

# BIBLICAL DOCTRINES → MARRIAGE, LOVE & REBUKE, July 12, 2015

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Basic reason for discussion: Recently I read a letter in newspaper (June 20, 2105) from Methodist Pastor on Love and Homosexuality.

I thought this 'letter' would provide a good example of what I have been talking about, in our discussion on the churches in the Book of Revelations; when I talk about the 'Backslidden' position some of the 'Reformed Churches' found themselves in during the latter portion of the 'Sardis Prophetic Church Period'. My example, I believe, involves the misconception that some of the churches leadership's has had in correctly applying specific 'doctrines'. It appears they focus in only one 'attribute' of a specific 'Christian Doctrine', which they want to apply, while engorging all the other 'attributes' that make up the specific Christian Doctrine which they are using. This I believe has been an issue throughout much of the churches history. My opinion is this has been and continues to be possible because Satan was able to get a strong grip on men's 'human desires'. Man has always fallen to Satan's tricks when he/man takes his eye off of what God wants and replaces it with what he/man wants!

This 'example' is the same 'type of incorrectly applied doctrine' that was preached in every church prophetic period and is obviously still currently being preached or taught in many churches today! Remember what I have said before, Satan's best trick to lead man astray or away from a strong relationship with God is by mixing 60% truth with 40% lie, which makes it all a 'LIE'.

ONE: Read letter from the Methodist pastor dated June 20, 2015.

TWO: How can anyone argue with the 'Biblical Concept of Love, and Specifically Love Thy Neighbor, which is the second commandment on God's list of 'TO DO'S'? See Matthew 22:37-39→ quoted below.

THREE: This pastor is using one of the cornerstone concepts of 'Christianity' to make his point→ but only informing people of one of the many 'facet' or 'attributes' in correctly applying this doctrine. I will try to outline how I believe God intended the 'Doctrine of Love' to work and specifically be applied in the marriage situation that this pastor is discussing. I will also discuss how the Bible defines 'Marriage', as well as, 'Corrections & Rebuke'.

However, before we look at the specific issue this pastor is discussing I would like to provide some background on several key issues he is using to make his point.

### The Issue of Love:

- 1) How God demonstrated his love for man and what God did for man→ John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
- 2) How man is to react to God's love→ John 14:15, "If you love me you will obey my commands." John 14:23-24, Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teachings. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teachings. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.'



3) How God expects man to react/relate to other men as it relates to the issue of 'LOVE'. John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." John 15:12-15, "My command is this; Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friend. You are my friend if you do what I command. I no longer call you servant, because a servant does not know his masters business." Heb. 12:14-16, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is Godless like Esau...."

SEPERATE POINT:

### LOVE AND CORRECTION & REBUKE→

I think the last sentence, in Heb. 12:14-16 speaks to the issue that the churches leadership has the 'authority and responsibility' to apply 'corrections and rebuke', if someone, within the 'body of believers' is 'publicly sinning'. The 'application of corrections and rebuke' for the "...sexually immoral..." (see, Heb. 12:14-16, above) would be no different than if another member was publicly into 'porn', 'beating their spouse', 'beating their children', 'public drunkenness', or any other misconduct, as defined by scripture, by a member of the church→ you get the idea. The leadership of the church has the obligation to 'correct and rebuke' it's members who are knowingly and outwardly sinning, as this sets a bad example for both saved the unsaved people watching.

Because I believe this then would fall into the 'stumbling block issue', which we will discuss in the next section. However, below I have added several verses that I believe speak to the issue of 'correction and rebuke is a part of true love'. See below for scripture: Rev. 3:19, **"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline."** Prov. 27:5, **"Better is open rebuke than hidden love."** I like this one and think it is very applicable Prov. 28:23, **"He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue."**

I have listed some other verses which approach this from many different directions; 1 Tim. 5:20, **"Those who sin are to be rebuked public, so that others will take notice."** 2 Tim. 4:2, **"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."** Luke 17:3, **"So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him."**

I have added these two verses out of the Book of Ezekiel, which speak to the same issue but with slightly different wording:

One→ Ezek. 33:8-9, **"When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sins, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself."**

Two→ Ezek. 3:18-19, **"When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do not warn the**



wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.”

I think God makes his point very clear in these two verses about his opinion on ‘correction and rebuke’. Also, I think these verses speaks to the issue of; If you really love someone and do not ‘correct and rebuke’ them about sin in their life→ Do you really love them?

NEXT POINT:

STUMBLING BLOCK ISSUE→

How (I) define if your actions have become a stumbling block to others; ‘If your actions or lack of action keeps another from having a relationship with God or a closer relationship with God’→ information and verses on ‘stumbling block issue’→ There are 14 verses on the issue of ‘stumbling block’ in the Bible. The first is in Lev. 19:14, **“Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord.** Last, Rev. 2:14, **“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teachings of Balaam...”** However, the one I like the best is, 1 Cor. 8:9-13, **“Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedoms does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idol’s? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brother in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.”**

## NOW BACK TO THE ISSUE OF LOVE:

Heb. 13:1-2, "Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as you yourself were suffering." Romans 13:8-10, "Let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery', 'Do not murder', 'Do not steal', 'Do not covet', and whatever other commandments there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

Some of these verses appear to me to focus on the 'Love' God requires Christian to Christian but would certainly apply to Christian to all unsaved men and obviously should be used by all men. Based on the biblical 'good neighbor concept'. Matt. 22:37-39, "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" This concept dates all the way back to the Levitical Laws, about 1500 BC, Leviticus 19:18, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

## CONCLUSION:

There can be no question that 'LOVE' is a cornerstone of Christian living.



However, the real questions I think we need to be asking based on the 'Biblical Concepts' of: 'Love' & 'The Correction and Rebuke portion of Love' and 'The responsibility we have as it relates to the stumbling block issue', as it relates to our love for other men and applying Gods laws and commandments correctly is: Is this pastor applying these concepts 'Biblical concept of Correctly?'

ANSWER:

It is my opinion that this pastor appears to have a limited understanding of what the word 'Doctrine of Love' means in Christianity and is also, only applying the portion of the 'Christian Doctrine of Love' that he has decided to speak to or apply. It appears to me that he believes 'love' means accepting others into the 'body of believers' regardless of their beliefs and action as they relate to God laws, commands and decree and just accepting their 'False Doctrines' without 'corrections and rebuke'. Note: 'corrections and rebuke' should always be done in love because if you are not doing it in 'love' you may be one sinning!

POINT→ If this 'pastor and church leadership' did not 'correct and rebuke' the actions of these two individuals; again in love and with great care, as they (the two individuals) may not realize that they are sinning and separated from God.

Question→ If they were to die shortly after meeting this pastor and be condemned to hell for all of eternity: Who is responsible for their 'souls' being lost?

ANALYSIS: There is no question that we as 'Christians' are commanded to not only accept all people into our worship services and fellowship but should also make them feel 'Welcome' (A warm welcome makes the best first impression on someone's first visit to a church or anywhere), as a first step in 'presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ'. Remember, hearing the 'Gospel of Jesus Christ' is the first step in the 'salvation process'. I think this means, in this situation; they would have to be inside the building where the 'gospel' is being preached and in a receptive frame of mind.

However, I do not think we can accept continuing, 'Ungodly behavior' or False Doctrines' without 'correction rebuke' within the 'true body of believers', which appears to me what this pastor is advocating. Again, this message of 'correction and rebuke' must be delivered in a 'loving and caring' way or it will appear that we are judging.

NEXT POINT→

Again, I am not talking about is using the 'Doctrine of Correction and Rebuke' to randomly judge people for their actions or lifestyle that we may not like. The churches leadership should use this 'Doctrine of Correction and Rebuke' very judiciously because other people outside of the 'body of believers' are always watching the actions of Christians/Churches and see the sin in your lives and maybe even worst sins, as we know we all have sin in our lives; see Romans 3:23. What I am talking about is 'Condoning Unacceptable Behavior or Doctrines being 'grafted' into the core Doctrine of the Body of Believers that is unacceptable or displeasing to God the Father or Jesus Christ'. Therefore, I could not accept this kind of logic nor do I think it is Biblical. I believe that part of the Pastors and the church leadership job



is to keep the 'Doctrine of the Church Pure' so as not to mislead people into sin. I will list some other scripture which I believe supports my opinion.

### MEANING of SOUND DOCTRINE:

Titus 2:1, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine."

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:3-4, "If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing."

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:20b-21, "Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith."

I have also provided two scripture references that I believe speak to how Christian Doctrines become corrupted.

1 Tim. 6:20-21, "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith."

Romans 16:17-18, "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naïve people."

I really like this one, 2 Tim. 4:2-5, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage (←I like these three words)—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time

will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist and discharge all the duties of your ministry."

I think you get the idea how corruption works its way into the church and becomes 'accepted doctrine'. The question for us is: Is this what this Methodist Preacher is doing or advocating?

If you want to read more on what the Bible has to say about 'sound doctrine' the Books of 1 & 2 Timothy are full of this subject. I also like 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and the Book of Ephesians and Galatians. Actually many of Paul's books speak in length to the issue of 'Sound Doctrine' and 'The correct lifestyle of a Christain'.

Remember one of the 'attributes or characteristics' of many of these churches and prophetic church periods (Revelations, chapters 2&3) was their ability to 'compromise, adapt and accept all others beliefs'. This is the attributes and characteristics that allowed them to survive→ but at what cost is the question. Base on my interpretation of scripture→ the cost was 'seperation from God & eternal damnation'.

NEXT POINT→

This pastor holds up 1 Corinthians, chapter 13 as the litmus test for defining his understanding of true 'love', which is a very good chapter to use, however, I think he missed the correct interpretation of verse 6, "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth."



The way men are 'redeemed', is to 'confess with your mouth that you are a sinner and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he gave his life to pay for our sins and that is what we are putting our faith in and our eternal future, as well as, we will try our best to live a Christ like life.

Continuing analysis:

Again, I believe that this pastor is correct in his application of the church's responsibility to accept and even welcome all people in to their worship service regardless of their past sins. Romans 3:23, "**...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.**" And there is no questioning the fact that we were all sinners and are all still sinners. I believe the primary job of every Christian (Pastor or any person within the 'body of believers') should be to ensure all people hear the word of God and have a chance to be saved. So I think my question for this Pastor, in this case: Is it possible for you to accomplish your 'primary job', 'and not do damage to others' with your current approach?

However, I think this pastor's understanding of several other Biblical concepts is being misapplied or incorrect. I will discuss these below:

### THE Biblical Doctrines of Marriage:

- 1) God ordained 'Marriage' to be between a man and a woman. God made this concept very clear in Gen. 2:24-25, "**For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.**" I understand this this verse does not specifically say a woman, however, if you move up the page

several verses in the Book of Genesis you will find that God specifies who the man is marrying, Gen. 2:20b-22, **"But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made the woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man."** Based on these verses I am not sure how you could argue who the two people are in a marriage → one man and one woman; actually there was only one man and one woman at this point in time. Jesus repeats these words in Matthew 19:4-6, which is again repeated in Mark 10:6-9. To gain a better understanding of the issue of 'marriage', 'divorce' and committing 'adultery' when in divorce read Matt. 19:1-12 & Mark 10:1-12.

- 2) You may ask: Why did God make marriage to be specifically between a man and a woman? And how did this fit into his/Gods overall plan? Answer → Gen. 1:26-30, **"Then God said, 'Let us (trinity) make man in our (trinity) image, in our likeness, and let them (man and woman) rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (man and woman). God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; (reproduce) fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then God said, 'I give you every seeding-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with



seeds in it. They will be you food. And all the beast of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant as food.” Also, Gen. 4:17, “Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant, and gave birth to Enoch.”

a) SIMPLE ANSWER→ REPRODUCE & RULES OVER THE EARTH

3) The scripture provides us with many examples of how God intended the ‘marriage relationship’ to work. I will provide some scripture as an example, which is as follows:

a) Spiritual and Home Leadership→To better understand how God intended this ‘relationship to work’ you will need to read Eph. 5:22-33. I pulled out a few key statements, “**Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church...However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**” Again, you need to read the entire passage to get the full meaning.

b) Intimacy of the Marriage Relationship→ I have picked two verses, however, there are many to choose from, Heb. 13:4, “**Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral.**” (I have added verse 5 because this is an issue that can effect a marriage a lot, “**Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have...**”. Also, Paul provides a lot of details as to how the ‘intimacy of the marriage relationship should be handled’ in, 1 Corinthians, chapter 7. We can discuss this in class but I will not take the time to write out this entire

chapter in this document. However, I would like to make one point, which I believe has been poorly interpreted by many Christians and non-Christians alike, 1 Cor. 7:5, **“Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourself to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”**

- Intimacy even in marriage must be by **“mutual consent”**.
- **“Mutual consent”** means each party, the man and the woman has 50% input into the decision process. This cannot be a one sided process.
- I believe this speaks to the 50/50 relationship that must exist if a marriage is to work. God set this partnership up with each party having their specific responsibilities: One→ the man is to be the ‘spiritual leader of the family’, primary bread winner and final decision maker of the family; Two→the woman is to be the homemaker, family nurturer, primary implementer of the ‘spiritual direction of the family and partner of the husband’. If you read the scripture carefully you will discover that God made men and women each with strong and weak attributes or characteristics and that God designed the family structure this way. Each partner was designed to compliments the other not to ‘rule over or replace’. If a family operates this way it will be a very strong unit and impenetrable by Satan’s lies. However, if this was God’s plan for how he designed the family to correctly operate, how do you think American families (Christian and non-Christian) compare to this blueprint?



## Conclusion:

I added these points to demonstrate why I do not believe the same sex marriages meet Gods plan for marriage or the family.

## SAME SEX MARRIAGE: SIN or ALTERNATE LIFESTYLE:

It appears to me that this is the real question that needs to be answered in this case as we have already discussed how to Biblically deal with it if it is a 'sin'. I will try to provide an adequate amount of scripture to support my conclusion.

POINT ONE→ I think the first time the subject of 'homosexuality' is discussed in the scripture is Gen. 19: 1-38, which is the story about Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. I believe the key identifying verse within this chapter is gen. 19: 4-5, **"Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'"**

POINT TWO→ The Levitical Laws also address this issue, as follows: Lev. 18:22 **"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."** Lev. 20:13, **"If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads."**

POINT THREE→ Israel also committed this type of sin, 1 Kings, 14:24, **"There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had**

driven out before the Israelites.” Notice the last part of this verse—what do think this means for America’s future!

POINT Four→ In the New Testament there are also references to this type of sinful behavior. Paul is probably the most vocal and in Romans, chapter 1, verses 18-32 Paul is against sin in general with ‘homosexuality’ being one of the ones listed, Romans 1: 26-28, **“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lust. 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.”**

Paul also speaks about this in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, **“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”** Paul again addresses this issue in 1 Tim. 10, when he speaks about people who are not of God and one of the things listed is **‘homosexuals’**.

Last, Jude 1: 6-7, discusses this issue and the outcome of people who practice this kind of sexual activities, **“And the angels who did not keep their position of authority but abandoned their own home—these he kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexuality and perversion. They serve as examples of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”**



### CURRENT WORLDLY VIEW:

My last point on the issue of homosexual behavior is that I know that there is currently a lot of discussion in the world today, stating that 'homosexual behavior' is nothing more than an alternate lifestyle and should be accepted in love by the world in general and especially by the Christian community and if we do not we (the Christian community) are haters and bigots. I have even read long documents stating that the Levitical Laws were established to protect 'young salve boys' from their evil owner's sexual desires. And that Paul's wittings were incorrect because of his personal bias on the subject. Many even state that Paul may have had personal/mental issues and his words cannot or should not be taken literally. If this is true then the Bible is not the 'Inspired Word of God' and we as Christians are following a false (god), which we know is not true. Our God is the God of creation an there is no other like him. Isa 45:5 states, **"I am the Lord, there is no other, apart from me there is no God."**

Last, all down through history man has been looking for ways to justify his sin and this is no different. Men today justify their 'homosexual behavior' by stating that 'homosexual behavior' is a sin, just like adultery, if it is done outside of → 'love, commitment and faithfulness' and that is why it should be accepted into the main stream of society and within the church as 'normal marriage'. Remember, Satan's best tactics in fooling men in to committing sin is by combining part lie and part truth, which turns out to be sin and will separate you from God.

I like the way Timothy describes this type of logic, 1 Tim. 6:20-21, **"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called**

knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith."

## CONCLUSION:

My conclusion on this letter is as follows:

- 1) The 'Doctrine of Love' is a cornerstone biblical principal; however, all aspects of this doctrine must be applied if it is to be done correctly and causing unforeseen damage, (stumbling block).
- 2) 'Correction and Rebuke' is a necessary part of the 'Doctrine of Love' and must be done if you really love someone.
- 3) 'A Godly Marriage' is between one man and one woman.
- 4) Homosexuality is a sin and cannot be accepted as part of a 'Sound Christian Doctrine'.
- 5) 'Sound Christian Doctrine' must be maintained by the 'true body of believers' or we are no longer the 'true body of believers'.

## Final Comments→

Christians always need to be very cautious in speaking out against 'Men of God' and this Pastor is professing to be a man of God. Therefore, I am only stating my opinion and the scripture upon which I base my opinion so that you may make your own decision on how to interpret this issue. I would not want to find myself in the same situation as Korah did in what became known as the Korah rebellion against Moses, Num.16.



However, Priest and Pastors also need to be very careful about what they say and preach, as God is holding them to a higher standard because of their position. Malachi 2:7 is a good example of this, “For the lips of priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty.” Malachi then follows verse 7 up with verses 8-9 describing the position Priest and Pastors put themselves in when they become a ‘stumbling block’, “But you have turned from the way and by your teachings have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi, says the Lord Almighty. So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.”

# Welcoming all lifestyles at church

FAITH PERSPECTIVES

How people choose to live in the Christian community is important



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selves as endorsing Jesus' love for all people; accordingly, they interpret the Bible differently from those on the other side.

There's little hope that there will be an immediate resolution between the two sides. The pro same-sex marriage vote in Ireland, and the impending Supreme Court decision on it in our country, will keep the dispute front and center. With each "win" for one side, there's new strategy from the other side for the next battle.

But there's an aspect to this debate that begs a broader issue.

Churches, by definition, want to be hospitable. But are there limits?

Regarding the LGBTQ issue, some Christians are faced with answering the question, Can I welcome into my faith community (translate: "love") a person whose sexual orientation I may not agree with?

And Jesus replies, "Did I stutter?"

As far as I can tell, Jesus never put qualifiers on whom to show understanding, compassion, and, if necessary, forgiveness to. Once we put on those qualifiers — "I will welcome them as long as they're not \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)" — then we open up a Pandora's box of qualifiers. The church historically has tacked on

conditions such as race and gender for full membership rights. The difference here is the understanding that for some, LGBTQ equals sin. It's not a sin to be born a certain color. However, to welcome someone who lives and loves in a way alien to you, and to how you read the Bible ... well, that's a different issue.

But should it be? If you believe homosexuality to be a sin, why should that inhibit you from welcoming a gay person or couple into your church? We all sin. Welcoming reflects love, and that is the basis for transformation of all sinners. If you love only those without sin, you're not going to have very many people to love.

One objection from some is that if you welcome an LGBTQ person into your faith community, you're endorsing their "sin."

But does that really follow? Welcoming another person into the community is welcoming a person, not an orientation or lifestyle. It's welcoming someone who is seeking reconciliation, purpose, direction. It's not endorsing a gay person. It's affirming a person who just happens to be gay.

Another objection is that if you welcome an LGBTQ person into your church and he/she assumes a leadership role, then that person who just happens to be gay, appeared.

will start saying gay-biased things that you won't agree with.

This hasn't been my experience. The gay Christians I know don't have an agenda other than to be part of a faithful, nurturing and worshipping community.

In considering a person's membership in a church I pastor, I do not question his or her sexual orientation.

What is more important is how they live within the Christian community. All — straight or LGBTQ — are to be held to the same Christian standard.

Can they embody the values that lie at the core of a disciple's lifestyle? Can they be faithful and committed in their relationships? Can they value others differently from themselves, just as they wish to be valued? Can they accept others as they are, without trying to first press them into a pre-defined "Christian" mold? Can they live out 1 Corinthians 13?

There are many things in life of which I'm not sure. But as far as individual Christians are concerned, and as far as a congregation is concerned, there's one thing I'm absolutely sure of. Jesus didn't stutter.

Weeks serves as senior pastor of Manchester United Methodist Church. He is a contributor to ST1today.com/religion, where this column first appeared.