

## A Compassionate, Truthful Response to LGBTQ+

Human Sexuality, Ephesians 4:14-15 on August 24, 2025

Pastor Jerry R. A. Johnson

*Please read Ephesians 4:14-15 before going further in this transcript.*

Today is our final week of a 5-part sermon series on Human Sexuality.

July 27: A Way That Seems Right (Intro to Human Sexuality series)

August 3: The Beauty of Christian Singlehood

August 10: The Beauty of Christian Marriage

August 17: The Beauty of Innocence, Modesty, and Purity

August 24: A Compassionate, Truthful Response to LGBTQ+

Each of these sermons will be posted on our church website:

([www.efcbemidji.org/sermons/sermon-list](http://www.efcbemidji.org/sermons/sermon-list))

Each one of these sermons is important, and they're all inter-related. So if you missed one in the series, please go back and give it a listen in order to gain a broader context for what we're talking about today.

For those who are interested in learning more about today's topic, I'd also recommend going back to two sermons from our Romans study in 2023:

February 26, 2023: Approving of Sins (Romans 1:24-32)

March 5, 2023: Navigating SSA

Today's bulletin has a list of Resources on Human Sexuality. Many of these resources are currently for sale in our Connection Café. Today is our final "Fireside Chat" down in our Fireside Room at 11 a.m. for anyone who'd like to talk about the message. Today is also our final sermon with "PG-13" themes, so we're providing a special option for our younger worshippers.

(See page 2 of the bulletin.) With this PG-13 rating in mind, the famous theologians, Calvin and Hobbes, give this introduction for "Adult Situations."<sup>1</sup>

The first caption begins with Calvin telling his pet tiger, Hobbes: "The TV listings say this movie has 'adult situations.' What are adult situations?" Hobbes replies,

"Probably things like going to work, paying bills and taxes, taking responsibilities..." Calvin responds, "WOW, they don't kid around when they say, 'for mature audiences.'" Hobbes concludes: "I've never understood how those movies make any money."



<sup>1</sup> I say "theologians" somewhat tongue and cheek although the young boy Calvin is named after the famous theologian John Calvin and his pet tiger Hobbes (who Calvin views as real) is named after philosopher, Thomas Hobbes.

Today's sermon is about "adult situations," and it's topical, so we're dropping right into the middle of Ephesians 4 without the benefit of examining the surrounding context. What we need to know for today, is that this section of verses is about spiritual maturity; and boy oh boy do we ever need spiritual maturity when it comes to topics like today's. Ephesians 4:15 says that by "...speaking the *truth* in *love*, we will *grow* to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." Our goal together today is to help each and every one of us grow in spiritual maturity; the same goal that we have every other Sunday. So we're not here today to pick a fight, or to argue over terminology and definitions, or to pretend that any one of us, (including me), has this all figured out.<sup>2</sup> We're also not intending to cause any further hurt or pain in the lives of people who are already hurting, so we're going to embrace a posture of compassion and kindness.

In the words of verse 15, we're here to speak the truth, and to do so in love, so that we can all grow in spiritual maturity together.<sup>3</sup> This brings to mind the description of Jesus in John 1:14,17, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Verse 17 then repeats, "...grace AND truth came through Jesus Christ." Grace, and truth, Jesus was full of both, and He came to bring both.<sup>4</sup> If we're one of His deeply devoted followers, then our attitudes and actions should be full of grace and truth as well. And, "speaking the truth in love," should be right in our wheelhouse. So as we proceed, let's assume this posture, and this frame of mind. Our tone, and our attitude toward this particular topic, should be just like it is toward any other topic:

- a loving warning to those who've been caught up in any deception,<sup>5</sup>
- and a loving rebuke toward those who are leading others astray.

Ephesians 4:14 declares, "Then [as we become mature] we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming." Do you see the two groups included here?

> The 1<sup>st</sup> group are those who are still infants in terms of their spiritual maturity. These are the folks who need a loving warning about the deception in which they've been caught up. They're still young in their faith, and in their understanding of spiritual truth, so they're getting "tossed back

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<sup>2</sup> "The truth of the gospel must be proclaimed 'in love,' not with a combative attitude." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2406 footnote on Ephesians 4:15.

<sup>3</sup> What's being implied here, in verse 15, is not only truthful and loving SPEECH, but also "a truthful and loving manner of life." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1990 footnote on Ephesians 4:15.

<sup>4</sup> See also John 1:14.

<sup>5</sup> See 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, "...by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching.”<sup>6</sup>

> The 2<sup>nd</sup> group are the false teachers right at the end of verse 14: the cunning and crafty people who are deceitful in their scheming. These are the folks who need a loving rebuke for leading others astray; they’re drawing people away from the grace and truth that comes through Jesus Christ. Instead, they are misleading them with the lies of this age, and right into the plans of the enemy of our souls.<sup>7</sup>

There are competing voices in our world today, each one of them claiming to hold forth the real truths regarding LGBTQ+. Even within the broader Christian community, there are some significant differences of opinion regarding how we should approach this particular issue. We won’t have time today to dive into every one of these nuances, but we will make some clear affirmations, and we’ll give some gospel clarifications before we’re done.<sup>8</sup> Our focus today is on “A Compassionate, Truthful Response to LGBTQ+.” As always, let’s begin with compassion...

### **A compassionate response to LGBTQ+ means... ...empathizing with their situation.**

I’ll be the first one to admit that it’s difficult for me to genuinely empathize, because I’m not personally drawn to any of the lifestyles represented by these letters. I am a straight man who’s been happily married to my wife for over 30 years. I’m striving to be a godly husband, dad, grandpa, and pastor, but I’ve never once wondered about my pronouns, or felt incongruence with my gender, or been drawn to anything other than a heterosexual orientation. So I’ve been blessed with a high level of peace and harmony with my own body and my experience as a male. So, admittedly, it’s taken me a lot of personal study and conversation with friends and family who identify in these ways. It’s taken heartfelt, prayerful consideration in order to grow in my understanding and empathy for how it must feel for someone who doesn’t have the same peace and harmony with their own body and gender and sexual orientation.

My life experience, and my Christian faith, have taught me that every single person on this planet needs a personal relationship with Jesus, regardless of their gender or their sexual orientation. It has also taught me to value every single person as someone who’s been endowed with dignity and worth by our mutual Creator, God Himself, who made each and every one

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<sup>6</sup> I appreciate how my Study Bible says it: “Immaturity leads to instability and susceptibility to every kind of false teaching.” *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2406 footnote on Ephesians 4:14.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” In Acts 20:29-30 the Apostle Paul warns believers, “29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”

<sup>8</sup> However, there will still be much to learn and discuss, well beyond this one sermon. And we absolutely will not be able to address every question and concern that is represented by a group this size.

of us in His own image. We talked about this in our first sermon on Human Sexuality, “A Way That Seems Right.” Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This is the origin story for the entire human race, and it gives us our contextual anchor and compass for understanding Human Sexuality. So even as we empathize with anyone who isn’t feeling congruence with the gender they were assigned at birth, it’s important for those people to know that, first and foremost, you were created *by* God and in the image *of* God. This endows you with great worth, and with immense value and dignity. It’s also important for you to know that when God created the human race, He only made two genders; His design, was indeed a binary design. Whether we like it or not, whether we understand it or not, or whether we agree with it or not, this is the truth of Scripture. So any real and meaningful solution in our journey to finding harmony and wholeness in our gender and sexual orientation needs to be built upon accepting, and submitting to, God’s design.

Your dignity and worth are deeply rooted in being created in God’s image. Your gender, as either male or female, is also deeply rooted in being created that way, as part of God’s very good creation design.<sup>9</sup> Now we should acknowledge here that there are some very rare instances when determining a child’s birth sex is not so simple. In these rare situations, the parents need to make the best, prayerful decision they can, with the advice of medical professionals.<sup>10</sup> These special situations reminds us again of the importance of empathy, and the extra measure of grace required from the rest of us, who haven’t had to navigate this kind of challenge.

**A compassionate response to LGBTQ+ also means...  
...being kind and protecting them from bullying and violence.**

Tragically, some people’s failure to empathize with the situation of LGBTQ+ people, has led them to justify bullying and violence against them. Now, to my knowledge, this is not happening at our church, but it’s sure happened at other churches, and throughout many communities. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I hope that we can all agree that if we see unkind and ungodly behavior like this, we need to speak up and speak out against it. Who among us is perfect, or without confusion in some area of our lives? Who among us hasn’t needed God’s grace, and been treated so much better than we ever deserved to be treated? As people who’ve had God’s grace lavished upon us, we ought to treat those around us with a similar grace and unmerited favor.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Genesis 1:31.

<sup>10</sup> I understand that a very small percentage of people are born with genitals that may not clearly indicate male or female. In these very rare situations, the parents and their doctor will need to make the best decision they can. These “intersex” conditions can be due to various conditions about which we are still learning.

<sup>11</sup> See Ephesians 1:7-8 and Colossians 3:12-14.

Matthew 9:36 says, “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus didn’t just show compassion toward His inner circle, and then withhold it from the rest of the people, He had compassion on the entire crowd; He cared for all of them, ministered to all of them. When we see people in our world who are harassed and helpless, we need to respond with compassion and help them, even protect them when necessary, including and *especially* those who have no shepherd. Regardless of what we may think of their lifestyle choice, or their personal pronouns, or their sexual orientation, we need to demonstrate and live out the compassion and kindness of Christ to the world around us.<sup>12</sup>

With this compassionate response in mind, let’s now consider how it fits together with a truthful response.<sup>13</sup>

**A truthful response to LGBTQ+ means...**

**...being clear about what God’s Word, the Bible, teaches.**

In John 8:31-32, Jesus says, “31 ...If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Friends, nothing less than the truth of Jesus Christ will set any of us free from our spiritually lost condition, and the wind and the waves of false teaching all around us. Anyone who wants to find healing and wholeness, and to be made right with God, needs to go through Jesus. To be clear, His truth includes both the Old and New Testaments of God’s written Word, the Bible. God’s truth ALONE gives the ultimate guidance and direction that we need to live fully and freely, including in the area of our Human Sexuality.

Regardless of what others may have told you, or tried to convince you of, the Bible is crystal clear that same-sex behavior is outside of God’s design for Human Sexuality. It has always, unequivocally, been sinful. Let’s look at two examples from Scripture that are particularly clear. Leviticus 18:22 states it plainly: “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.” Romans 1:26-27 says that because humankind rejected God’s truth, “26 ...God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Romans 2:4 reminds us about how God’s kindness is intended to lead us to repentance; we need to remember God’s forbearance and patience with us, by practicing it toward the people around us.

<sup>13</sup> I appreciate how one ministry explains it: Posture is how we treat others. Position is what we believe. Posture Shift. <https://postureshift.com/about/>

<sup>14</sup> I preached on this text in more detail back on 2/26/23 if you’d like to learn more: <https://efcbemidji.org/sermon/approving-of-sins/>



Detestable, shameful, and unnatural - these are not my words, these are the words of Scripture. To be clear, *all* sin is detestable to God, whether it's the sin of homosexuals or heterosexuals, but these particular verses make it abundantly clear how God views same-sex behavior and lust. As harsh as these words may come across to us, our Creator has certainly not been unclear about His will in this matter.

*("Hold on Pastor Jerry, what happened to our "compassionate" response?" Friends, one of the most compassionate things that we can do for one another, is to offer a humble, loving warning about the real consequences of sin.)*

Despite the fact that every single one of our sins is absolutely detestable to a holy God, He is also a God of love, and a God of grace. Romans 5:20 declares, "...But where sin increased, *grace* increased all the more." God loves us despite our sin, despite our disobedience, despite our trespass against His boundaries for our Human Sexuality. And His love elicited within Him a response: "a compassionate, truthful response." He sent Jesus down to this earth to rescue us from our sin. In His relentless love and grace, God pursues us by offering us rescue and renewal through His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

Now, right in the midst of God's beautiful grace and truth, it's incredibly unfortunate that there are a number of churches and pastors, who call themselves Christians, who openly endorse, and approve of, same-sex behavior. In fact, they go so far as to openly advocate for it, and even celebrate it, even though God's Word gives such a clear prohibition against it.<sup>15</sup> This is not only sad and frustrating, it's also so incredibly unfair to LGBTQ+ people, because it only serves to intensify the confusion of an already confused sexuality, and it abandons them to sin.<sup>16 17 18</sup>

Isaiah 5:20-21 gives this warning,  
"20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,  
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,  
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.  
21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes  
and clever in their own sight."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Consider Romans 1:32.

<sup>16</sup> These are the same people who offer up false teachings, like saying that King David and Jonathan were gay, which is completely unfounded anywhere in Scripture. These kinds of things are absurd even to suggest, but that hasn't stopped some people from suggesting them anyhow. See 1 Samuel 18:1-4 and 2 Samuel 1:26. Also check out this article by Pastor Kevin DeYoung at [https://www.crossway.org/articles/were-david-and-jonathan-lovers/?srltid=AfmBOor\\_q7WfERJof3XAJLC-OmFvxkefBjfZqE2j8AN90vd-C3BzSw4](https://www.crossway.org/articles/were-david-and-jonathan-lovers/?srltid=AfmBOor_q7WfERJof3XAJLC-OmFvxkefBjfZqE2j8AN90vd-C3BzSw4)

<sup>17</sup> Those who've been entrusted with God's truth ought to know better, and they will be held accountable for their deception and false teachings. Consider Matthew 12:36, 2 Corinthians 2:17, and James 3:1.

<sup>18</sup> I'd be confused too, and I'd feel harassed and helpless, if I were feeling any of these attractions, and then looked for spiritual guidance and truth, and instead received spiritual lies and deception. Instead of loving clarity on the things of God, and the teaching of His word, far too many people in our world today, especially our younger generations, are having this lifestyle affirmed and celebrated by their own church, by their own pastor or other religious leader.

<sup>19</sup> In Isaiah 45 the LORD reminds His people that He alone is the potter, and they are the clay. In Isaiah 45:9 God declares, "Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to

Ephesians 4:14 comes back into view, "...tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming." This is actually yet another good reason for having a compassionate response to LGBTQ+ people: they continue to be tossed back and forth by the wind and waves of false teaching, not only within our culture, but also within some churches!<sup>20</sup>

**A truthful response to LGBTQ+ also means...**

**...being clear that there's genuine help and hope in the gospel.**

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 begins with a stern warning, and then concludes with some glorious good news, "9 ...Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Let's not fail to notice that the sin of "men having sex with other men" is listed right alongside many other sins, sins which will also and equally keep someone from inheriting the kingdom of God. This is a loving warning to *all* of us sinners this morning, heterosexual and homosexual alike. Those who continue living in these sinful ways, and do not repent and turn to Jesus in full surrender, will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The glorious good news is there at the beginning of verse 11: "And that is what some of you *were*." Past tense! Were! There is no sin which cannot be overcome by the cross of Jesus Christ. As the Apostle writes these words, some 2,000 years ago, he's declaring that some of the deeply devoted followers of Jesus in the church in Corinth were once caught up in the LGBTQ+ lifestyle. But not anymore! They'd found their identity in Christ! They'd been washed clean, they'd been sanctified and made holy, and they'd been justified and made right with God in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God! Friend, *that* is the Good News of the Gospel, which offers each and every one of us genuine help and hope!

We're going to close our service today with the song, "The Goodness of God." In fact, I'd like our worship team to come forward and prepare to lead us in that song. If you or someone you know would like some help in the area of LGBTQ+, we have multiple people who'd be honored to serve you: Our church has a Women's Ministry. You can email:

[efree@PaulBunyan.net](mailto:efree@PaulBunyan.net) and we'll put you in touch with them.

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the potter, 'What are you making?' ..." Also see Isaiah 29:16 as well as Isaiah 10:15. In a different context, this same question comes to bear in Romans 9:20, "...Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

<sup>20</sup> We should commend anyone who has left a church which teaches and affirms unbiblical lifestyle choices. We either serve and honor the living God as revealed in the Bible, or we don't.

We also have a Men's Purity Ministry, which you can email at:

[ConquerMe11@yahoo.com](mailto:ConquerMe11@yahoo.com)

And we have 3 pastors who'd be honored to serve you:

[PastorJerry@efcbemidji.org](mailto:PastorJerry@efcbemidji.org)

[PastorEric@efcbemidji.org](mailto:PastorEric@efcbemidji.org)

[PastorShane@efcbemidji.org](mailto:PastorShane@efcbemidji.org)

Our desire today is not to judge anyone else's sin as any worse than our own. Our desire is to share the hope that we've found in Christ with anyone who may be struggling to follow God's design, and to trust His goodness in the area of Human Sexuality. With that in mind, I'd like to conclude by offering up a special prayer for anyone who's on this journey. Ephesians 3:14-19 records the Apostle Paul's beautiful prayer for the people living in Ephesus. I'd like to offer up these words as a heartfelt prayer for any LGBTQ+ person who desires to follow after the God who created them:

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family, in heaven, and on earth, derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." In Jesus Name, Amen. <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Goodness of God can be listened to here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AwLTeMyq20&list=RD-AwLTeMyq20&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AwLTeMyq20&list=RD-AwLTeMyq20&start_radio=1)