

Dear City Leaders,

Thank you for the ways you love and serve those you lead. As an EMT, we recognize that you, as leaders, are often in discussions with people who are wrestling with how Scripture applies to their lives. We also recognize that the topic of sexuality and gender is a sensitive topic for many people. In light of this, we want to provide you with some direction and equipping as you lead during and after the “Unashamed” sermon series in February.

As you lead, consider the following:

1. If a discussion happens in a group that you are leading, allow people to express their concerns, struggles, and beliefs. Unless every person states their beliefs, assume that there are both traditional and affirming views in the room. Oftentimes in church settings, people don't feel free to express that they hold to an affirming view. There also may be closeted people in your group. Help steer the conversation to be productive and loving.
2. If you have a one-on-one conversation with someone, here are things to keep in mind
 - a. Express a desire to listen and understand them. Ask clarifying questions or reflect back what you are hearing to make sure you are understanding them.
 - b. Try to discern if they misunderstood something that was said in a sermon. This is common. You can say “I can see how you heard that, and I am not certain what he was intending to communicate, but I wonder if the intent was...” or “I can see how you heard that, but I heard it differently. I thought what he was trying to communicate was...”
 - c. Help them to identify what they need. Are they looking for someone to talk to about their child's sexuality? Are they wanting deeper theological study?
 - d. Encourage them to bring their concerns to God in prayer. Pray with them.
 - e. Encourage them to wrestle with God's Word. On both sides of the topic, people can make premature conclusions without studying God's Word.
 - f. If our traditional belief is a deal-breaker for someone, bless them if they decide to leave, and keep a wide-open door to return.
3. If you think that this topic may be difficult for someone, consider calling them to check-in. It shows loving care and concern when we are proactive. In general, keep your ears and eyes open for opportunities to shepherd.
4. At any point, let people know that they can sit down with any of the EMT to express concerns or get greater clarification.
5. If you feel stuck or feel hesitant to talk to people about their concerns, let another leader know so that we can make a game plan on how to follow those people up.
6. If someone wants to read a book on the topic, we suggest “People to Be Loved” by Preston Sprinkle. The book expresses a traditional view in a compassionate way. Preston also addresses affirming arguments.
7. Most importantly, let's commit to pray for the people in our church. Pray that their ears and minds would be open to truth and that they will grow in compassion for others.

Much of the above suggestions are taken from or adapted from “Leading a Church in a Time of Sexual Questioning” by Bruce B. Miller.