

Leader’s Guide

Episode 12

Good News For The LGBTQ Culture

Summary

Many of us find it difficult to address spiritual issues with patients whose lifestyles are significantly different from our own. Jesus is a powerful example for us in His willingness to leave the comforts of heaven behind, in order to rescue us from our inappropriate lifestyle. We have far more in common with the LGBTQ community than we might first realize. Everyone struggles with identity issues, and our ability to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others is directly related to finding our identity in Christ.

Speaker

Dr. Jennifer Kang is an obstetrician-gynecologist in Redding, California, where she owns a faith-centered private practice. She has a passion to care for the medical and spiritual needs of her patients by creating a space where they can readily encounter the love of God. She enjoys sharing that passion through medical education and speaking. She also leads a non-profit organization, Selah Health International, whose mission is to connect Christian healthcare workers with projects that promote the health and well-being of women and children. She and her husband Nick are dedicated to raising their own four young children to know and live the love of Christ. For further information or to contact Dr. Jennifer Kang, you can email her at jennifer.kang@selahwomenshealth.com.

Discussion Questions

* + - 1. **What from this video inspired, edified or challenged you?**
			2. **What fears come up when you think about sharing good news with LGBTQ patients? What have you learned about the love of God that would help you with these fears?**

A common fear in this regard seems to be one of rejection. Some worry that if we talk about identity or spiritual things with our LGBTQ patients, they will immediately reject us or ridicule our faith. And perhaps they might. But we can bravely reach out, remembering the One who was rejected and yet did not let fear lead Him away from love. Just remember to share good news. “It’s not ok to be gay,” is not going to be received as good news. “It is ok to be on a journey discovering your identity, and Jesus accepts you where you are and will love you all the way,” is much better news.

Another common fear is that it will become our responsibility to answer every challenge or question about our faith beliefs from our LGBTQ patients. We fear they will mock our answers or become hostile with assumptions about our judgment of them. It is so reassuring to know Jesus already knew this very real fear several thousand years ago and specifically reassured us with this promise: “Now when they bring you before the synagogues and the officials and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12, NASB).

It is actually the whole purpose of Christ to break down hostilities and reconcile all people to Himself and to each other. “But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” (Ephesians 2:13-14, NASB). If the intention of His love is alive and working in us, we should expect to encounter the hostilities that keep people separated from God. But just as His love melted our own hostility toward Christ, He will do it again for those He brings to us. What if God specifically orchestrated for a particular person to encounter you because He is chasing their heart, and He trusts the work of His love in you enough to have you be His face….

* + - 1. **Carefully read over John 4:7-26. What can we learn about dealing with marginalized and rejected people from Jesus? How can we specifically imitate Him?**

Some of the points in this passage about Jesus and the woman: He broke across the cultural barriers of that day to even talk to this woman. He humbled Himself and asked her to help Him. He was compassionate as He spoke truth to this woman. He was willing to offer her something she really needed. And though He never condoned her sin, He gave her reason for hope that was greater than her sin.

* + - 1. **How can we notice things to affirm in people around us? For motivation, check out Philippians 4:8. How can we practice this with LGBTQ patients?**

Affirmation requires that you really see someone. It takes a little time, a few questions and some listening. But if you listen, you will hear clues about what they care about, what they hope for, what they’re working for. And every time you see or hear something that is good, that is beautiful, that is true—these are the opportunities to affirm and to encourage. “…whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8, NASB). Affirmation is the glue of human connection. It helps me to trust that you want to know me and that I could be safe to be known.

* + - 1. **Read Proverbs 15:1. What reminder does this verse give us in dealing with angry people? Give some examples of “soft” or “gentle” words.**

Soft words would be more than tone of voice. It would be words to communicate compassion, acceptance and value, since all people are created in the image of God. Not letting emotions get “hooked” by other people’s anger is key. The Holy Spirit helps us do that.

* + - 1. **How can we communicate comfort to patients when they express psychological or emotional pain? What phrases or stories can we use to tangibly give comfort to LGBTQ patients?**

First, it is important to learn to recognize when comfort is what is needed. Sometimes that way people act when they are afraid, grieving or feeling rejected doesn’t initially reflect that emotional state. Sometimes they project anger or rejection instead, when what they really crave is comfort and understanding. The Holy Spirit sees through all of us. “… the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among people knows the thoughts of a person except the spirit of the person that is in him? So also the thoughts of God no one knows, except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10-11, NASB).

Certainly, the practice of comfort is learned best from the ultimate Comforter “…who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:4, NASB). When I recognize that comfort is needed, I pay attention to the Holy Spirit within me guiding me toward thoughts and stories I can share. It is the sharing of our stories that can help to bring comfort and belonging.

I also internally ask the Holy Spirit to share with me God’s thoughts toward the person I’m with. Sometimes I will open this with, “Would you mind if I tell you some thoughts I’ve just had about you? Sometimes God whispers things to me about people. Would you like to know what He thinks of you today?” Most people don’t turn me down, whether out of true interest or just politeness, but I have watched so many have the most profound experiences with the love of God when I bravely share what I sense. In that moment, when a person hears what God thinks about them, no matter how simple, the God-space deep inside them finds its comfort.

* + - 1. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14.What does Paul list here as aspects of our identity in Christ? How has God taught you about your identity, and how could you share your story about that?**

Many words here: chosen, adoption as sons, grace freely bestowed, forgiveness, inheritance, redemption, sealed by the Holy Spirit. When the Lord convicts us of our need for forgiveness—which happens on a regular basis in the life of one walking with Jesus—we are reminded of the firm and sure promises of God’s Word, including those in this passage. Our identity in Christ frees us from the limitations of our sin and enables us to walk triumphantly with Jesus our brother.

* + - 1. **What aspects or attributes of Jesus would you want your LGBTQ patients to experience in their interactions with you?**

Jesus seemed to be forever offending the religious and self-righteous people of His day, but somehow His demeanor, His words and His love seemed to be an irresistible draw to the poor, the physically and socially desperate and the ones known as “sinners” of His day. He commented on this specifically in the story of His calling of Matthew that Mark records:

“And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, ‘Why is He eating with tax collectors and sinners?’And hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners’” (Mark 2:15-17, NASB).

The experiences people had with Jesus kept drawing more to Him. He was direct and sometimes even offensive in His language about what the kingdom of God was really like, and yet somehow His deep acceptance of them also challenged their paradigms and kept them coming back for more. He did not appear to have discomfort in the presence of their errors and failures. This incredible balance of unshakable confidence in what is real and true paired with unmatched and compassionate approval of the value and beauty of all people … this is the wonder of Jesus I most would want to have experienced from me. This real Jesus is such an uncommon experience that none of us can really deny the draw. We find ourselves so intrigued by the experience of Him that gradually we find ourselves following Him. He is able to transform us along the way until we can experience reality as He made it.

* + - 1. **When we deal with patients who have experienced great pain, how can the following verses help us? Lamentations 3:22-23 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.Give some specific examples of how we can show compassion and comfort.**

God is faithful, compassionate and love in every situation, even when we cannot understand what God might be doing.

God uses pain in our lives to give us a platform to minister to and comfort others.

1. **How has God taught you about your identity, and how could you tell your story about that?**

Every person, as they grow through life, can look back and realize how their views of themselves and their place and purpose in the world change and evolve over time. However, sometimes it takes a real depth of humility to admit the insecurity of this process and to expose the imperfections of your own discovery process. We often have ideals about ourselves that we are still unable to quite deliver on. We so easily entangle our sense of identity in what we are doing, or what we are hoping to do, or what we are striving to achieve, rather than who we were created to *be*. It is sometimes hard for us to see that who we are, right here and right now, even now brings pleasure and joy to our Creator who formed us for *Him.* Some of the most profound moments of realization of my life have come as I became aware that He delighted in me in spite of me. That I was a walking and breathing representation of some amazing aspect of Him, mirrored into this reality in a way that only I can do. I discover this identity more and more as I look intently into who He is. Because I was created to reflect this unique attribute of Him, I can only really find it *in Him*. The more I realize this mystery, then the more I don’t want to create and defend my own identity. I am most satisfied when I find the identity He handcrafted *for* me.

You can engage someone easily in a conversation about identity by reflecting on all the different ways you’ve seen yourself or dreamed yourself to be over the years, from the 5-year-old superhero to the teenage homecoming queen, to the devoted faithful parent who never misses a soccer game. You can appreciate so much about a person by learning about what things in their life shaped their view of themselves. Sometimes you are able to comment on the beautiful threads throughout their life that seem to run together into patterns expressing the true depth of who they are.

1. **Colin Smothers references the fact that some think of God as a “cosmic kill-joy.” Does this thought ever enter your mind? How do you seek to combat it?**

Even as we walk with Christ, we will on a regular basis run into biblical commands that run contrary to our desires. This is clear evidence that we do indeed need a Savior—not just for forgiveness, but also for the kind of heart change that makes us more like the One who died and rose on our behalf. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are filled with illustrations of our calling to submit our will to God’s will, as well as plenty of positive and negative examples. In fact, Jesus took on the punishment we deserve, so that we would become holy (2 Corinthians 5:21). God also empowers us through His love for us to love others (1 John 4:19).

1. **What is one take-home item from today’s session that you hope to implement?**

Additional Resources

1. Williams, Ken. (2021). The Journey Out: How I Followed Jesus Away From Gay. Destiny Image.
2. Woning, Elizabeth. Loving Lesbians: Experiencing The Love of God For Gay People. Audio recording.
3. Woning, Elizabeth. (2018). Surprised by Love: God's Heart and Homosexuality. Audio recording. SoundCloud.
4. <https://www.equippedtolove.com/>
5. Yuan, Christopher. (2018). Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story.
6. Yuan, Christopher. (2011). Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son’s Journey to God. A Broken Mother’s Search for Hope.
7. Domen, Jim. Not a Mistake.