

Interview with Erwin Lutzer
April 2005

Servant: You are a Canadian.

Erwin: Yes, I'm a Saskatchewan boy. The last years we lived in Regina.

You're now preaching at Moody Church in Chicago. Tell us about your family.

My wife's name is Rebecca and we have 3 daughters, all married, and we have 5 grandchildren.

There are several books out on this topic, but I chose yours because it's short and because you are one of my favorite preachers.

Thank you. I tried to write it with compassion and understanding and I've actually received some letters from the gay community thanking me for my compassion.

That's great to hear. Tell us about the response that you've received.

The book has been very well received. I've even received some response from those in the homosexual community who have thanked me for the compassion that the book demonstrates. In fact a lesbian who wrote to me said that she felt that I understood lesbianism. She was abused as a child and I mention in the book that that's the way many women get into the movement. So I'm thankful. I had the privilege of speaking to 600 pastors in Kansas on this topic and gave them copies of my book and many legislators were there. The next day the legislature voted to have a law in Kansas that restricts marriage to one man and one woman and does not even regard civic unions. Actually I want to be clear that I can't take credit for that vote except that the legislature actually postponed their vote until after I had spoken and many of them were there. And now it will go to the general electorate in Kansas this spring. I've received letters saying this book has been used by many pastors to preach on the topic and to educate people regarding this matter.

Why did you choose to write the book?

I wrote the book because I found many Christians said that they were opposed to same-sex marriages but they didn't quite know why. In fact the general consensus was that we should allow them to live their lives and we live ours and let's just let them get married and what difference does it make to us? What they didn't understand is that when the definition of marriage is changed, it's changed for everybody. I'm sure it won't affect my marriage, but it will affect the marriage of my children and my grandchildren and future generations. So there's no way that the homosexuals can live in their community and we can live in ours. Think of it. What is taught in schools would have to change, including the whole concept of what makes a family. There are schools that are teaching that a family is any group of people and so forth, but that would just simply be accelerated and you can imagine the impact. The next thing on the docket is plural marriage. In the US the ACLU has already said that is something they want to fight for. After all, who are you to restrict the number of people that you're married to or whether it's a combination of males or females or whatever. Then of course, the other implication that is so far-reaching has to do with children and adoption. All the studies show that children who are nurtured in families where you have a father and a mother do much better than those who have only one parent or two parents of the same gender. To have a child adopted into a gay relationship, you're depriving them of either a father or a mother and no man can

take the place of a mother's love and no woman can model masculinity. So there's no question that the impact on the children would be great.

I recently spoke to a Canadian man of about 60 who was just pelting me with every question in the book on this topic and who was completely for it. He said that marriages are falling apart and it was better for a child to be raised with two loving parents than in a broken marriage. What would be your response to him?

I'd say two things. Of course it would be better for a child to be raised by, say, two loving lesbians than to be in an abusive heterosexual family. But then a second point I would make is that there is certainly no evidence that same-sex marriages last longer than heterosexual marriages. In fact, in my book you'll find statistics that demonstrate that. Even these supposedly loving, committed relationships don't last long at all. Men especially say they are committed to an emotional monogamy, not a physical one. In other words, even in the midst of their committed relationship, they have other sexual relationships. And here's an important issue: as a society we must always aim for that which is highest and good and we cannot institutionalize a principle of same-sex marriage just because of specific instances where a child might have been better off if he had been raised by a same-sex couple. That's not the way in which laws are made and that's not good for society. We do not change the law because of every possible exception to it that can be found.

I was just reading a Canadian Community Health Survey done in 2003. Just one percent of Canadians called themselves homosexual and only 0.7 percent more called themselves bisexual. How did such a small minority gain such a huge voice?

I do answer that in the first part of my book. The homosexuals in the '80s laid out a specific agenda. They decided to change the way in which America views homosexuality. The media, of course, has been their right arm, promoting pro-gay programs, etc and what they did is to say that as long as you talk about gay-ness as often and as loudly as possible you can make people think it is normal. Even hell can be represented as heaven if one has the right propaganda. So that was their agenda. Secondly they wanted to be portrayed as victims—of hatred, of crimes. So you have the hate-speech laws and as a result, hate-crimes. And of course, the media has really played into this. Portraying themselves as victims has really played on the sympathies of Canadians and Americans and people think to themselves: how terrible that these people are victimized when in point of fact that's not true at all. But they portray this and so people's sympathies lie in their direction.

One of the interesting parts of the book was the discussion of Matthew Shepherd. It definitely lends credence to what you just said.

Here's a drunken thug who kills someone who happens to be gay and suddenly the homosexuals latch on to this and the media plays into their hands and blames the murder indirectly to all those opposed to the gay agenda, including men like James Dobson. In effect they were blaming all of us. This is what our hatred caused. I need to say that we had a gay demonstration at Moody Church on the 12 of February.

So they were trying to say what?

There were about 30 of them and they had various chants that they used like "Separation of church and state; Moody is a house of hate." The interesting thing is that when you look at these demonstrators, they are filled with rage. Remember, this comes from those who say we are hateful. But there is a deeper issue here. We need to understand that

many of them have anger because they are dealing with abandonment issues that go back to their childhood. So we have to be very careful. We can't just stand in condemnation and say they're angrier than we are. We have to understand the cause of their anger. And for many of them it's been abuse, it's been misuse; it's been growing up in homes without a father and a mother, being thrown away by society. So they're deeply hurting people and we have to love them and treat them as such.

So what should we as believers be saying to the gay community if they will actually listen to us?

Well, as I say in the book, first of all we have to acknowledge our own sin. We're not coming from a position of self-righteousness; this is not a time for finger pointing. We have to point out that our opposition to same-sex marriages is not hateful. It is the most loving thing that we can do. For us to stand by and watch society radically altered through the transformation of our families would be deeply negligent on our part. So we need to help them understand that. We also need to help them see that God loves them, that there is forgiveness, that they can come to Christ as they are and receive his forgiveness and his help. Here in the US there was a program about a gay woman from a Christian home whose mother had rejected her. Then the program ended with this mother going to church and the choir singing "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me..." The whole point of the program was this: that you say it's ok to be who you are and to come to Christ that way, but you live differently. What the program lacked was the understanding that we do come to Christ as sinners, as adulterers, as alcoholics, as homosexuals—just as we are. But Christ loves us too much to leave us the way we came, so there's a transformation that happens. But they were trying to mock the idea that the church says you can come just as you are while on the other hand they reject somebody who's gay.

You are aware, of course, of what our minority Liberal government is doing up here. They just voted overwhelmingly at their party conference to go through with it at this time and they're pretty excited. Obviously it is a huge concern to people in our shoes. What is our country going to look like if same-sex marriages are allowed?

We do have some idea based on some places in Europe where the family has been almost destroyed, where the children are shunted from one set of parents to another and where the stability of the family has been grossly weakened. We also know that there will be more gay people later because homosexuality grows best in the soil of ruptured relationships. In the brokenness of the home, the abandonment issues, the abuse, the sexual abuse, all of those things begin to step up and in future generations the homosexual population will grow. And that's the kind of world we can expect--a world in which our children are taught that there's no difference whether you have a father or a mother or two mothers or five or three fathers and two mothers—whatever collection of adults happens to want to live together, they are married. Therefore, when we talk today about the breakup of the family, pornography, abuse and so on, this is only a small cloud in comparison to the storm that is about to break.

What have we as Christians neglected to say and do in this whole thing?

I think first of all as Christians we have neglected to share our faith, to understand that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. I was speaking to a Bible conference recently and I asked them to imagine if every one of us went home and invited two or three neighbors into our homes and befriended them and showed them the love of Christ

and explained the gospel to them. Not all in one evening necessarily. I'm talking about strategic, intentional friendships for the purpose of evangelism. We could greatly impact this nation because what the nation needs is more people who respond to the gospel and who love Christ. That's really ultimately what we need. Secondly, I think that we have watched all of these developments with growing concern and we're intimidated by the media and by our friends because there is a cultural stream that is flowing. The cultural stream is saying that homosexuality is normal, to prevent same-sex marriages is discrimination. That is the stream and it's been constantly promoted by the media in so many different ways that as Christians we've often been timid to stand against this cultural stream and to offer an alternative and to explain that Christ is there to save all of us. People say, well, what do you think of homosexuals? And my answer is that they are fellow human beings who need a Savior just like the rest of us. We have been silent about the gospel and about our stand in these matters, except when it becomes a big political thing. Then we write letters and make phone calls. But probably by then the cultural stream is already flowing to become a river and it's very difficult to stop.

I was just reading an article from the Calgary Herald pointing out many of the health issues, which somehow no one is discussing. Almost a third of young men who accept the gay orientation will be dead or HIV-positive by age 30. Canadian homosexuals have a life expectancy 8 – 20 years less than heterosexuals. I was amazed to find this. It's the first mention of those things I've found.

And those kinds of articles are buried in editorials and so forth, but they're not strong enough to counter the cultural stream. There are certain myths in our culture and once these myths lay hold and become a national myth, it doesn't matter how much science or rationality is against them. For example there are other myths. There's the myth that the Muslim religion is a peaceful religion. All of history is against that. The Koran is against that. But that's the cultural myth and if you stand against it you get a death threat. The point is that we live in a time when society wants to believe what it wants to believe.

Another thing the homosexual movement wants us to believe is that the only people who are opposed to same-sex marriage are Christians based on the Bible. That's not true. I can go to Japan. They don't have same-sex marriage and they're 99.5% not Christian, they're Buddhist and so forth. It's because it is rooted in universal, natural law. You can go to pagans and find one man with ten wives, but in fact nowhere do you find same-sex marriage, not even Greece and Rome, where homosexuality was rampant.

Our prime minister was just over in China and religious leaders there were pleading with him not to allow this thing and he completely ignored them.

There's something that I want to say that would be of great help. We always receive this criticism saying this is discrimination. It's not discrimination at all. We have certain laws to gain, say, a driver's license. If you don't meet that requirement, you can't have a driver's license. It's not discrimination. In the very same way there are certain laws as to what marriage is. If you don't meet the requirements, you don't meet the requirements. There are four requirements if you're going to get married. Number one is that you cannot currently be married to someone else. Number two, you cannot marry a child, number three, you cannot marry a close relative and number four you must marry someone of the opposite sex. If you don't meet those requirements, you don't meet the requirements to get married. The issue isn't that homosexuals shouldn't marry; just that when they do they should marry someone of the opposite sex. Then they would meet the

requirements of marriage. So there's no discrimination. The law is totally blind, it applies equally to everyone.

A friend of mine down in Boston who grew up in the church and is gay recently told me basically don't preach to me about this stuff until you get your own marriages in order. They're falling apart. I had to tell him I was sorry, that he was right. What do you say?

First of all I'd agree that our marriages are falling apart but the answer is not to go with same-sex marriage. Let's suppose that the value of the Canadian dollar is falling. It's falling with relationship to Europe and to the United States. So what do we say to ourselves? The dollar is falling, therefore what we're going to do is print counterfeit money. It would stimulate the economy. People would find there was more money to spend, they'd be buying more goods, and so forth. So as long as the dollar is falling, don't criticize our counterfeit money. Well, you and I know that in time counterfeit money would destroy the economy. And yet that's what the argument is when it comes to same-sex marriage. Our marriages are falling so the answer is to go in a direction where the marriages would turn out to be far worse, according even to the statistics of the homosexual community.

That's a tremendous illustration. How can we make sure that our churches are not a house of hate?

First of all I think it's very important for pastors to speak on this issue. And I think that the pastors themselves have to model compassion and understanding and that's where it begins. The best way to do that is to be reminded of our own great sins and to lead the congregation in repentance for our own sins and then in prayer for the country and for the homosexual community. Secondly we must learn from those who've learned from bitter experience that one of their children is homosexual. They're had to realize their hostility toward homosexuals and have suddenly had to begin to mellow. Let's always keep in mind that these are human beings with the same hopes and fears and dreams and desires for love that all of us have and therefore we must approach them as fellow travelers on this road of life. I believe that compassion and understanding are a bridge ultimately to the gospel because most homosexuals want to think that all they can hear from the church is condemnation with no hope, no forgiveness. In the US there's a man who goes to various events with signs saying "God hates fags" and of course the media is there every time. That image is so destructive to our Christian witness and it's the kind of demonstration and confrontation that we must studiously avoid.

This has probably been a pretty heavy time for you, has it?

When I preached on this at Moody Church this spring the congregation received it very well, in fact I received a standing ovation. So they were on our page. We did not advertise it widely except within the congregation so we did not have any demonstrations. Churches that advertise ahead of time might find that they get picketed and once my book went out and was read, the picketers showed up. Let's keep in mind that when that happens we just need to have a loving witness. We're not confronting them, we're not condemning them, we're letting them exercise what we call in America first amendments right to demonstrate and give their view point, and then we go on doing what God has called us to do. But let us not be intimidated.

Where do you find hope in the midst of these things?

I can only speak for America. There are certain things happening here. We still have Promise Keepers, 13,000 men, there are movements like that; large evangelical churches that are preaching the gospel and people are being saved; you have the possibility of using the media for the gospel. So all of these things demonstrate that Jesus is still building his church in the midst of it. And even at an eleventh hour God is still able to intervene, and if it happens that same-sex marriages are legalized, the church is going to continue to do what Jesus has called it to do, mainly to stand for truth in a loving way, to preach the gospel, to bring men and women to Christ, and to evangelize. And so we're going to do what we do no matter what the government does.

So maybe this is an opportunity for the church to really be the church?

I'm skeptical because the church is too complacent and I don't know whether they will step to the plate. But yes, exactly, it's always the right opportunity for the church to be the church.

When all is said and done, how would you like to be remembered?

A staff member of mine gave me the highest tribute when he said that on my tombstone should be written, "He loved the gospel." If I can be remembered for loving the gospel, that's the only remembrance I need. Jesus died for sinners like me and redeemed me and that's the way I'd like to be remembered.