

30 Best-Practice Tips on Preaching for LGBT+ Inclusion and Care

WRITING YOUR 'POSTURE SHIFT' SERMON



THE MOST CHALLENGING QUESTIONS we face are from faithful pastors who ask how they can effectively extend the Gospel to LGBT+ people.

Beyond one-on-one engagement, teaching from the pulpit is a key channel through which LGBT+ people can hear your heart. Equally as important, preaching offers an opportunity to broadly set a generous posture for your congregation to follow in genuinely loving LGBT+ family and friends.

Your message could be what keeps an LGBT+ young adult sitting in the pews continuing to grow in their faith. Or maybe it will prevent an act of bullying perpetrated against LGBT+ youth. It could alter the course of a rejecting parent whose child is

at risk of suicide and end up saving a life. Maybe it will even convince the next generation that your church is committed to loving mercy and doing justice.

No wonder sermon consulting review is one of our highest-demand services. Pastors across North America and beyond are seeking to find creative ways to honor God while conveying love for LGBT+ people of all ages. We call this messaging a **'Posture Shift' Sermon**.

Since 2005, we have consulted thousands of pastors on excelling in their pulpit messaging in order to effectively reach LGBT+ people, parents and families of LGBT+ people, and the next generation.

Pastors using our guiding principles have found that they apply effectively in broader contexts of life, ministry, and Gospel messaging. We pray that our 30 best-practice tips will serve as a helpful resource for you.

MOVE BEYOND “THE ISSUE” TO REAL PEOPLE.

01 Invite LGBT+ persons who may be hurt by your message to your dinner table. Specifically notify gay couples so they can decide whether or not their children should attend.

02 Every word counts! Ask numerous individuals you trust to review your message to get an initial indication of how it is perceived. Lead Them Home can help via Posture Shift Sermon Consulting service.

03 Move beyond “the issue” of homosexuality to focus on “real people” who identify as LGBT+ or experience same-sex attraction (or SSA).

04 Explain to your congregation why words and phrases like gay lifestyle, lifestyle choice, sexual preference, alternative lifestyle, practicing homosexual and love the sinner, hate the sin can deeply hurt or trigger LGBT+ people. Biblically, we are called to so hate our own sin that we actually repent; and likewise, to love others whether or not they ever repent (see Matthew 7:5).

05 We must stop addressing homosexuality as an issue “out there” and start recognizing that we are talking about our children in the church. Too often, our messages give the impression of a hypothetical person. Pastors should directly say, “If you are gay and nobody knows, I want you to know that I will make this church safe for you. I would love to hear your story. I invite you to contact me.”

06 Take LGBT+ listeners to lunch the week after your sermon to ask their opinion about what you said that was helpful – and anything you may have shared which was hurtful. Assure them of your love.

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KEEP YOUR LEADERS AND CONGREGATION IN THE LOOP.

07 Assure your leadership team and congregation about where you are going – and where you are not going – both in your theological position and in your missional posture. Do not leave people to fear your direction, or else they may disengage from listening (and being transformed).

08 John the Baptist was a holy man, yet he denied no one desiring to be baptized. He did not take an inventory of sin: he dunked anyone who came. Jesus taught to let the “tares” grow with the “wheat.” Gay people are not tares *per se*, but the lesson remains: **inclusion is the way to grow faith identity.**

09 Offer a powerful call to see LGBT+ people as our family: “We must move beyond us-and-them attitudes. These are OUR kids: our youth and our young adults in our church family.”

10 Help people overcome the fear of condoning or enabling sin. Say: “Gay people are not in love because of you. You don’t have that much power. Your greatest power lies in the opportunity you have to love others like Jesus loves.”

11 People may accuse you of using Scripture out of context or referring to only one Scripture, so draw upon numerous examples to show how Jesus responds to sinners. Look for passages from the “big T” Truth writers in Scripture. Paul’s Romans 2:1-4 is one of the most powerful passages in the Bible.

12 You cannot move people’s hearts if you only appeal to human compassion. You must demonstrate that many of Jesus’ parables confront religious people who point God against weak or sinful people.

13 Connect your call to love to biblical examples of how Jesus loves. Jesus goes to hurting people. He invites banished people. He dines with sinners. He was called demonic and heretic for doing so.

14 Leaders can no longer speak in different words to different audiences. In an internet age with sermons online, we must have a singular message. Only preach what you are willing to post online.

Honor God. Love people. **Lead courageously.**

A biblically sound, missiological training designed to enhance LGBT+ church inclusion and care

POSTURE SHIFT 



DON'T SHIFT FROM SOUND THEOLOGY.

15 Our world tends to set “love” and “truth” in a binary against one another, whereas the fullness of Jesus exudes both fully and simultaneously. Prove that you can speak love and truth in your life, messages, programming, classes, and other initiatives.

16 Ask your congregation: “Does loving gay people cost you your biblical beliefs?” One gay researcher has said this to the evangelical church: “Keep your deeply held biblical beliefs, but just as diligently learn to love your children well.” **Love does not sacrifice the Gospel: it fulfills it.**

17 Give your congregation assurance that inclusion does not mean “anyone can serve in any position” and remind everyone that this reality goes for everyone – not just LGBT+ people. Offer assurance that lay leaders entrusted with teaching authority must teach in a biblical manner that honors God.

18 Protect against theology shifts by distinguishing gender, race, ethnicity, diet and clothing (non-moral issues) from sexuality (moral issue). Many compare sexuality to race and gender implying that they are on the same moral plane. The true common thread is that LGBT+ persons have been mistreated similarly to how women and racial minorities were once (and sometimes still are) mistreated. A justice generation in a sexually addicted world has difficulty discerning “in-out” injustice matters from “right-wrong” righteousness (holiness) matters. Our history of excluding many kinds of people contributes to this moral confusion.

19 When clarifying your church’s orthodoxy, avoid saying “this is my view.” This leads congregants to fear that a biblical view is dependent upon a personality rather than what the Bible teaches.

HOW WILL YOU CARE FOR PARENTS OF LGBT+ YOUTH?

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ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHURCH'S HISTORICAL MISTREATMENT.

20 Convey radical love for LGBT+ people by apologizing on behalf of the body of Christ for past mistreatment. Be sure to avoid perceptions of a “bait-and-switch” that could later trigger deep hurt. Avoid setting up any misunderstanding that your church is changing its beliefs on biblical marriage.

21 Allow for pauses in your messages for people to thoughtfully reflect upon the pain many LGBT+ people experience in the church and move the heart of your hearers away from blaming gay people.

22 While clearly affirming a historic view of sexuality and marriage is important, highlight that we have work to do to love gay people well. Be specific in how to love well.

23 We have not truly expressed remorse for the countless gay teens who died from suicide following years of torment. It is never too late to grieve young lives lost. Lead Them Home can help guide you to video resources that memorialize and grieve lost lives. Show one of these videos during your message.

ACCESS ALL MATERIAL FROM OUR 2-DAY INTENSIVE LEADER TRAINING COURSE
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NOURISH FAITH IDENTITY IN PRACTICE, NOT JUST THEORY.

24 Exclusion deconstructs faith identity and kills hope in the soul of hurting people. A gospel of exclusion has no power to reach already banished persons. Once exclusion exhausts itself, it has no power left to grow faith identity. **Inclusion is necessary to develop spiritual identity in Christ.**

25 Start with youth: even deeply conservative hearts can be deeply touched by the grave injustices and vulnerabilities gay teens face (bullying, teasing, rejection, suicide, homelessness). Share suicide statistics and call your congregation to love hurting LGBT+ youth. Condemn bullying and gay jokes.

26 Equip parents: as a pastor, clearly guide them toward acceptance and inclusion of gay children. Encourage other parents to love these parents well. Our resources for pastors and parents of LGBT+ youth, *Guiding Families*, can help (order at guidingfamilies.com).

27 Many younger adults surrendering same-sex attraction (SSA) to follow Christ can hear a “posture shift” message as applying to them: they can be nourished by it. Older SSA strugglers may feel threatened by the new language – as if the legitimacy of their costly obedience to God is being questioned. It can feel like theology is changing. Be sensitive in understanding the impact of your message on such persons.

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LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD.

28 Many pastors attempting to level the playing field refer to greed, gossip, anger, materialism and unforgiveness. While it is important to include sins we all struggle with, it is an oversight to fail to mention our sexual sins. To mention porn is not intended as a sin comparison, but rather an honest sin confession. It is a striking hypocrisy to not recognize this ongoing sexual sin epidemic among the majority sinners in the church.

29 You can mention the challenge of celibacy for all people. An often-invisible narrative in the church is the reality of those who have lived out long-term celibacy. The suffering they may experience is a “bridge” to SSA persons called to purity. Since heterosexual singleness is not as visible (families are everywhere), it looks as if SSA persons are alone. Elevate the reality of singleness and the high value Scripture places on it, that it is a spiritual gift and not some sort of curse.

30 Level the playing field by sharing the reality of suffering for those who marry. In marriage and singleness alike, there is blessing and suffering this side of heaven. Marriage does not always satisfy a sex drive; and it does not always relieve loneliness. Similarly, long-term singleness is not always miserable: there can be tremendous purpose, satisfaction and meaning in a single life lived with God.

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For Further Guidance



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