lack of compassion for those who wrestle with this issue.

The well-worn line that 'God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve' may draw chuckles from an unthinking congregation, but it makes me cringe whenever I hear it. I wonder how the young person struggling with their sexual identity feels when the authority figures in the church use

the core of their struggle as an opportunity for cheap jibes. Can we seriously expect them to confide in leaders who make light of their pain? Where, then, do they go? We have a great emphasis at present, 'Reflecting Hope', but if we are as successful as we wish, there will be all sorts of people coming through our doors. Are we ready to receive them?

Our biblical position on homosexuality is what it is. It's not going to change. However, what needs to change is how we relate to the people we consider to be lost. I believe that one of the barriers to a compassionate response is our traditional position that homosexuality is simply a rebellious lifestyle choice. We may readily embrace various possible causes for homosexuality, but we tend to shy away from the possibility that genetics may play a part. An extensive 2019 study cited 'the environment' as being 75% responsible for people's sexual preferences. While research has debunked the notion of a 'gay gene', the extent of genetic influence remains a subject of debate ([harvardmagazine.com/2019/08/there-s-still-no-gay-gene](https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2019/08/there-s-still-no-gay-gene)).

There is a misconception that if we accept that homosexual orientation is genetically influenced, we must also accept that "it's natural, can't be helped, and it's just the way God made some people." The fact is that we live in a 'fallen' world. As a result, people can be born with all manner of physical, psychological and physiological abnormalities. Ellen White alludes to this when she refers to "hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil" (Desire of Ages, 311). Humanity is affected by sin on every level, including our genetic makeup. It is possible that some people may have a predisposition toward same-sex attraction. It is too simplistic to dismiss homosexuality as a choice. Can anybody choose their sexual orientation? When did we choose to be heterosexual? Even in our permissive society, why would an Adventist Christian consciously choose such an orientation, which is guaranteed to excite opposition?



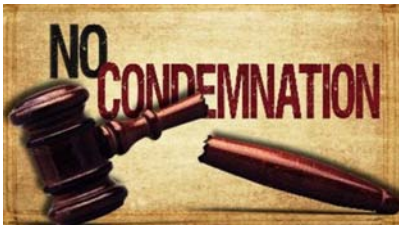
Whether homosexuality is genetically influenced, a conscious choice or a product of environment - or even all three - it is still the product of a fallen human condition. Homosexual orientation may not be a choice, but homosexual behaviour is a choice. A thorough study of the biblical passages that refer to homosexuality shows a condemnation of practice, not orientation. A person's orientation indicates sexual preference and how an individual may be tempted. However, God does not judge us for how we are tempted. He holds us accountable for our decisions and the behaviours that follow those decisions. The fact that a person may have a predisposition toward homosexuality is not the point. Genetics do not determine morality. The Bible clarifies that we are all born in sin and shaped in iniquity (Psalm 51:5).

The fact that we are 'naturally' sinful does not legitimise sin but instead emphasises our need for a Saviour. The argument is often raised that if an individual surrenders completely to God, He will change their orientation. Can God do that? Of course! The God who spoke the world into existence is able to change a person's sexual orientation, but that does not necessarily mean that He will. Did the Lord have the ability to remove Paul's 'thorn in the flesh'? Of course! Did He? No! He simply said, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).



There are in existence various "exit ministries" who claim great success in helping homosexuals to change their orientation, but there are also many same-sex attracted Christians who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour and have committed themselves to a life of celibacy despite their orientation. To live without the opportunity for legitimate sexual expression is a common experience for both those who experience a same-sex attraction while choosing to remain celibate and single heterosexuals who, for whatever reason, remain single.

Living without romance and a legitimate outlet for sexual expression may be considered a loss for those who desire such relationships. However, such relationships are not the be-all and end-all of human intimacy. In his excellent book 'Beyond Boundaries', John Townsend makes the point that, as a society, we have bought into the fallacy generated to a large extent by Hollywood that a sexual relationship trumps every other kind of intimate relationship we can experience. Our primary concern has to be faithfulness to God's will for our lives, and if that requires celibacy, then so be it.



To respond compassionately, we must come to terms with our prejudices. We need to examine our hearts and ask ourselves whether we truly can hate the sin and love the sinner. In His dealings with both the woman at the well (John 4) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8), Jesus demonstrated both love and acceptance while at the same time holding these women accountable for their choices. It is the absence of a compassionate heart that leads to a 'round 'em up and burn 'em up mentality.

It is much easier to take a judgmental view when homosexuality has no face. However, if the church is truly a family, then we need to appreciate that those who are fighting their silent battles are our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters to whom we owe a duty of care. It is those we consider to be the worst of sinners who need the best of grace. In Luke 15:2, the church leaders levelled what was intended to be a criticism of Jesus but was, in fact, one of the greatest compliments they could have paid Him. "And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:2).

Our challenge as a church community is to create a safe place of compassion and understanding, allowing people to bring their struggles and receive spiritual and emotional support. In the words of former GC Communications Director Ray Dabrowski, "A Christian church is expected to uphold biblical standards. But it is equally important that as Christians we are always full of grace and compassionate towards everyone." - SDA Position on Homosexuality, 1999-OCT-03.



Busyness is not a Badge of Honour in the Eyes of God

Pr Max McKenzie-Cook

As Christians, our giving nature and acts of kindness define us. We embody love and generosity through volunteering, worship, and financial support. However, amidst our selfless commitments, we must remember to prioritise self-care and question the belief that busyness equates to devotion. As someone who has grown up in church and working in my current role in Community Ministries, I see the purity of heart in those who give so much to the most marginalised in society. However, this is usually at the expense of their health and wellbeing. I hope to explore the significance of nurturing ourselves while engaging in Christian service and start conversations that challenge the notion that being constantly occupied is the accurate measure of dedication.

In our devotion to others, we must remember that God holds us in the same esteem as he does others. As such, he seeks our wellbeing as well. It is never his desire that we burn out or neglect our families and friends in the pursuit of service to others. The importance of self-care is an integral part of our Christian journey. Each one of us holds immense value, and by prioritising our wellbeing, we can continue to make a lasting impact on those around us. It is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that constant busyness equates to righteousness. However, by finding a healthy balance between our commitments and personal wellbeing, we unlock a renewed energy and focus, enabling us to face challenges with grace and compassion.

Christian service should be free from excessive busyness and be devoid of guilt or shame when we cannot fulfil an obligation. It is a journey fuelled by love, compassion and an unwavering commitment to grace. Embracing self-care is not a sign of weak devotion; it is a testament to the wisdom of nurturing ourselves to become beacons of light for others. By challenging the notion that busyness is the ultimate measure of goodness, we reclaim our freedom to serve authentically, redirecting our focus to the essence of our faith and deepening our connection with God.

We must redefine how we approach Christian service and elevate the significance of self-nurturing alongside our dedication to helping others. The pressure to constantly be occupied can inadvertently dilute the true essence of Christian generosity. By valuing our wellbeing, we enhance the quality of our service, ensure our sustained ability to give, and foster a healthier relationship with God. Striking a harmonious balance between our commitments and self-care is essential. This balanced approach empowers us to shape a future marked by hope, compassion, and unwavering love for one another. As we prioritise self-care while embracing our Christian calling, we become beacons of inspiration, radiating joy and strength. Our acts of kindness will bear fruit in the lives of those we serve and within ourselves, fostering personal growth and deepening our connection with God.

Take
care of
your
self!

As we shed the weight of unrealistic expectations and embrace the value of nurturing ourselves, we unlock our true potential to touch lives and make a lasting difference. May our dedication to others be matched by our commitment to self-growth, enabling us to create a future where love, compassion, and grace win out. Together, we can inspire others to find their balance, cultivating a world where a wellspring of genuine care and devotion fuels every act of service.

The BUC Needs You! Departmental Advisory Committee

Are you looking to make a difference in the Seventh-day Adventist community? Do you believe that your professional experience and skills could improve or strengthen the way in which the British Union Conference (BUC) operates? If so, this is the opportunity for you!

As part of our new strategic plan, we at the BUC are seeking talented, interested and committed individuals to serve on our advisory committees for Family, Children's, Possibility Ministries and Safeguarding. These committees will provide expert advice and guidance to help our departments achieve our goals and serve our Union and the nation more effectively.

We are looking for individuals with significant experience in their respective fields. Whether you're a seasoned professional or a rising star in your industry, we welcome your unique perspective and insights. If you're passionate about strengthening marriage, family life education, emotional wellbeing, single adults, safeguarding children, domestic abuse, supporting people with disabilities or ministry to children, your expertise and insights will be invaluable to our committees.

As a member of our advisory committees, you'll have the opportunity to give meaningful advice on the work of our departments, as we strive to execute our strategic plan (2023-26) in the BUC here in the UK and Ireland. You'll work closely with other industry experts, practitioners and interested individuals, as well as with the departmental director, to develop innovative tactics and solutions that address the most pressing issues facing our communities. Our Departmental Advisory Committees are unremunerated, and are open to all backgrounds, ages and levels of experience. The meetings will take place on Zoom at least twice per year.

If you're ready to join a dynamic and dedicated team, we want to hear from you. Contact Abigail Wright-Stephenson awright-stephenson@adventist.uk to learn more or complete the form to express your interest by clicking this link. <https://forms.office.com/e/rsgZKPpJb4>





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Is a professor emeritus of psychology at Bowling Green State University and Adjunct Professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry at the Baylor College of Medicine. He has published extensively on religion, spirituality, and health.

MORGAN MEDLOCK
MD, MDiv, MPH
Is a convener, educator, administrator, and clinician who is passionate about designing equitable, community-centered behavioral health interventions. Since completing adult psychiatry and health policy training at Harvard Medical School she has been an advocate for marginalized populations.

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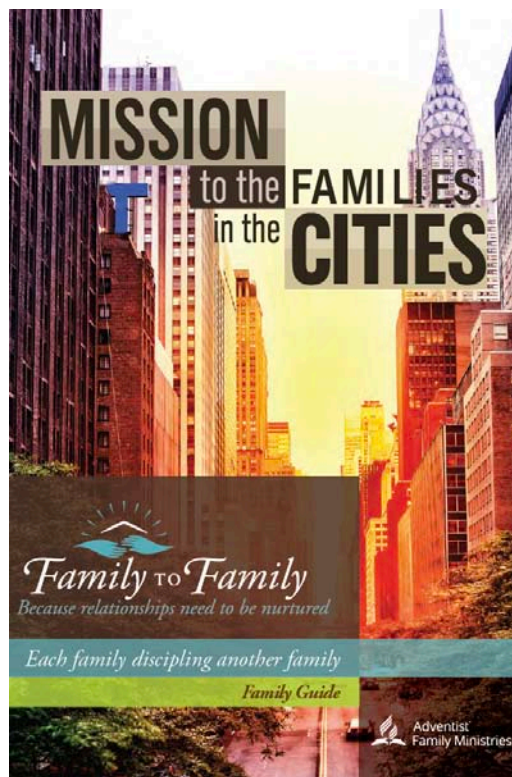
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2023 Dates for Your Diary

- Special Needs Camp: 9-16 July
- Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice: 20-22 July
- NEC Family Camp: 21-30 July
- SEC Camp Meeting: 24-30 July
- Children's Sabbath: 22 July
- SEC Prayer Retreat: 18-20 August
- End It Now - Abuse Awareness Sabbath: 26 August
- Family Togetherness Week: 2-9 September
- World Orphans & Vulnerable Children's Day: 18 November



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[Family and Mental Health](#)



Click here to download the Missions Resource
[Mission to Families](#)



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If you have something to say on family matters, children's spirituality, safeguarding, disability, relational themes, emotional wellbeing, men's issues, or would just like to let others know about what's happening in your church or community for families, why not put it in writing and submit it for publication? Email awright-stephenson@adventist.uk

Useful Links

[AdventSource](#)

[Adventist Possibility Ministries](#)

[Adventist Single Adult Ministries \(ASAM\)](#)

[Adventist Special Needs Association \(ASNA\)](#)

[BUC Family Ministries](#)

[BUC Safeguarding](#)

[Care for the Family](#)

[GC Children's Ministries](#)

[GC Family Ministries](#)

[In Discipleship](#)

[Prepare Enrich](#)

[TED Children's Ministries](#)

[TED Family Ministries](#)

[TED Possibility Ministries](#)

[Through the Roof \(Disability outreach\)](#)

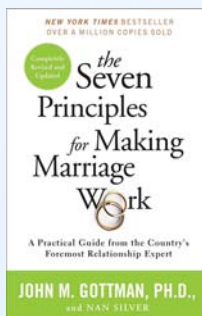
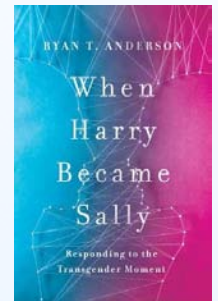
[Women's Aid](#)

Recommended Reading



Biblical Care for Families Affected by Disability. Providing biblical care and counsel to families living with physical, intellectual, or emotional disabilities and chronic conditions is an important and valuable role for a healthy church. This book provides a solid footing for initiating relevant biblical care for individuals and families living with disability.

When Harry Became Sally provides thoughtful answers to questions arising from the transgender moment. Drawing on the best insights from biology, psychology, and philosophy, Ryan Anderson offers a nuanced view of human embodiment, a balanced approach to public policy on gender identity, and a sober assessment of the human costs of getting human nature wrong.



Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work. John Gottman helps couples focus on each other, on paying attention to the small day-to-day moments that, make up the heart and soul of any relationship. He provides spouses with a solid foundation for resolving conflict when it does occur and find strategies for living with those issues that cannot be resolved. This book is a definitive guide for anyone who wants their relationship to attain its highest potential.

BUC Family, Children, Possibility Ministries & Safeguarding



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