

METROSEXUAL

3. A Love That Dares

This week's message was a conversation, not a preach. This is a chance for us to discuss our own reaction to things that were said.

In Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul explains that there are things that are of *first importance*: “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”. Then there are also topics of secondary importance that we can hold different interpretations on whilst still loving each other. What do you think of this idea? What does this look like practically? Is this how the church is perceived by the wider world on big issues?

Have you had any experience of friends - gay or straight - who have been put off church because of their perceptions of the church's treatment of LGBT people?

Jamie shared that he felt like he didn't fit into normal society, and so he found a home in the subculture of the LGBT community. How can we as a church welcome people who have felt rejected by normal society?

Jamie also shared that he felt pushed away, and even hated, by the church. However, on walking into Metro he was met with such a loving welcome that it felt like 'being hit by a brick'. How can we make sure this is the experience everyone has in our community (minus the bricks), regardless of where they have come from?

An important part of Jamie's story is that he was bought along by a friend, Andy. For Jamie, this meant that he could have open and honest conversations about faith and see the Holy Spirit in Andy. How do we play this role for our friends, especially those on the outside?

Alexandra shared her experiences of people telling her that she was just changing the Bible for her own purposes. How did you react to this? Was it surprising to hear that she really wanted to take the Bible seriously and investigate for herself?

She also shared that a lot of churches ignore the Bible and welcome gay people without asking the hard questions, but it was important for her to find a church that wrestled with what the bible says. How can we hold the tension of welcoming people whilst also not shying away from tough discussions? How can we make sure that we talk about these topics, rather than just ignoring them?

Philip talked about the fact that we as Woodlands hold to the traditional, historic teaching of the church on marriage as being between a man and a woman. But at the same time we want to love and support members of our community who genuinely have different convictions. What are the challenges of living within this tension? Would you prefer it if we laid down the law in a more black and white way and disciplined those who disagree?

Break down into small groups to pray about these issues. Pray for the LGBT community in Bristol, that God would do something incredible and reveal Himself to them. Pray that they would find their way into churches, find a welcome, and find faith in Jesus. Pray for God's grace to be with us as a church, that we can hold onto each other, even when we disagree strongly on sensitive issues. Pray for the leaders of the church in Bristol - for wisdom, for insight and for compassion.