

# River Church

## Marlow

# My Contribution

Theological not ideological

- Explaining not persuading

I'm not an activist for 'LGBTQ rights'

This is not a 'blank canvas' question—the onus is on the alternative view to make its case over the traditional view

- Can the alternative view be truly evangelical and not 'liberal'?

# My Goal

To explain the reasons for there being  
'two views' on same-sex relationships, so  
that each of us can arrive at our own  
fully-informed personal conclusion on  
the appropriate Christian response

# Defining Our Terms

‘Homosexual’ derives from the Greek *homos* (meaning ‘same’) not the Latin *homo* (meaning ‘man’)

‘Gay’ refers especially (but not only) to male homosexual orientation,  
‘Lesbian’ only to female

# Framing The Question

How we frame the question is important because we're talking about people—and the impact of our answer on those people

*It's not just an academic theological matter of 'correct beliefs'*

Since we are evangelicals, the Bible will be front and centre in the conversation

# The Question

Whether our expectations of homosexual people in the expression of their sexuality should be the same as our expectations of heterosexual people

# Another Way of Framing It

How does God think and feel about  
homosexual people?

And in the light of that—how should  
his Church respond to homosexual  
people on his behalf?

# What The Question Is Not

Ignoring or subverting the authority of the  
Bible as the Word of God

Endorsing promiscuity, or something called  
‘the homosexual lifestyle’

Affirming anything and everything LGBTQ+

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“I’m just worried about what kind of world my  
grandchildren are going to grow up in”



# Week One: Setting The Scene

- Why our answer is so important
- Some of the issues and concerns that sit ‘below the surface’ for evangelicalism
  - That perhaps we share
- In view of the importance of the authority of Scripture for our question—
  - The basic principles of evangelical biblical interpretation

## Week Two: The Bible

- The Church's traditional position
  - Why should there be any reason to revisit that?
- What does the Bible say?
  - The relevant verses viewed through the lens of the basic principles of evangelical biblical interpretation

## Week Three: Drawing It Together

- Recapping Weeks One and Two
- The implications and pastoral application flowing from each of the 'two views'
- Conversation and questions
- Brief thoughts on transgender

# Your Opinion

Everyone has an opinion on this  
question already

Please take a moment to jot down  
the reasons for your opinion



# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

It's simply to do with what the Bible says  
and standing up for Christian truth—  
however unpopular that might be

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

It's 'a salvation issue'—people in same-sex marriages are living in sin and destined for hell

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Homosexual attraction is just temptation  
that should be resisted



# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether we believe that someone's sexuality  
can be changed through prayer ministry  
if they want it to be

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether our concerns are to do with  
safeguarding—and if so, what those concerns are

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

How uncomfortable we are with the ‘sex’  
aspects of same-sex relationships

Or whether we think it’s a minor point in the  
scheme of things—in the context of  
everything else about a couple’s life  
together as disciples of Jesus

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether we believe that being homosexual occurs naturally or is caused by other factors—such as upbringing or bad experiences in life

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

If we believe it occurs naturally, whether we think it's 'only natural' that God would want every person—gay or straight—to have an appropriate context for the expression of their sexuality

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether we believe that Psalm 139:13-14  
applies to a homosexual person just as  
much as a heterosexual person

‘You created my inmost being; you knit  
me together in my mother’s womb. I  
praise you because I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made ...’

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether we believe that it's simply a matter  
of accepting people as they are and  
allowing them to be who they are

That it's ultimately between each person and God—  
so our role is to love people, not judge them

That what goes on consensually behind closed doors  
in *any* formally-committed, monogamous,  
relationship is none of our business—we are not  
called to be 'curtain twitchers'

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether we think that it's wrong to put the  
interests of a disputed doctrine over the  
interests of people  
—especially if we know it's a 'close call'



# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

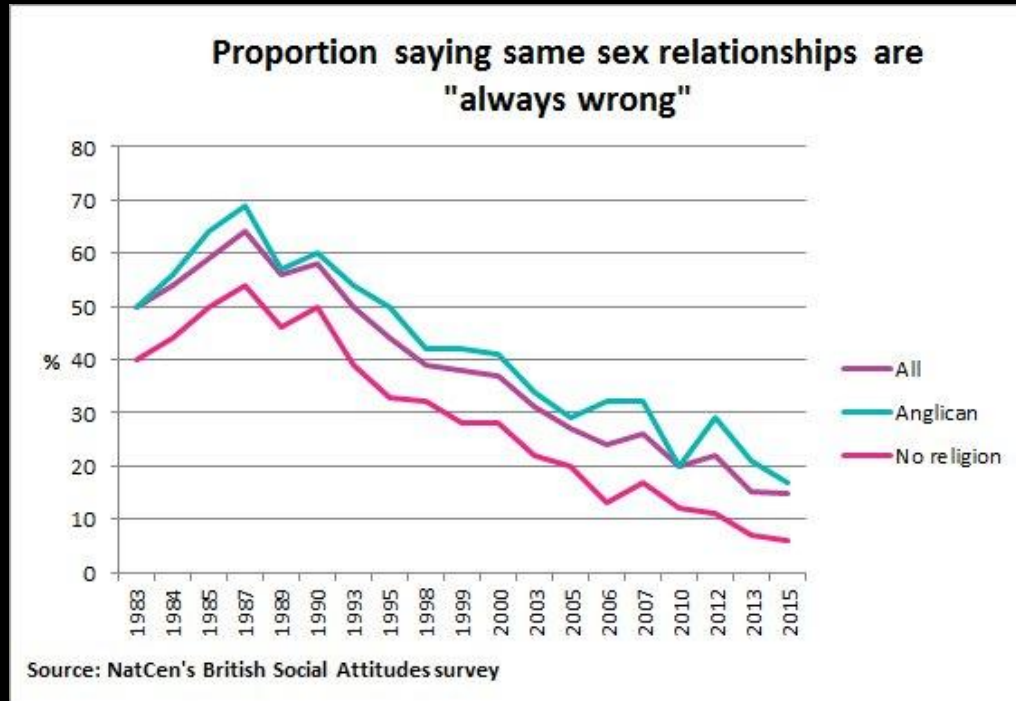
Whether we think that it's unkind and uncaring for conservative evangelicals to insist that homosexual people must grow old alone while heterosexuals are permitted (and encouraged) to have the affection and intimacy of a life partner

# Things That Maybe Influence Our Opinion?

Whether we think that conservative evangelicalism is over-focused on homosexuality while being selective towards moral and ethical concerns of Jesus that people in our world today see as far more important



# Why It's Important Missionally



# Why It's Important Missionally

- In schools, homophobia is seen as in the same category as racism and sexism
- Christian push-back based on 'The Bible says ...' (aka 'God disagrees') does not make the Bible look good or God look good
  - If unchurched people think the Bible is 'ridiculous' on this subject, how does that impact the credibility of what we say it teaches on anything else—especially Jesus?



# The Authority of Scripture

Imagine you know a new Christian who has read this in the Evangelical Alliance's Basis of Faith

“We believe in the divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God—fully trustworthy for faith and conduct”

They really want to be obeying the Bible but need your help with some of the things they've read . . .

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**\*utterly truthful**



# Scriptural Commands

**Y for Yes** = it applies to us today *in its exact original form*

**N for No** = it *does not* apply to us today in its exact original form

**P for Partially** = it applies to us today in part—or ‘in spirit’—based on ‘the underlying principle’

# 1 Timothy 2:8–12

8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray,  
lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

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with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or  
expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds,  
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appropriate for women who profess to worship

God. 11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.

# London School of Theology

“We believe that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are God-breathed since their writers spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; hence, they are fully trustworthy in all that they affirm; and as the written Word of God, they are our supreme authority for faith and conduct.

We acknowledge the need for the Scriptures to be rightly interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and using the gifts of understanding and scholarship that God has given to his people.”

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# The ‘Inspiration’ of The Bible

All Scripture is God-breathed\* and useful  
for teaching, rebuking, correcting and  
training in righteousness

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

\*Our word ‘inspiration’ is from the Latin *inspirare*—to  
‘blow into’ or ‘breathe upon’—compare Genesis 2:7  
and John 20:22

# Takeaway #1

There's no *interpretation-free* way of just reading the Bible and believing the Bible

- All Bible readers are interpreters
- Interpretation is unavoidable

Whenever someone says, 'The Bible says . . .'  
(plus a verse) or 'The Bible clearly teaches . . .'  
(such-and-such)—they're interpreting!



## Takeaway #2

There's also no *theology-free* option of just reading the Bible and believing the Bible

- We're all theologians
- 'Theology' is from the Greek for 'God' *theo* and 'words' *logos*

Theology is 'Thoughts about God and the things of God that we express through words'

# Takeaway #3

When it comes to ‘the authority’ of the Bible . . .

- It’s only speaking as ‘The Word of God’ when it’s being interpreted and applied well

So, the question is

- What does it look like for us to be reading the Bible well—on this or anything else?
- *How can we be confident we’re doing that?*



# Christian Beliefs

“We hold a theologically orthodox position and as such we ask Pioneer churches to affirm both the Nicene Creed and the Evangelical Alliance basis of faith”

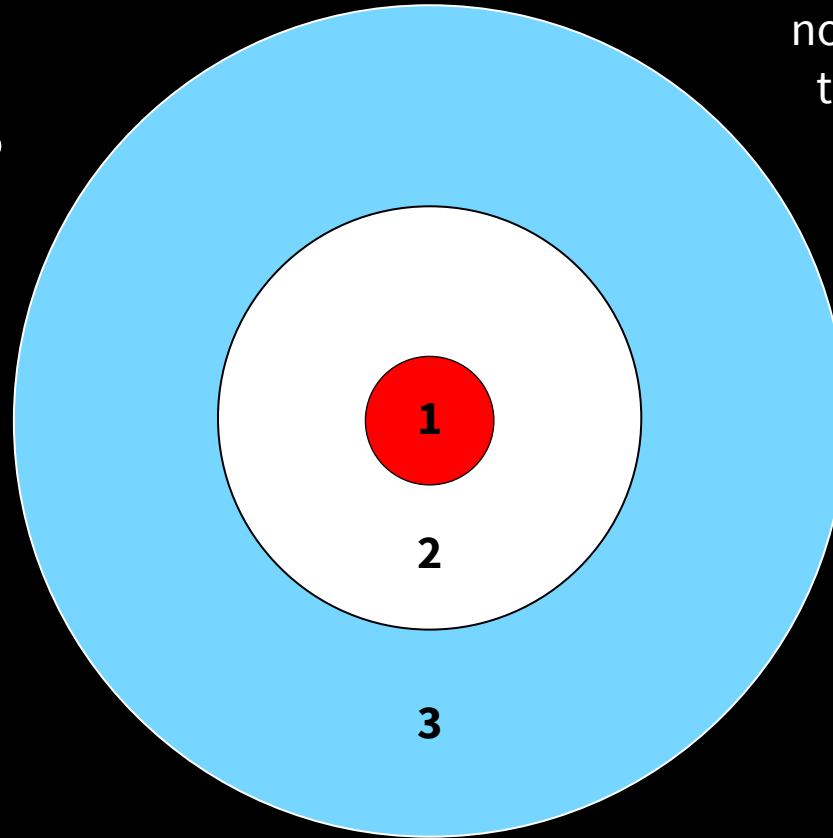
[pioneer.org.uk/about-us/](http://pioneer.org.uk/about-us/)

# What Christians Believe

**DOGMA**

**DOCTRINES**

**ADIAPHORA**



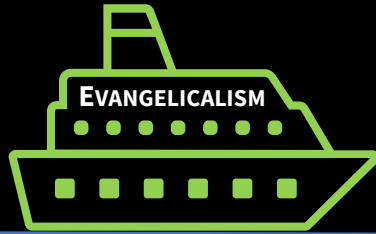
**1. DOGMA** = the essentials:  
non-negotiable beliefs  
that Christians have  
always agreed on

**2. DOCTRINES** =  
additional beliefs that  
a denomination or  
organisation requires  
to be part of it

**3. ADIAPHORA** = non-  
essential matters of  
opinion on which  
Christians can  
reasonably disagree



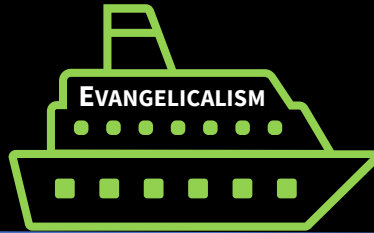
# Evangelicalism and Homosexuality



“The Bible says ...”  
*and Church tradition agrees*

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# Evangelicalism and Homosexuality



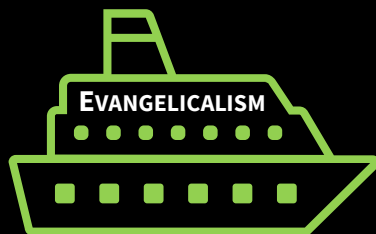
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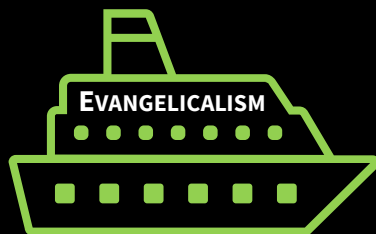
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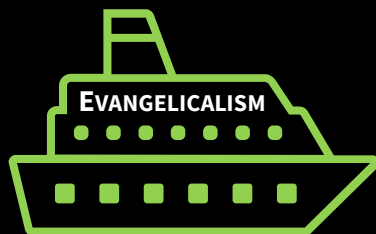
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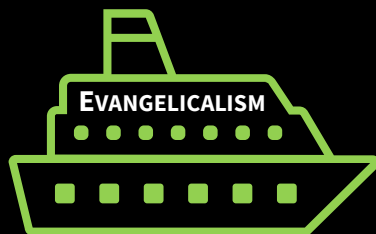
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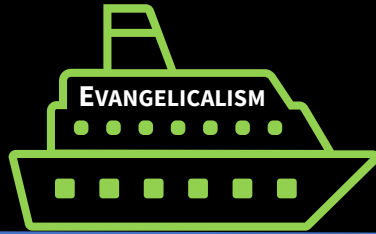
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The epicentre of a ‘culture war’ against ‘the spirit of the age’—*are you with us?*

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# The Basic Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation

# Biblical Interpretation #1

The meaning of a text is *always* what it would have meant to its original author and audience

- It's what *they* would have understood it to be saying, *about what*, and *why*

*“A text cannot mean what it never meant”*

*GORDON FEE & DOUGLAS STUART*

# Biblical Interpretation #2

Context, Context, Context is to biblical  
interpretation what Location,  
Location, Location is to property

How many aspects of 'context' can you  
identify that could be relevant to  
understanding a Bible verse?



# Some Features of Context

- Old Testament or New Testament
- The genre (type of writing)
- The surrounding verses
- Where it sits in the biblical story
- The words in the original language(s)
- The political background
- The economic background
- The cultural background and its societal 'norms'

# Some Features of Context

- *Who* was writing . . . *to whom* they were writing . . . *why* they were writing
- What else we know about the characters
- What the biblical writer knew and didn't
- Everything that people in the Ancient World thought was 'obvious'
  - About God, the gods, spiritual things, science, nature, the human body (such as, reproduction), medicine, the cosmos . . .

# Biblical Interpretation #3

Having decided the *original* meaning, we can then move on to the entirely separate question of whether its meaning *for us* is

- a. Exactly the same
- b. Something analogous—the same value or principle, outworked differently

OR

- c. Nothing at all—it was timebound for ‘there and then’

# Biblical Interpretation #4

Is the text prescribing something to be *normative* or just observing something that's *normally* the case?

Normative is 'setting a standard or pattern to which all should conform'

Normally, or the norm, is 'reflecting what was—and maybe still is—typically the case'

# Why All This Matters

## – Especially For Evangelicals –

‘Bringing out’ things that ARE in the text is called *exegesis*—which is the goal

‘Reading-in’ things that ARE NOT in the text is called *eisegesis*—which is bad practice

‘Proof-texting’ is extracting a verse (out of its context) and quoting it stand-alone as supposedly ‘proving’ something as ‘biblical’ when a contextual reading would not support that

# Biblical Interpretation #5

The Holy Spirit can speak to us  
*meaningfully through* a verse or passage  
in ways that *need not conform to* its  
original meaning

But that is *not the same as* its meaning

The two are often confused but ought not to be!

# The Old Testament Commandments

Which ones apply to Christians?

- a. All of them—they're all The Word of God
- b. None of them
- c. The 'moral' ones, but not the 'civil' or 'ceremonial' ones
- d. The ones that still seem to make sense in our world today
- e. The ones repeated in the New Testament

# River Church

## Marlow