

Adult Ed – 2/19/22

RCA and Beyond?

Session 6: Moving Forward - Clarity in Teaching and Discipleship

1. What kind of issue is the question of sex and marriage?
 - a. RCA Vision 2020 team: “functional diversity” in the RCA as a denomination.
 - b. Question: can a church (local or denominational) operate with “functional diversity” on this question, *even if they all hold to the authority of Scripture*?
 - i. Is this an essential matter? (we can’t just “agree to disagree”)
 - ii. Or is it non-essential? (an area of proper Christian liberty and diversity)
 - c. Three reasons why this is an essential issue.
 - i. The authority of Scripture: The whole of Scripture speaks clearly and consistently to the nature of marriage.
 - ii. Sanctifying grace and discipline: Scripture always takes unrepentant sexual immorality very seriously.
 1. Gentile nations judged by God due to idolatry and sexual immorality (Lev. 18:24-29)
 2. Unrepentant sexual immorality is cause for church discipline and raises the question of whether someone has truly embraced the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 5:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 3. The church’s mission depends on Spirit-filled sanctification (1 Cor. 6:12-20)
 - iii. The witness of church history.
 - d. Why “functional diversity” is not an option for a local church and/or denomination.
 - i. Teaching/doctrine. A church must have clarity on what it teaches regarding God’s call for bodies, sex, marriage, and singleness. If not, it is confused and confusing.
 - ii. Discipleship. A church must have clarity on what it means to follow Jesus in matters of sex, singleness, and marriage. There cannot be multiple standards of what faithful discipleship looks like in this area.
 - iii. Discipline. A church must have clarity on when someone needs to be confronted, called to repentance, and (if necessary) disciplined for unrepentant sin.

1. Failure to challenge and discipline anyone for sexual immorality in the church means that we have ceased to be the church.
 2. Failure to restore and encourage anyone who is repentant means that we are not working with Christ but falling prey to Satan (1 Cor. 2:5-11)
- iv. Hospitality. A church must have clarity for the sake of hospitality. It's not very friendly or welcoming to obscure or hide what you believe.
- v. Coordinated denominational efforts include things such as:
1. Training of pastors
 2. Mission work (foreign and domestic)
- These coordinated efforts generally require clarity and hospitality.

Takeaway: based on what we have covered thus far, it seems that:

- The RCA is not a good fit for us.
- We need to align ourselves with a denomination that holds to similar biblical, Reformed distinctives, and has clarity on the matter of sex, marriage, and singleness. As Christianity increasingly becomes a cultural minority, clarity around our teaching and discipleship in this area is critical.
- We need to develop the proper pastoral posture toward LGB people both inside and outside the church.

2. Foundations for a biblical theology of the body (Great Lakes Catechism)

- a. The body (and sex) are fundamentally good.
- b. The body (and sex) are affected by the fall.
- c. Scripture is the authoritative lens on bodies, sex, singleness, and marriage.
- d. The family of God is our first family. Both singleness and marriage should be "oriented" by the reality of the new family created by Jesus.
- e. Singleness and celibacy are good.
- f. Marriage is good.
 - i. Marriage is defined as the one-flesh union of male and female (two sexually different people).
 - ii. Sexual union is a covenantal act.
 - iii. The covenantal act/sexual activity divorced from its covenantal context embodies a lie about God.

3. Practical and Pastoral Concerns: LGB youth and adults in the church

- a. Emphasize that God's grace and love extend to anyone and everyone.
- b. It's "belong, believe, behave," not "behave, believe, belong."

- c. Sexual brokenness is a reality for all. Sexual holiness is the call for all.
(Reminder: Heterosexuality does not equal holiness.)
 - d. Distinguish between
 - i. Orientation
 - ii. Attraction
 - iii. Sexual desire / lust
 - iv. Sexual activity
 - e. Know what to say and do if/when someone comes out to you:
 - i. “Thank you for telling me.”
 - ii. “It takes a lot of courage to share this with someone.”
 - iii. “Know that I love you and your church family loves you.”
 - iv. “I will hold this in confidence.”
 - v. “I am here for you and want you to know that I’ll walk with you each step of the way.”
4. The church and the broader culture: interacting with our non-Christian LGB friends
- a. The Bible doesn’t expect non-Christians to act like Christians. Neither should we.
 - b. Interpersonally: Christians must treat our LGBT+ friends, neighbors, classmates, and co-workers with respect and kindness.
 - c. Socially and politically:
 - i. Christians can build bridges with the LGBT+ community by working against discrimination in areas such as housing and employment.
 - ii. Christians can affirm the reality of religious freedom for churches and Christian organizations to hold to the biblical view of marriage in their teaching and policies.