

TOGETHER: Do not call good what God calls sin_112403

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I like the question, "What would Jesus do?" It helps clarify decisions we have to make every day. But many people have not studied the Bible enough to know what Jesus did.

Some who never have looked carefully at the gospels seem to have the idea that following Jesus only means being "really nice." C.S. Lewis said, "Jesus did not come to make us nice men, but new men."



Recently, some have claimed Jesus would not object to homosexual behavior or ordaining homosexual people to ministry. There is no question Jesus loves everyone and is willing to save those others would condemn. But this sometimes leads people to assume that Jesus blesses sin. In fact,

what Jesus does is stand beside sinners to give them a vision and hope for a new way of life. Jesus loves sinners too much to encourage us to go on in our sinful ways.

The Bible gives us the normative standard by which we know Jesus. No other book is definitive about the mind of Christ. We can pray and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to understand the Scripture and empower us in our personal walk. But our impressions are not on the same level as Scripture. Jesus is the standard or the criterion by which we interpret and understand the Bible. The Living Word of God (Jesus) comes from the same God that has inspired and given to us the written word of God (Scripture). Therefore, our assumptions about what Jesus might think about a matter can never be allowed to supercede the clear teaching of the Bible.

I was asked to comment on recent decisions being made by the Episcopal Church in America. I hesitate to enter into a debate in another Christian communion and would urge us all to pray for our brothers and sisters in the Anglican fold. But it is a very serious matter when any Christian body takes a stand that is in clear contradiction to the doctrines of Scripture and sets aside the wisdom of the church at large for its own ends.

Many are uncomfortable with any judgment against homosexual behavior, fearing it will be heard as unloving and condemning. There is good reason to be concerned when you read and hear some of the things that swirl around us. But now the other side of the matter has been pressed forward in the media and entertainment venues. Homosexual behavior is lauded, normalized and brought into every living room in America by television. A state judiciary has suggested there is no constitutional reason to prohibit the marriage of same-sex partners.

Of course, other sinful behaviors also are often presented in a common, matter-of-fact way, and we must guard against elevating one category of sin above all others. But it is important for Christians to say: "Homosexual

behavior is wrong. It is sinful behavior that goes against God's will for the human family." We can love people and seek their best interests when they are sinners. But we must not sin against them by thinking that loving them means approving sinful behavior. We must not call good what God calls sinful.

All of us need to repent of our sins and receive gratefully the forgiveness and mercy of God. We can expect from God his Spirit's strength to help us fight temptation and to help us live a renewed and growing Christian life.

We are loved.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.