

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Today is an application day. These are the real-life questions.

But first I want to acknowledge something very important.

- Today has the potential to be very helpful; it also has the potential to be very painful.
- For those who do not share the Biblical convictions I've been communicating for the past weeks, it's likely you may feel you're on the outside looking in, and we are talking about you.
- I desire to respect and include. I want to be practical in applying what I've taught. I acknowledge how this may feel.
- I sure hope you'll sense genuine love, respect, and concern.

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Today is an application day. These are the real-life questions.

1. I was speaking with (a loved one) and didn't know how to respond. I recently heard that he/she is in a gay relationship.

This is the first we met since then. How do I relate?

- What do I say?
- How do I interact with him/her?
- If I invite her/him for a meal, what about the partner?
- How do I respond to birthdays and holidays?
- What do I do with the awkwardness I feel?
- What do I say to our children?

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Today is an application day. These are the real-life questions.

2. A co-worker is gay. We work together well. She/He frequently talks about their gay relationship. How do I best relate?

- In this setting we're told not to mix our religious beliefs with our work. Yet it feels that to cheerfully listen and apparently affirm all that is said is a form of passive approval of convictions I don't share, and of behavior that will be long-term hurtful. How do I best relate?
- I so want to express godly love for this person. How do I express both acceptance and truth?

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Today is an application day. These are the real-life questions.

3. At school there is a strong emphasis on tolerance. I totally agree that we should all respect one another. But it seems that “tolerance” requires acceptance of the person, acceptance of the behavior, and *approval* of the behavior.

How do I best relate?

- Is it possible to distinguish between this type of “tolerance” (which includes approval) and a godly respect for and love of the person without approving the behavior? (Can you love the sinner and hate the sin?)

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Here are some principles as to how to best discern our response:

1. LOOK to Jesus.
2. SEARCH the Scriptures.
3. LOVE God, and your neighbor.
4. EXTEND grace and truth – to others, and to yourself.
5. WALK in humility and conviction.
6. LIVE in light of eternity.
7. RECOGNIZE the offensiveness of the gospel.
8. STAND FIRM in the midst of spiritual battle.
9. BEGIN with a godly fear/reverence of the Lord.
10. DON'T DO IT ALONE!

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Let's LOOK to Jesus:

1. It was all about honoring the Father.
2. Jesus' love for people flowed from his regard for his Father.
3. Jesus had personal clarity (clear convictions).
4. Jesus did not focus on "my happiness" or "my rights."
5. Jesus loved – accepted, related with, ate with – sinners.
6. Jesus called people to repent, to love and obey God first.
7. Jesus exuded grace and truth – all at the same time.
8. Jesus recognized the spiritual battle.
9. Jesus recognized that in this world there will be persecution.
10. Jesus prayed for us – for us to be united, to love as he did.

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

Let's SEARCH the Scriptures:

² *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

³ *And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.*

⁴ *Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*

⁵ *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*

⁶ *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

Colossians 4:2-6 (NIV1984)

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

How practical and specific can we get from Colossians 4:2-6?

1. We're going to need God's help. Talk to him about it.
2. Be thankful that God is partnering with you to love people.
3. Don't back away; instead, look for opportunities (open doors).
4. Look for *open* doors! :)
5. Recognize that our message is "the mystery of Christ."
6. Accept the consequences; don't let fear direct or stop you.
7. Seek to be clear. "Put things on the table."
8. Be wise; seek to embrace the people and the opportunities.
9. Fill your speech with grace; season it well!
10. Trust the Holy Spirit to give you an answer in each situation.

A FIRM FOUNDATION IN SHIFTING SAND

So How Do I Relate?

A few more thoughts from a pastor and fellow-traveler:

1. We're going to need to get "comfortable" with not feeling comfortable.
2. Avoidance is not long-term helpful.
3. For parents: We're going to have to be clear with our children.
4. We will need to obey God, and not fear people's responses.
5. Be loving and engaging.
6. Do not buy into the idea that to accept a person you must approve of their behavior.
7. We will need to work together, day by day.
8. It's a journey with eternal impact; let's walk with that truth.