

Lunch & Learn #9 Nov. 22, 2023

## The Bible Tells Me So

- I can do all things through a verse taken out of context.

Our Vision Statement:



**As Rev. Michael Brooks of Port Nelson United Church in Burlington says:**

“By being intentional about being affirming of all ages, health conditions, races, genders, gender identity, sexual orientations, family diversity, ability, economic circumstances, religion, spiritual and ethnic background we are preparing ourselves and our community for those we haven’t even met yet.

We are becoming spiritually ready to embrace difference even if that difference changes us and changes our community.”

### The Bible Tells Me So

‘I can do all things through a verse taken out of context.’

It is often evident when religious interpretation becomes a driving force in politics and social justice.

It is not unique to Christianity. Eg. Islam, Hinduism.

**Video:** Currently a major factor in US politics. <https://youtu.be/f3VHK1NXIBw?si=ZX3ugljwGuWFW3KG>



## The commonly used Bible references:

1. It boils down to language. The original Gospel manuscripts were written in ancient Greek and Hebrew.
2. Many words used in the original manuscripts had(have) no translation to contemporary languages so the writers made up a translation based on what they felt the context of the passage was, or what fit their personal bias for the passage.
3. Homosexuality is a common focus in scripture interpretation as other terms like transgender, bisexual etc. are more modern identifiers.
4. The word homosexual did not appear in the original translations. It was first used in the English translation we call 'The Revised Standard Version' in 1946 as an interpretation of a previously unknown word used by Paul.

**'No matter how big the lie, if it's repeated often enough, people will come to believe it.'**

**Joseph Goebbels (German Propaganda Minister)**

## Common Sources (The Clobber Verses)

### New Testament

**Romans 1: 26-27** – Paul's comments on relationships.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:8-11** – The interpretation of two previously unknown words used by Paul.

**Matthew 8, Luke 7** – Jesus' view on marriage.

**Matthew 19:12** – Jesus' reference to eunuchs.

## Genesis 1 – Adam & Eve

**'God created man and woman'** - That's it!

**Contemporary interpretation** – God created many categories between the extremes. Eg. – Night & Day → dawn/ dusk/ twilight. There are many biological gender variations in nature and creation.

**'When we read that God created man and woman, it doesn't mean that we are limited to the two. There are nonbinary, gender fluid, transgender and other expressions of the non-gendered image of God within creation.'**

( LGBTQ+ Theology 101)

## Genesis 2 – Marriage story of Adam & Eve

The word 'marriage' is not used. Instead 'one flesh' is used to describe their covenant relationship. The term is used by Jesus and Paul as covenant relationships and in Paul's case not necessarily based on gender.

## **Genesis 19 – Sodom & Gomorrah**

The sin of Sodom is often interpreted as the sin of homosexuality.

In more contemporary interpretations the actions are seen as acts of inhospitality and social injustice.

## **Leviticus 18 & 20 – The Laws**

**18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.**

**20:13 If a man lies with a man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.**

Accurate translations from the ancient Hebrew have been questioned.

## **Cultural norms come into play.**

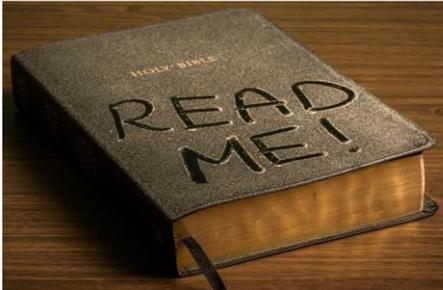
The text is regarded as a Code of Purity to help keep the people of Israel pure and separate from surrounding cultures.

**Leviticus condemns many things, but the entire Old Testament law code has never applied to Christians in light of Christ's death.**

(Matthew Vines, 'God and The Gay Christian')

**ACTIVITY:** [Open-Hearts-AUSE\\_Final\\_May192020 \(1\).pdf](#)

**PRESENTATION: We'd like to thank Gord, minister of Kincardine United Church, for letting us use his presentation that follows. The script is written in first person.**



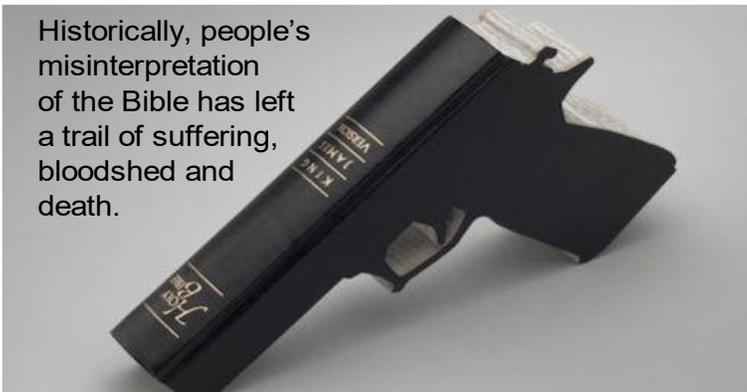
Most people have not carefully and prayerfully researched the biblical texts used by some to condemn God's 2-spirit and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex and asexual people.

**Here's a complete list of all the times in the Bible that Jesus condemns anyone for their gender identity or their sexual orientation.**



**I hope this list has been helpful to give you some insight into my own perspective.**

Historically, people's misinterpretation of the Bible has left a trail of suffering, bloodshed and death.



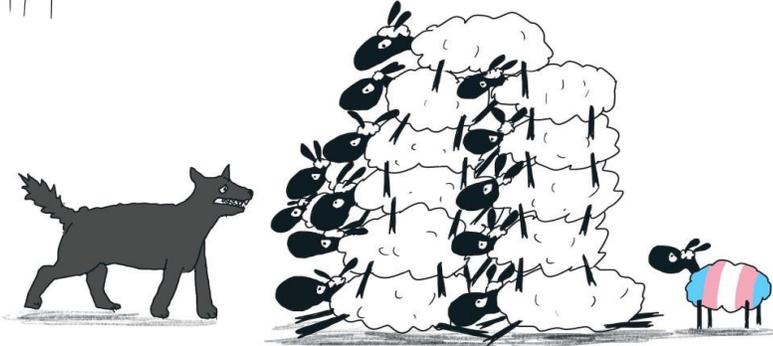
*Most people who misuse the Bible actually **don't** search the scriptures. They simply find a text or a verse that supports their prejudice, subsequently quoting or misquoting the text. I find that I guard against the same practice within myself. After all, it is easier and comforting to reinforce my own prejudices.*

*At the heart of Christianity is a powerful ethic. This image portrays the biblical story of Jesus talking with the woman at the well. He approaches her – a woman who has had five husbands and is in a common-law relationship with a sixth. Her community would look upon her as a damaged woman. Nevertheless, this ethic of inclusion centres on **each** person regardless who they are*



*In other words, without the ethic of Jesus' love, Christians can represent the worst humanity has to offer. This is why – like this cartoon's protective barrier of the sheep between the wolf and the trans sheep – I feel called to loudly proclaim that love comes first. Love **always** comes first*

©nakedpastor  
H. Ward



*When we Christians forget love's imperative, this is likely the judgement – not just of society – but of those who follow the ethic of radical love*



*Consider this. Place of birth is **not** a choice. Ethnic group is **not** a choice. Race is **not** a choice. Sexual orientation is **not** a choice. Gender identity is **not** a choice*

Place of birth is not a choice.  
Ethnic group is not a choice.  
Race is not a choice.  
Sexual orientation is not a choice.  
Gender identity is not a choice.

However, hate *is* a choice



Take a look at another cartoon by NakedPastor. I suffer from the same malady. I think *my* interpretation is the correct one. However, over the years I have come to realise – and, yes, I’m a slow learner – that we stumble toward loving by engaging with those with whom we disagree or don’t understand. We don’t shut them out, revile them or deny them their humanity



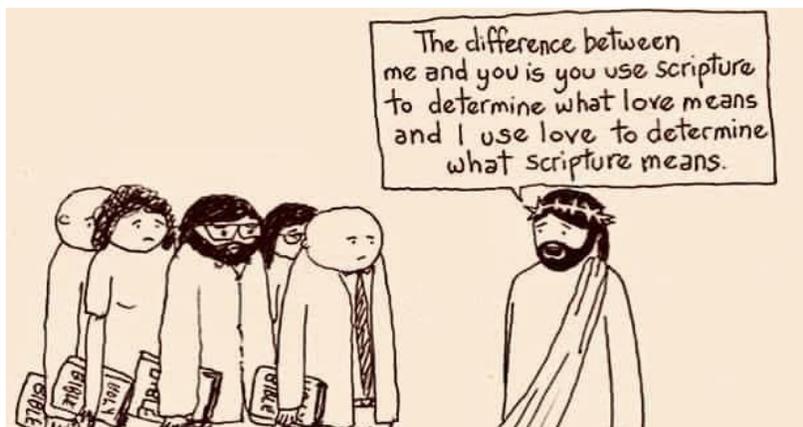
As Richard Rohr, Franciscan priest, writer and founding director of The Centre for Action and Contemplation, writes,

‘Jesus did not come to create a country club or a tribe of people who could say, “We’re in and you’re out. We’ve got the truth and you don’t. Jesus came to reveal something that was true everywhere, for everyone, and all the time.’

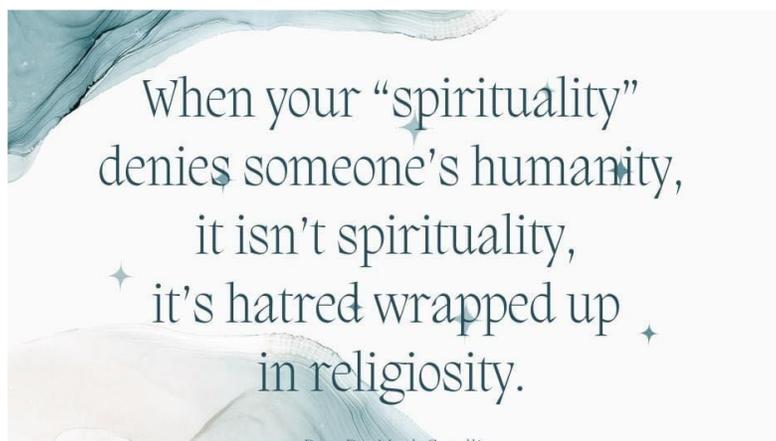


-Father Richard Rohr, Franciscan priest and founding Director of the Center for Action and Contemplation.

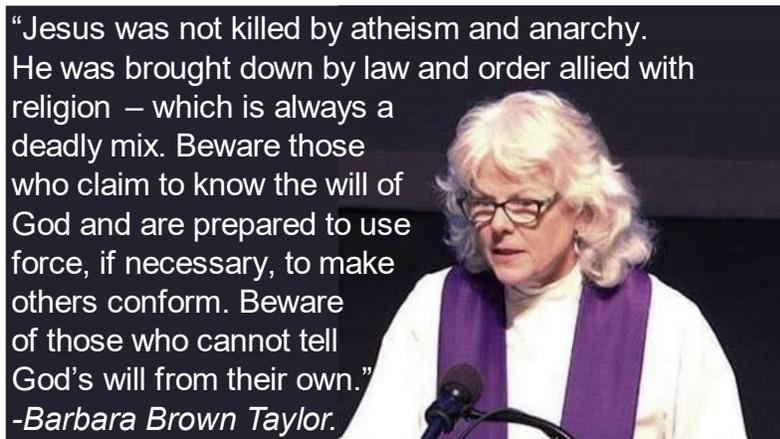
The practice that Christians are called to follow is what this cartoon states: “The difference between me and you is you use **scripture** to determine what love means and I use **love** to determine what **scripture** means.”



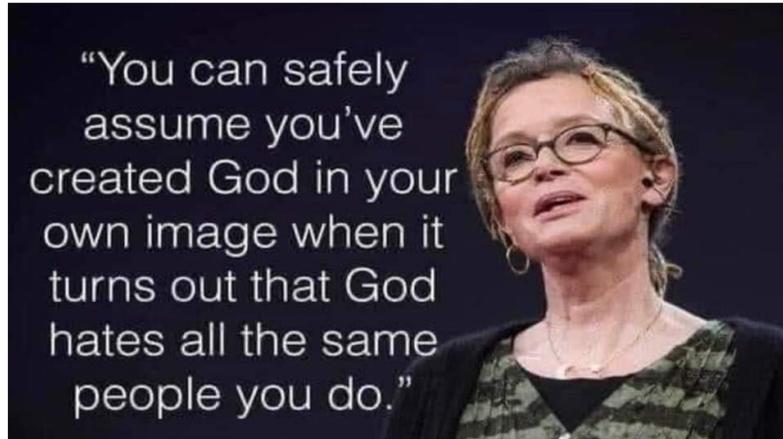
When your “spirituality denies someone’s humanity, it isn’t spirituality, it’s hatred wrapped up in religiosity



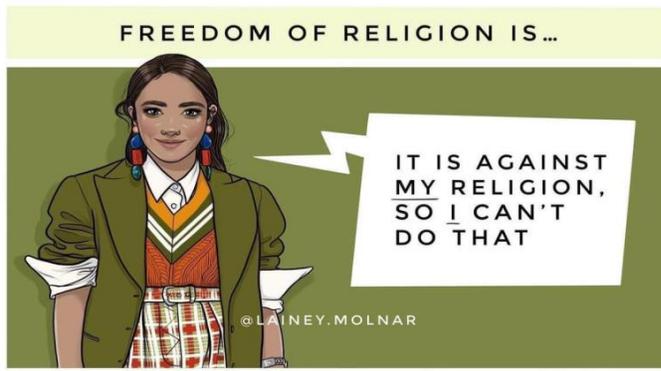
As *Episcopalian priest and lauded preacher Barbara Brown Taylor* writes: “Jesus was not killed by atheism and anarchy. He was brought down by law and order allied with religion – which is always a deadly mix. Beware of those who claim to know the will of God and are prepared to use force, if necessary, to make others conform. Beware of those who cannot tell God’s will from their own.” For me, it is the desire to force others to conform that alarms me. After all, that force and violence is so totally opposite to the ethic of love



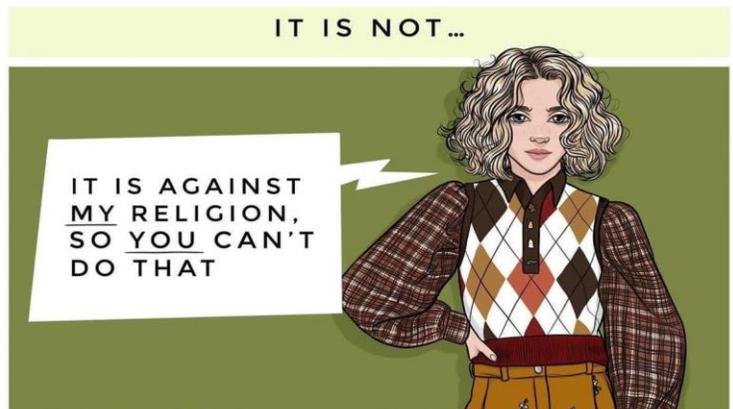
As novelist, writer, essayist and memoirist Anne Lamott writes: “You can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates the same people you do.”



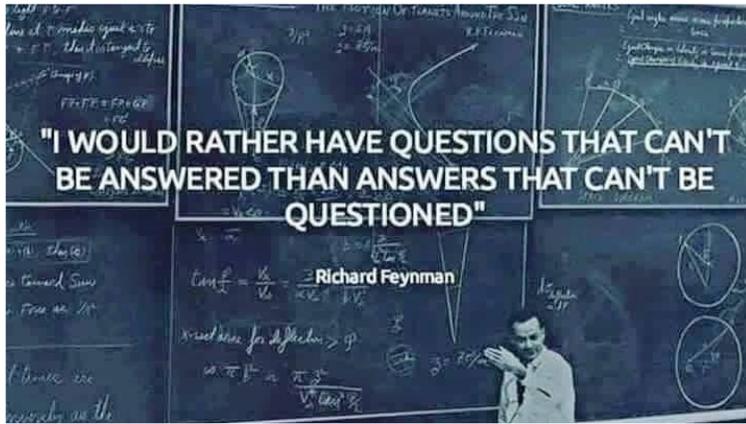
Some would protest that their right to freedom of religion is in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, let's be clear. Freedom of religion is when something is against your **own** religion, **you** can't do it



Freedom of religion is **not** if it is against your religion, then **others** can't do it



Sadly, that kind of perception is all about control of **everyone**. “I would rather have questions that can't be answered than answers that can't be questioned.”



*When hate is loud, love must be louder. Again, the ethic within the Christian faith is love, which Jesus called the greatest commandment*



*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Notice the centrality of love, **not** hate, **not** control, **not** force, **not** violence*

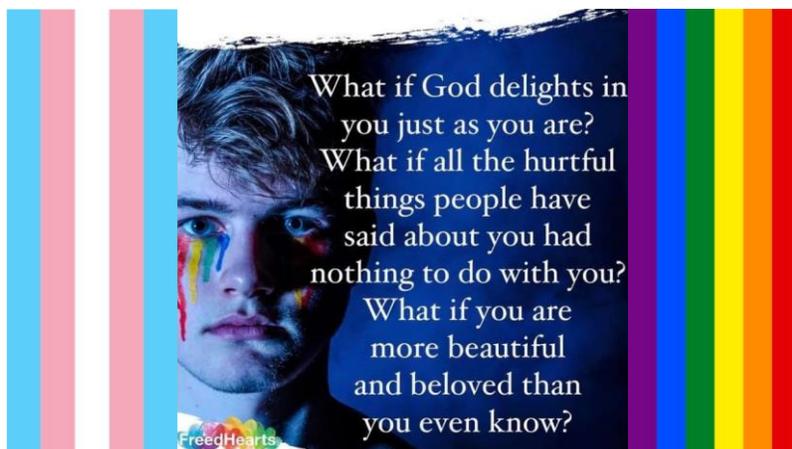


Yet many of my sibling Christians struggle with differing and non-traditional perceptions. Consider this image because it is very much **not** part of the Christian tradition. However, in the first book of the Bible in Genesis, the ancient Hebrew word used for God is Elohim, which is **plural** and non-gendered. Yet hatred within far too many Christian communities of faith is greatest – and most threatening – for trans people.

Therefore, God who is plural, God who is the original they/them, “what if God delights in you just as you are? What if all the hurtful things people have said about you had nothing to do with you? What if you are more beautiful and beloved than you even know?”



Let me paint a different picture than the traditional one of Jesus by sharing with you a poem written by award-winning transgender poet, performer, educator and speaker, Jay Hulme. It's titled “Jesus at the Gay Bar.”



He's here in the midst of it – right at the centre of the dance floor, robes hitched up to his knees to make it easy to spin. At some point in the evening a boy will touch the hem of his robe and beg to be healed, beg to be anything other than this; and he will reach his arms out, sweat-damp, and weary from dance. He'll cup this boy's face in his hand and say, “My beautiful child, there is nothing in this heart of yours that ever needs to be healed.”



*I would proclaim the same belief as that of The Sparkle Creed written by Rachel Small Stokes, a pastor in the United Church of Christ who currently serves Immanuel United Church of Christ Church in Louisville, Kentucky*



## THE SPARKLE CREED

by Rev. Rachel Small Stokes

**I believe** in the non -binary God whose pronouns are plural.

**I believe** in Jesus Christ, their child, who wore a fabulous tunic and had two dads, and who saw everyone as a sibling of God.

**I believe** in the rainbow Spirit, who shatters our image of one white light and refracts it into a rainbow of gorgeous diversity.



## THE SPARKLE CREED

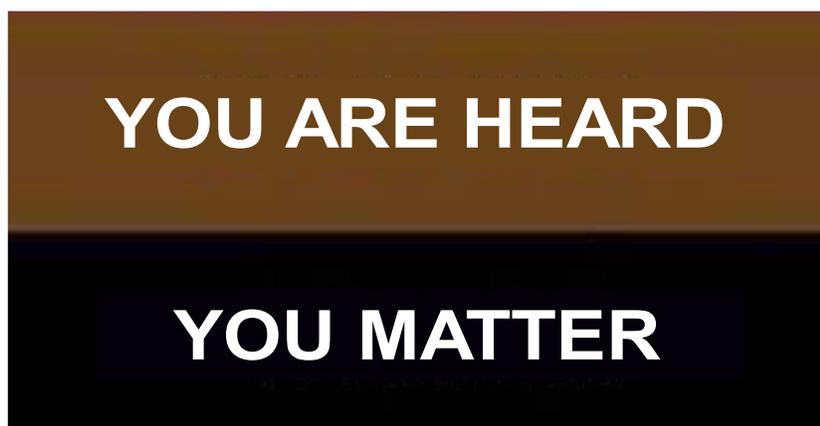
by Rev. Rachel Small Stokes

**I believe** in the church of everyday saints, as numerous, creative, and resilient as patches on the AIDS quilt, whose feet are grounded in mud and whose eyes gaze at the stars in Wonder.

**I believe** in the calling to each of us, that love is love, so beloved, let us love.

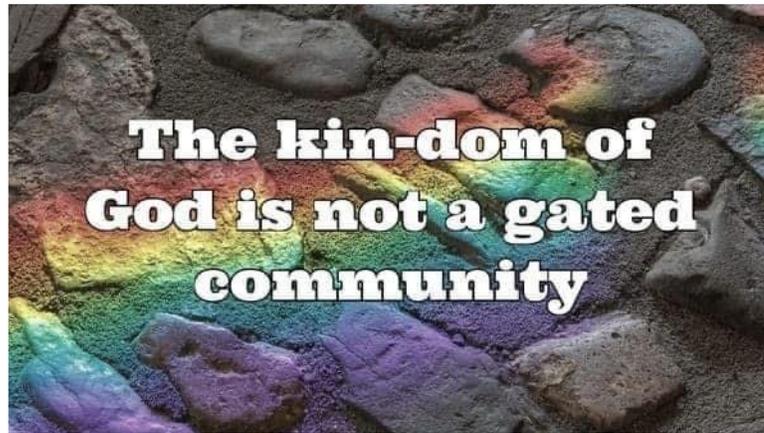
**I believe**, glorious God. Help my unbelief.

*After all, faith is **not** a static thing but an ongoing practice of becoming more and more loving. As a minister in the United Church of Canada, let me say these things so you know I am not an **ally**, but I **am** your **accomplice**, for I follow **you** instead of imposing my perception upon you. Why?*



*I pray that you come to realise that there **are** Christian communities of faith which follow the ethic of love !*

*You see, the kin-dom of God is not a gated community. Thank you.*



## **THANK YOU, GORD !**

God didn't create someone whom He could sit around and hate!

Jesus came to take away our sins, not our sexuality.

(Rev. Troy Perry)

**The only Gospel to be found in Christianity, the Gospel of grace, faith, love, peace, reconciliation, and inclusiveness demands that we embrace all of God's children, we be authentic as God created us to be, and we recognize that we commit a grievous sin when we reject the wonderful gift bestowed upon us by God, the gift of being able to love another person.**

(J. Maneker, California State University)

Next Lunch & Learn

March 20 2024, 10:30