

Equip Austin: The Gospel and Same-Sex Marriage CGGC eNews--Vol. 9, No. 32

A little over a week ago I gathered with a couple of other pastors and took part in the live stream for **Equip Austin: The Gospel and Same-Sex Marriage: Equipping the Church for a Post-Marriage Culture**. I hope you took advantage of the opportunity as well. It was a rich time of learning for me and the friends who gathered with me. If we're going to move beyond the fortress mentality (just protecting ourselves from folks who we perceive as a threat to us), then we're going to have to learn how to hold to our biblical convictions while obeying Jesus' call to love our neighbor as ourselves. I thought I'd share two or three of my learnings from the evening.



Dr. Russell Moore of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission challenged us from 2 Timothy 2 to be good soldiers who fight with conviction and kindness. There was a time when our larger culture did pre-evangelism for us (people tended to want the same things we want, had an understanding of God, faith, and a moral foundation); today our culture not only disagrees with us, but it doesn't even understand what we're talking about. We must hold to our convictions, but we must fight with kindness. One of his most helpful observations was that if we're preaching the whole counsel of God, we'll tend to get "clobbered" from both sides. If you call homosexuality sin, you'll be called closed minded, bigoted and "on the wrong side of history" by the larger culture. If you call Christians to show the same love, grace and patience that they've experienced from the Father, you'll be accused of going too far, associating with "sinners" and watering down the Gospel by some of our very own brothers and sisters. Let's strive to teach and live the whole counsel of God!



Dr. Russell Moore speaks at Equip Austin

Two other themes emerged during the night as the discussion continued to help us understand how to minister to those who identify as LGBTQ. The first theme was hospitality. There were several voices who shared their own story of same-sex attraction and coming to faith. In each of those stories, the hospitality offered by brothers and sisters in Christ played a key role in their journey to faith. We often think of hospitality as the willingness and ability to host folks in our homes (who often are similar to us), but biblical hospitality goes beyond our comfortable circle to those who are different from us and even opposed to us. Across the board, one of our greatest potentials for evangelism is to recapture the Christian understanding of hospitality by extending welcome, grace and love to those who are different than us by sharing our lives with them and welcoming them into our homes and families.

Finally, a similar theme was the issue of true, genuine community. When we call people to repent from their LGBTQ life, we're calling them to abandon their community. Too often we're inviting them into a community that is less genuine and caring than the one we're calling

them from. We're calling them from their "family" but we, far too often, don't have a very good family to welcome them to. Loneliness is rampant in our society, particularly amongst those considering leaving the LGBTQ life. If we are to fulfill our call to take the Gospel to all people and nations, then we must foster a deep, rich and genuine sense of community within our families of faith. God forgive us when the rest of the culture offers a deeper sense of community than what your people do!

My understanding is that the video from Equip Austin will be made available soon. We will pass along that information when it becomes available. Let's keep strive not only to believe in grace and truth, but to practice grace and truth and live it out!

Christ's Peace
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