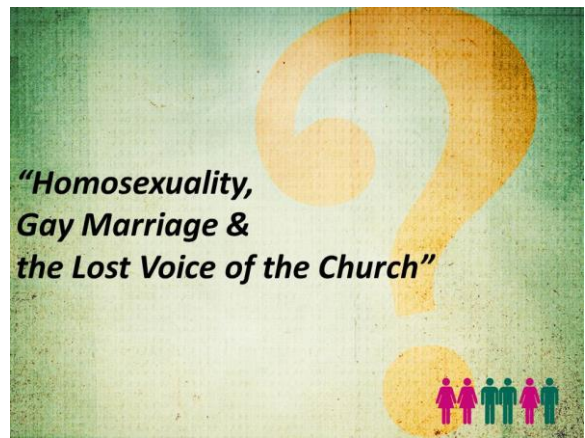


## Read Me First

In the fall of 2013, Oak Hills Baptist Church allowed me and Dr. John Hiigel to facilitate an Adult Forum (our term for an adult Sunday school) on the issues of homosexuality and gay marriage. Prior to this AF, very little had been discussed at the church on the subject. What little conversation existed usually illustrated just how anxious, uninformed, and divided the church was becoming.

Additionally, OHBC had just hired a new Senior Pastor, and he was beginning his first fall preaching series at the

same time. So, without even factoring in the debate taking place nationally in both political and church related contexts, it was obvious that the church took on a great risk. But God demonstrated his faithfulness. If you have been invited to listen in on our conversation, we pray that God extends to you what he has begun among us.



*Thank you for your interest and support in OHBC and our fall Adult Forum. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject, we ask that you not post this material on other websites or social media or use for financial gain.*

We certainly encourage you to talk about our forum and these materials because we want to see the lost voice of the church regained. If you choose to refer others to these materials, please refer to them to Pastor Paul or the church office. [ppankratz@oakhills.net](mailto:ppankratz@oakhills.net) 605-332-2648.

### Uploaded Materials

We have uploaded audio files from the presentations and have provided discussion guides for most of the sessions. These discussion guides provide most of the PPT visuals that were used during the presentations, and they were designed primarily for a small group discussion.

### Scope and Sequence

The first audio comes from the sermon I gave on August 25, 2013. I used this message to announce our intention to have the Adult Forum and to describe our posture towards the broader cultural context. I sought to apply the example from the first chapter of Daniel to the cultural and religious divide on gay marriage.

**Session 1** Introduced the purpose of the AF and the concept of the “lost voice of the church.” (By Paul Pankratz)

**Session 2** Reflected on the concepts of human identity and sexuality as described in various Biblical passages. (By Dr. John Hiigel)

**Session 3** Worked through the purpose and context of Biblical texts that prohibit certain sexual practices and set certain sexual boundaries. Both our own perspectives and counter-perspectives were provided. (By Dr. John Hiigel)

**Session 4** Challenged the way the church “speaks” of and thinks about marriage. A case was made to show compassion toward those who are unmarried and toward those whom the church encourages celibacy. (By Paul Pankratz)

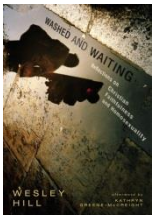
**Session 5** Sought to provide some practical ways in which to understand the nature and purpose of marriage within both the church community and the broader national context. (By Paul Pankratz)

**Session 6** Provided the audience an opportunity to evaluate the Adult Forum and work through a couple of case scenarios. This session provided us with some feedback on how people were receiving the input from the forum. (By Paul Pankratz & Dr. Hiigel)

**Session 7:** Pastor Jim Rutherford concluded the AF by casting a vision for the church to be both a rehab & mission station for its members.

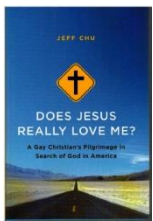
### **Resources**

Dozens of resources were utilized and studied in preparation for this AF. We specifically recommended the following book for the audience to continue their own personal study:



*Washed & Waiting* By Wesley Hill

This was the main recommended book for the Adult Forum. Wesley provided deep theological and personal reflection as he wrestled with his homosexuality and his spiritual commitment to celibacy.



*Does Jesus Really Love Me?* By Jeff Chu

This book was utilized for a specific book discussion called Square. The book is not theological, but it provides an array of perspectives on the church experience from the perspective of someone who is gay (and married).

We also recommended:

- *The End of Sexual Identity* By Janell Paris
- *Homosexuality and the Bible* By Robert Gagnon
- *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends* By Mark Yarhouse

### **Final Reflections**

One of the aspects of this AF that both surprised and encouraged OHBC was that we reserved our challenge for the church, not for the homosexual. In each session, I personally highlighted specific homosexual persons in a positive light, even when there were specific points in which I found disagreement. All three of us (John, Jim, & I) sought to be faithful to the Word of God while trying to wisely and carefully navigate our cultural context.

This Adult Forum specifically invited our church to regain the lost voice of the church. However, this AF was merely an introduction. It did not, nor could it, answer all of our questions. May God bless you and guide you in your learning and your relating.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Paul Pankratz'.

Paul Pankratz