

PASTOR'S PENSÉES



The Longest Mile

by Cole Huffman

The tension between our religious liberty and anti-discrimination considerations for LGBT people is thick. Should you get into a conversation about this with someone and they discover you are religious, they might ask you what you have against LGBT people. How do you respond? If someone flatly states you must think all gay people are sinners going straight to Hell, how do you respond? I have four ideas on this.

First, don't get pushed into a corner. Slow the conversation. Ask clarifying questions like: *What do you mean by "sinner"?* They think that's *your* question to answer as the Christian, and it is, but try to get their thoughts on it first.

Most people don't want their LGBT friends to be thought of as evil. That's fair. Many of them are good neighbors. Sin does not make one a bad person in the sense of monstrous. It makes every one of us condemned before God for our unrighteousness and self-righteousness. But as God's image-bearers all sinful human beings possess dignity and the potential for eternal glory.

Our sinfulness is what harms God's *shalom*, a Hebrew word that includes everything that leads or lends to human flourishing. LGBT is sinful because it neither leads nor lends to human flourishing. This is not meant to be a cold bottom line, but why God discourages these things in Scripture and life.

Second, ask your questioner if they believe gender concerns are of equal importance to race concerns. They will agree, likely. The scorn aimed at racism extends to anything that looks discriminating to LGBT people. Opposing what homosexuality or transgenderism *is*, even in principle, is considered discriminating on its face. We live in a time in which disagreement equates to rejection, even hatred.

Gender and race *are* equal in importance. The difference is that race is a superficial distinction (skin deep) between otherwise full human beings, while gender is a fundamental distinction (male and female) between otherwise full human beings. Racism makes superficial differences fundamental. LGBT makes fundamental differences superficial. A thoughtful person can see the problem: it is inconsistent to treat race sacredly as fixed but then desecralize gender by treating it as fluid.

Third, love your neighbor. LGBT people and their friends are right to complain when we appear more focused on their sin than ours, or give the impression theirs is a fast pass to Hell. Heterosexuality is not what takes you to Heaven! Only Jesus' righteousness does. If homosexuality puts one in Hell, it is because the LGBT person has added self-righteousness to unrighteousness, refusing Jesus' righteousness to cover both. There are plenty of heterosexual people in that boat.

Fourth and finally, don't rely on winsomeness to win the day. Culturally, we're too far out past the shallows. LGBT people have successfully fought to have their orientation privileged. It is still part of our gospel stewardship to point people to the sexual ethics of Jesus. Let's be as gracious about this as we can be but realize our convictions are considered bigoted even when we're nice.

Recently, I gave a couple of my daughters an analogy for how these cultural shifts run. (Christian teens feel incredible pressure now to legitimize LGBT experiences.) I used the four laps of a mile relay. The gun went off some fifty years ago at the sexual revolution; the first lap was "free love" heterosexual hedonism. The baton was then passed to "L" and "G" and homosexuality was normalized. "B" and "T" are running the third lap now, gaining speed. (This discussion with my girls was prompted by one of them volunteering to me that a pop artist on the radio is "bi.")

Who will run the fourth lap? Perhaps it will be the polyamorous, or pedophiles seeking legitimacy, or bestializers, or sex



bot lovers, or all the above making a grab for the baton to make their run at mainstream acceptance. The mainstream crowd seems ready to cheer anyone on this track because, to adapt the assassins' maxim in the video game *Assassin's Creed*, nothing is true when everything is permitted.

Have you heard Alexander the Great's famous line about not being afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep? He said he was afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion. Jesus leads his sheep to resiliency and greater fidelity to creeds. He leads us to build the kind of fellowship that emboldens faithfulness at cost.

Israel was told that "strong" and "courageous" were to be her watchwords as she entered a land where the inhabitants ran wild. I'm not spending a lot of time worrying about religious liberty nowadays. I don't want to lose it, but the fear is not keeping me up at night. I'm not keeping time by the stopwatch down at the track.

Let's train ourselves for godliness. Let's look to Jesus, the undefeated author and finisher of our faith. Let's give ourselves to gospel wakefulness and unrelenting engagement with reality for Jesus' sake.

The world around us needs us to be *more* completely the Lord's, not less. If it seems dark outside to you, remember that every day Jesus is calling people into light. Until all sheep fall in step behind Him.

"Exalted Among the Nations" Global Missions Conference

Friday–Sunday, February 22–24

*Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!*
(Psalm 46:10)

We will hear stories from around the world about how God is making His name known among the nations, and learn about how to help exalt Him at home and abroad.



Conference Speaker: Ronnie Stevens

Ronnie is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated from the *University of Georgia* and *Dallas Theological Seminary*. The beloved former Pastor of First Evan (1994–2003),



Ronnie has also pastored churches in North Carolina, Munich, Budapest, and Moscow. Ronnie and Jane are missionaries with *Entrust*, living in Moscow, Russia. Ronnie has an extensive teaching and preaching ministry throughout Europe and the Middle East. They have three adult children and six grandsons.

"Go Tell It On The Mountain" Kids' Missions Conference (KMC)

(For ages 3 ½ years old–5th gr.) (Childcare: nursery–age 3)

Join us for a weekend to experience cross-cultural missions by exploring the cultures, traditions, snacks, and pastimes of other countries! Kids will enjoy discovering more about other countries and how people from our church are sharing God's love across the globe. Register by Wednesday, February 6 for your child to receive a free t-shirt! Nursery is available for ages 3 and under; please register your little ones as well at www.firstevan.org/kmc.

Multicultural Worship Led By Proskuneeo



Proskuneeo Ministries helps the Body of Christ to see, live, and share the vision of multicultural, Jesus-centered worshipping communities on earth as in heaven. The Bible is clear that one day we will gather with people from every nation to worship God around the throne. And yet, here on earth, churches are often segregated by race, age, language, denomination, and style. We believe that Jesus is worthy of diverse, united praise.

Conference Project: "Exalting God in Nepal"

We will raise funds to help *GLOW (God Loves Orphans and Widows)*, a ministry of *Nepal Gospel Centre* which offers biblical and practical training to equip disadvantaged women to support their families.

Behind the Scenes: God at Work by Andrew Spurgeon, *Global Outreach*, Singapore (*Singapore Bible College*)



I hesitated last semester when the day came for me to take the eight seminary students I mentor out for street evangelism. I share the gospel



regularly, but it is somewhat intimidating to **demonstrate** evangelism in front of students. So I prayed diligently. We made the short walk from the seminary to "Little India," an area of Singapore where Indians speak my language, Tamil. The first four people we approached refused to listen to us. I told my students not to be discouraged.

Eventually, the Lord led us to a back alley where two Indians were drinking and chatting. I asked, "May I sit with you? I am teaching my students a lesson about sharing one's faith." One man said, "Yes, Sir. Today is my daughter's birthday. She lives in India. I am getting ready to wish her birthday greetings. If you wish her birthday greetings, then I'll listen to you." So I spoke to his teenage daughter on the phone. After greeting her with birthday wishes, I shared the gospel with her. She surprised me by saying she was a Christian! She had heard the gospel in her school and accepted the Lord as her Savior. She had been praying for her unsaved dad and was glad I was visiting him and sharing the gospel. After the phone conversation, the students and I shared the gospel with the two Indian men, Kumar and Ravi. Although they didn't accept the gospel, we formed a friendship. My students and I have been visiting the two men regularly.

On that day, my students and I learned God is at work behind the scenes, even when we don't realize it. He went ahead of us and prepared those two men. Would you pray with us that God will continue to work in their hearts and open their eyes to the Lord Jesus Christ?

More info and schedule details: www.firstevan.org/gmc

Joseph Marsh Joins Our Staff

Lifelong First Evaner Joseph Marsh joins our team as Global Missions Intern, working primarily in graphic design. He is currently a sophomore Economics major at the University of Memphis and enjoys a variety of extracurricular activities. He feels passionate about photography, philosophy, religion, health and fitness, cooking, and music.



Global Missions Team Nominations

The *Global Missions Team* is committed to providing leadership to First Evan's global outreach. Participants must be members of First Evan with a growing knowledge of worldwide missions. They need sufficient time to devote to caring for our missionaries and raising awareness of missions at FEC. Please submit nominations to missions@firstevan.org.

WORSHIP

Palm Sunday Services

Sunday, April 14, 9:00 and 10:45 a.m.

Presented by the Worship Ministry, assisted by members of the *Memphis Symphony Orchestra*

Singers who are not regular members of the *Worship Choir* are invited to join us for these special services. On Sunday, March 3, there will be lunch in the Chapel at noon, followed by a preview rehearsal in the Sanctuary from 1:00–3:00 p.m. Please contact the Worship Office at 682-8452 or jspurlin@firstevan.org if you would like to join.

Beginning on March 10, there will be weekly rehearsals on Sunday afternoons from 4:00–5:45 p.m.

Baptism

Sunday, March 31, 10:45 a.m., Sanctuary
Please register by Monday, March 18 at www.firstevan.org/baptism.

RECREATION

ESCRA Spring Soccer

Ages: 4–12; Cost: \$65/child

Season: March 29/30–May 17/18

Register by Monday, February 18 at www.firstevan.org/soccer.

Adult Coed Softball

Cost: \$65/player (includes jersey)

Season: Tuesday nights beginning April 9
Register by Monday, March 18 at www.firstevan.org/softball.



CHURCH-WIDE

Welcome New Members!

Ben & Chalise Bondurant
2539 Kenwood
Bartlett, TN 38134

Leng Leav
1283 E. Kamali Cv.
Bartlett, TN 38134

Save the Date:

Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, March 23

7:30–10:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall

Cost: \$5/person; \$20/family

This fundraiser makes scouting affordable for every boy by helping to cover program, equipment, and camping costs. Tickets are available from troop members Sundays and Wednesdays and the day of the event. For more information, please contact Richard Marsh at 482-4429.

STUDENTS

Boy Scout Troop 276 (gr. 6+, E202, E226)

Cub Scouts (gr. 2–5, E234; every other week)

Tuesdays, 6:45–8:15 p.m.

We are a Christ-centered troop helping boys grow into authentic godly men. For more information, contact Richard Marsh at 482-4429.

Save the Dates: Sundays, February 17, March 3 and 24, April 7 and 28

Impact "The Gathering"

6:15–8:00 p.m., The Ferwerda Abode
(2329 Lynnfield St., Memphis 38119)

We all need a break. This semester will focus on resting in God's Word and worshipping Him as a family.

Common Ground "Light Nights"

6:30–8:15 p.m., The Berr Den
(4969 Flamingo Rd., Memphis 38117)

Come join us as we eat together, worship together, and pray together.

MEN

Men's Fish Fry

Guest Speaker: Ronnie Stevens

Tuesday, February 12, 6:00 p.m., F-Hall

Cost: \$7/person or \$50/table

Join us for an evening of fish, food, and fellowship. Contact Shawn Wilkins at 831-5824 for available tickets.

Save the Date: Men's Retreat
April 26–28, Mammoth Spring, AR

WOMEN

A Colorful Day "My Anchor Holds"

Saturday, February 9, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Come join us for a special day filled with learning, creativity, and encouragement. You will have the opportunity to sign up for two electives taught by women of First Evan and will enjoy brunch between sessions. During the brunch, Kellie (Edmundson) Turnage will share her testimony about how God was her anchor during a difficult time in her life. **Cost: \$10. Contact Sharon Mrok at 682-8452 for availability.**

MEMPHIS MINISTRIES

Meet Memphis Saturday, April 6

Join us as we engage our neighbors across the city. Registration begins Sunday, February 17 at www.firstevan.org/meetmemphis. We look forward to serving together.



ADULTS

LLL Movie Day

Monday, February 18

1:00 p.m., Chapel

Out of the Ashes: C.T. Studd
Cricketer & Missionary



"Swing Into Spring" Senior Luncheon

Saturday, March 2

11:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall

RSVP to Susanna Winter by Tuesday, February 26 at dswinter@bellsouth.net or call 487-2819.



CARE

ACT II Widows Fellowship Luncheon and Tea

Monday, February 4

11:00 a.m., Jo Anne Clark's Home

(548 Valleybrook Dr., Memphis, 38120)

Dr. Jim Reardon will speak. For more information, contact Cathy Graham at 685-1028.

Caregivers (Ministry to those caring for others)

Monday, February 25, 7:00 p.m., Chapel

Speakers Joy Williams and Susan Crowson of *Geriatric Plans and Services* will discuss "Geriatric plans and services—mapping the way through challenging times."

He Cares (Ministry to the homebound)

Thursday, February 28

9:30 a.m., Soltau Center

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

“To glorify Jesus Christ and magnify His gospel in all of life until He comes.”

Sunday School Classes
9:30–10:30 a.m.

Fellowship 10:30 a.m.

Worship Service
10:45 a.m.–noon
Sanctuary

Evening Worship Service
6:00–7:00 p.m.
Chapel

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LIVE STREAM WORSHIP SERVICES

www.firstevan.org/watch

CALENDAR

February

- 3 Communion | *Discover First Evan (Part 2)* 9:30 a.m., E236
- 4 *ACT II* Widows Fellowship 11:00 a.m., Jo Anne Clarke's Home (548 Valleybrook Dr., Memphis, 38120)
Men's Bible Study Resumes 6:30–8:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall
- 9 *A Colorful Day* 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.
- 10 Child Dedication 10:45 a.m., Sanctuary
- 11 Deacon/Elder Meeting
- 12 *Men's Fish Fry* 6:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall
- 18 *LLL Movie Day* 1:00 p.m., Chapel
- 21 *Recreation Lunch and Learn* 12:00–1:00 p.m., E111

22–24 **Global Missions Conference | Kids' Missions Conference**

- 22 5:00 p.m. Dinner, Fellowship Hall | 6:15 p.m. Opening Service, Sanctuary | 8:00 p.m. Student Event
- 23 8:30–9:00 a.m. Light Breakfast, Fellowship Hall | 9:00 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. Devotional, Reports, and Seminars
12:30 p.m. Fellowship Lunch, Fellowship Hall | Evening—Sunday School Dinners with Missionaries
- 24 9:30 a.m. Sunday School with Missionaries | 10:45 a.m. Global Worship Celebration, Sanctuary
12:00 p.m. Fellowship Lunch, Fellowship Hall | 6:00 p.m. Closing Service, Sanctuary
- 25 *Men's Prayer Breakfast with Missionaries* 6:15–7:45 a.m., Fellowship Hall
Caregivers 7:00 p.m., Chapel
- 28 *He Cares* 9:30 a.m., Soltau Center

March

- 2 "Swing Into Spring" Senior Luncheon 11:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall
- 3 Communion | *World Prayer Focus* 5:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall
- 4 *ACT II* Widows Fellowship 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- 10 *Daylight Saving Time Begins* Spring Forward!
- 11–15 *Spring Break* (No MDO; No Heart to Heart; No Midweek Fellowship Meal or activities)
- 13 *Common Ground* Hiking Trip
- 18 *LLL Movie Day* 1:00 p.m., Chapel | Deacon/Elder Meeting
- 23 *Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast* 7:30–10:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall
Original Strength Workshop/Certification 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Recreation Center
- 24 Missions Lunch 12:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall
- 28 *He Cares* 9:30 a.m., Soltau Center
- 31 Baptism | Church Picnic 12:00 p.m., East Lawn