

## Transcript 152

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the God Questions podcast. Couple episodes ago we had an episode on what does the Bible say about homosexuality? And this is not Part 2 of that by any stretch, but it's a very related concept. Today, we're going to be discussing what does the Bible say about the saying, love the sinner but hate the sin? This is a topic that a saying, so to speak, that is not explicitly biblical. There's no verse in the Bible that says hate the sin, but love the sinner. But with that said, the Bible does teach us to hate sin, but also to love those who are sinning. So the concept is biblical. So today we're gonna be discussing a little bit both about defending the concept biblically, but then also how do we actually apply it? Thinking that's when it gets very, very difficult. This for many even pointing out a sinful behavior feels like hate to them. When you're trying you're utmost to show love while speaking the truth, Ephesians 4:15, it's not always received that way. So joining me today is Nelson. He is the director of video content for Got Questions Ministries and Gwen, who is the administrator for [compellingtruth.org](http://compellingtruth.org) and also our volunteer coordinator. So Gwen, Nelson, welcome to the show with me today.

Gwen Sellers

Thanks for having us. So I'll just jump in on kind of starting to defend the concept. So actually our article on this topic points to Jude 1:22 through 23. So I'll read the quote from the article. It says be merciful to those who doubt. Save others by snatching them from the fire. To others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. I think what Shea said in the intro, you know it comes to mind mostly for me is Ephesians 4:15 of speaking the truth in love. And how we genuinely love someone is like also includes speaking the truth to them. And when we believe what the Bible says about sin, that it ultimately leads to death and destruction, we of course hate that. But we actually love people by warning them about what their sin is going to lead to.

Gwen Sellers

And I think this applies both when we think about this concept as related to non believers and to believers. Mean we're called to hate this in in our own lives. And we are called to share the gospel with unbelievers. I mean, God loves like all of us before we came to Christ. We're dead in our trespasses. Jesus died while we were still dead in our sins. Still enemies of God. So I think it's just it's God's love that compels us to share the gospel which involves the reality of sin. But then it's also God's love that compels us as believers to point out and help restore and correct sin in other believers. Which again you see in places like James 5 or Galatians 6 or a podcast the three of us did earlier about, you know, judgment. We talked about that idea of how we need to point things out sometimes. Nelson, what would you go to for defending this concept?

Nelson Domingues

You know, I I think like you mentioned, it's it's really difficult because we we realize how difficult it is to point something out in someone else and any characters that have the life that that can in essence make them feel bad about themselves or make them think less about themselves. And we're almost like trained not to do that. Like we don't want around and if someone makes us food or cake or something like that and and and and they made it out of love. Maybe we were sick and we don't go around and say,

hey, I did not like that meal. Like and we don't want to offend people in that sort of way. We don't want to hurt their feelings because you know, most of the time they do these things out of genuine care and love. But so when it comes to sin and in the lives of people that we see, we kind of take on that same persona, where we just want to be OK and be nice and not really mention anything, not create waves and just try to get along with everyone around us. And while there is a sense where we want to do that, there is also a responsibility as believers that we have to the people that God has put in our lives to lovingly point them to Christ. And sometimes that will mean pointing out a particular sin in a situation that you might be in.

Nelson Domingues

I look at the life of Jesus and how he often did it. And there's many stories, and examples, and parables, that where he confronted someone in sin. And he restored them where he spoke with them, where he sat down and ate with them. And in those conversations, he showed them truth. And he pointed out sin, and he showed him the path to himself, forgiveness, who he was. And I think about the woman at the well, when he arrived and he spoke with her and she was an obvious sin, having many husbands and the one that she was with was not her own as well again. And Jesus knew that, and he saw that in her. And we know from the story that she was put off from the rest of the town and she was going out in different times of day and things like that. And so we realized she was an outcast as well. So Jesus went there and he spoke to her. He pointed out her sin. He confronted her with it, but he did so in this way that was kind, and that was loving. And he revealed to her that he was the Messiah. And revealing that truth causing her to heart to stir. And he pointed out that what she was doing was sin. I mean we see the results of of Him speaking to her in John Chapter 4 and this is where we find that story, the woman at the well. And John 4, verse 4:39, we see the result of him claiming to be the Messiah, showing her he was the Messiah, proving to her that he was a Messiah and her heart changed. She went back to the town and she spoke to everyone there, and many in that town came to know Christ because of the testimony that she now had. That she was first confronted by Christ, that she found out who he was, that she understood that she was in sin, and that he kindly and lovingly spoke to her and drew her in and through that there was fruit in that labor.

Nelson Domingues

We see the same thing with the woman caught in adultery with the Pharisees brought a woman who was in the act of adultery in John Chapter 8 again. Very explicit sin. And again a situation that was very condemning and that people would easily ridicule and point at and avoid and can say all sorts of different things. But then Jesus, again, he calls out to the crowd and he's like who among you is without sin? And the point of what he's doing there is he's trying to bring out compassion within the hearts of the hearers, trying to say to them, you fail to all the time, each one of you have failed. Now we're all sitting here pointing out this particular sin in this particular person, but what about yourself? And so the crowd walks away, feeling the guilt and shame of their own sins because Jesus wants to address this woman now and in doing that and the crowd walks away. He doesn't just excuse her sin. He doesn't tell her to be OK with it. He doesn't say that I hope you feel good about yourself. He doesn't try to make her feel comfortable in her sin in any sort of sense. But he directly points it out. He shows her it's wrong and he tells her stop sinning, go and sin no more. John chapter 8, verse 11. And so again, he calls out sin, but he draws out the heart of the person by being compassionate and being loving.

Nelson Domingues

And I see these examples in scripture and I think that's the same way that we need to address the sin that we see in the people around us. We're called the first address this in our own lives. Of course, we were reminded of, you know, in Matthew Chapter 7 about, you know, the log in our own eye about removing that giant log from our own eye before we attacked the spec in our brothers eye. And so we're minded that the people around us, while they need to know that they are living in sin, in direct opposition to God. And they are in a bad place. And if they're not saved, they're on their way to hell and we need to communicate these things in no uncertain terms. But the way we communicate these things, if we can do so in a way that draws them in, that reveals to them a path of life that draws them into the acceptance of Jesus Christ once they turn from their sins and see that they're living a life in opposition to God and making themselves enemies of God. But yet he still loves them and wants to draw them in. That's our job as ambassadors. That's our job as disciples to make more disciples. Not to push people away. I mean, what would be the use of that? What would be the the use of the Great Commission if all we did was look for sinners and pointed out their sin and then push them away from Christ? That would be the exact opposite of what we ought to be doing.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I think that's so important. It's like that restoration really is the goal. I mean, whether dealing with sin in unbelievers or believers. I love the 1st Corinthians 6:9 through 11, you know names all these sins and people who won't inherit the Kingdom of God. And then it's and such were some of you. But you were washed and you were cleansed. And also when the New Testament talks about pointing out sin in believers, it's for the purpose of restoration. I mean, when we really recognize that yeah, sin goes against a holy God, and so it's wrong. But also God is the source of life, and so what sin that you know that sin is so destructive it really, we pointed out, in order to restore, in order for people to have life. And James one always comes to mind for me there it kind of describes how you know, saying it's like we want to do it and then we're enticed by our desires and then we sin and then it leads to death. But good gifts actually come from God. And I love to that example of Jesus. I mean, sinners were attracted to Jesus. So what is it about someone who's so clear about what sin is and God's requirements for holiness and you know all those things? Like Jesus did not equivocate on sin and yet sinners wanted to hang around him. Like that's how we're called to be. And yeah, that's really hard to do in practice. And again, I find it so difficult for myself. You're so right about that self examination thing, and I think it's hard for me to to hate my own sin and you know, but it can be easy to notice in in other people. But when it comes to me, it's like, oh, you know, like let's just justify that. But no like, I need to hate the sin in my life too.

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, it's so easy to have that double standard in our lives where we can be OK with this in our own lives but it's so easy to point out the sin in other people. And that's something that we need to be more humble about in our own lives too. I actually agree.

Gwen Sellers

And I think when we have, you know, the more we hate our own sin and have that humble attitude and recognize our need for rescue from God, the more we actually maybe when we're pointing out sin in other people, the more it comes out as truly loving and desiring to restore rather than as judgy.

Shea Houdmann

I mean both made excellent points. And I see even in this conversation, sometimes the struggle we have in answering people's questions and then, well, it's such and such activity that I'm doing is it sinful? It would be easy to just come out and bam, yes, it's sinful. Here's the verse. Deal with it. That would be hating the sin, that would not be loving the sinner. So finding that balance between, yes, here's what the Bible says about the situation, but doing it in the spirit of Jesus forgiveness is available to you. God loves you. God provided for your salvation. You're trying to focus on those sorts of things because both of you said the way Christ did it made it so attractive. He was very clear, go and sin no more. At the same time, sinners listened to him. They wanted to be around him. They wanted to hear from him. They asked him questions. And for the most part, other than the religious leaders, they did as he told them to. There was a life transforming event to hear him speak the truth in love in a sense.

Shea Houdmann

But I want to ask both of you questions related to this. Sometimes the struggle is with the word hate in the sense that when we point out a sin in someone's life that they will interpret that as hey, no matter how lovingly we do it, that's where hate speech comes from. Now don't get me wrong, there is speech that is very hateful. But how did we get to the point where just saying that a certain behavior is sinful with no emotional hate attached to it whatsoever, how did that get to the point that some people, or even a lot of people, consider that to be hateful?

Gwen Sellers

I just don't. I mean, I think some of it I you know I think there are a variety of reasons. I think in some ways people in our culture tend to. I mean we are such a sort of like a self focused culture. And you know, with social media it's all about branding. And so like, who am I and what do you do? So it's so I think there is this sort of fragile sense of self in some ways. So like if you're critical of something I do then like I'm not OK. But I think that speaks to what happens for other people. And I know, like for me this can be a struggle, is that naturally going to shame, you know? When someone points out you did something wrong it can feel like, Oh my gosh, I'm an I'm a terrible person. And you know, so then I need to be reminded of the gospel like well, yeah, like of course I did something wrong, I'm a sinner. That's why I need a savior. But I think in a society that's so much about individual expression when you have sort of something. When you say something against that individual expression, it feels like a personal attack for some people.

Nelson Domingues

I think you're right. And I think the way we've grown as a society where we become so individualistic and the way we're advertised to is not that this product is good or that this product is superior to the other products. How products and things are advertising is that this will help you. You will become something else. For instance if you buy a pair of of certain sneakers, you don't just because they look good or comfortable, you because perhaps making a good runner or a good basketball player. The same thing with some of the clothes that we wear or the things that we buy. We begin to identify ourselves then with some sort of thing in our lives. And so someone might identify, well, I'm a runner. Not I'm not. I'm Nelson. Right. I'm a runner. I'm a I. Love sports. I love doing these things. And maybe someone else loves doing other things and they identify themselves, their actual personhood as this other thing, as whatever they wanted it to be. I'm an artist. I'm a singer, you know, I'm a computer programmer. All these different things, but that's not really you. That's something you do. Maybe it's something you're

passionate about. But I think we've gone to the edge where we're saying, you know, our actions are also become us as well. And so if someone is involved in a life of sin where they say, well, that's who I am, I just am that person and it doesn't have to be that way. You can say no. You're a person who got created in his own image, right? Fearfully and wonderfully made. And God made you to prepare good works before you to do and all these sorts of different things, you may be doing sin or involved in sin but that's not who you are. But I think it's really easy when we begin to talk to people about their sin that sometimes they translate that as attacking their character, attacking their very person. And I think it's very critical that when we address someone's sin, we address the sin itself, the action and why it's wrong. Why God scripture calls it wrong. Just because that it's a wrong sin and that is the end of the day, that is the fact. But it's because it causes damage. It hurts people around you. It hurts who God made you to be. And these are the things we need to draw out while we talk people to turn away from any sin.

Nelson Domingues

It's just like if a loved one was involved in an obvious thing like like a drug addiction. You begin to see that drug in their life as something that you probably would hate. Because you see what's turning them into you, see what is stealing away from them and we begin to address that thing, then. That drug is. I hate that drug because it's hurting you. And I think that's one the same way you need to look at sin. I hate that sin because God calls it sin and it's hurting you. It's it's pushing away you away from God and we need to address that so you can be right with God and and have a good relationship with him and be restored.

Shea Houdmann

Excellent, I.

Gwen Sellers

Great example.

Shea Houdmann

I love the heart in that in that we want to be clear what we're communicating. What is the actual sin involved? And then also this the need to separate what you do from who you are and in all facets of life. Ultimately we are beings who are created in the image of God. That's who we are. And everything else what we do are what we're passionate about, that's those are things we love. There's things we enjoy. But those are not ultimately who we are and it's a very healthy attitude to have. Let's get really practical here at the end of this episode. How can I actually in reality in practice, hate sin while loving sinners? What's actually in if I in front of a person who is actively involved in some sin, how can I express that truth that that behavior is destructive? This harmful is not who God created you to be. While also showing love to that person.

Nelson Domingues

I think it's about building relationships with people. I used to live in the city of Chicago and they would have the gay parade every year and there would be a lot of Christian groups out there that would be pointing their fingers and holding banners and flags and saying God hates you and and all these sorts of different things. And while God hates that sin and many other sins. Addressing it in that way did nothing but push the people away. And I think if we know someone in our lives involved in any sin, say adultery,

drug abuse, many other sins we we would begin to hopefully have a relationship close enough to them and say do you realize what you're doing? Do you believe in God? And if the answer would be yes, you say do you understand that he calls something good and something's evil? And and you begin to walk him through. And you realize that this action that you're involved in, that you're doing, that that's something that he calls evil. That's something that pushes you away from God. And as you begin to reveal those truths, loving you can say now I'm not trying to make you just feel bad and push you away. I'm trying to make you understand that there's a path out of that mess. A path path forward of redemption and forgiveness and acceptance even though your actions are sinful, there is a path forward. And that's exactly the way Jesus acted when he sat down with tax collectors and with all sorts of other people. He was. He was a light in that darkness, and he was so bright that they looked at him and they were drawn to him and they wanted to hear from him and he would point them to the truth. Which is himself. And point them to the fact that they could be forgiven of any and every sin so long as they repented of those sins and turn to him.

Gwen Sellers

Well, I think that's so true that idea of relationship. And Nelson the example you gave earlier of you know talking to someone who's addicted to drugs of like, you know, this is destroying you. And I care about you. And so therefore I want change for you. And I think you know, for me, obviously all of this is way easier said than done. Then, but you know, there are times too when there are people that we don't have a relationship or don't have an opportunity to have a relationship where we do need to like to hate the sin and and love the sinner. And that's kind of to me, those are those cultural things and you know, like the idea of abortion, it's like, yeah, we don't want abortion to exist, but that doesn't mean we hate everybody involved in that industry. No, we we love them. We recognize that they're deceived. We want them to know truth. We want them to experience life. And so one thing that I do is I pray for them. Or, you know, when I hear about a a reporting of a crime, like a shooting or something, I tend to pray for the victims and their families as well as the perpetrator and their families because everybody in that situation needs help and needs restoration. So I mean, that's not necessarily like actively loving them in a way that they know about, but I think it helps set my heart right to recognize that all people are in need of God and not to kind of have like, oh, the sinners out there and then everybody else. It's like, nope, this is everybody. And to set my heart toward love.

Nelson Domingues

And hopefully we're living our lives in such a way we're we're demonstrating Christ likeness and his love, just in the way we speak and act, and that will provide opportunities in and of itself, where people will ask us things. We're living a life like Jesus, people will be drawn to us. They're not going to be put off. They'll be drawn to us. They want to know why we live the life we live. They want to know why we love the way we love. We want to know why we we sit down with the downhearted and desperate and sinners and want to point them to Christ. And I think when they see that character, I think it's intoxicating. I think it'll be drawn to Christ, like the crowds you see following Jesus himself because they knew who he was and what he was capable of. And and and I think we ought to be, as scripture calls us, just beacons of light and wherever he places us. So it is really difficult to have a hard conversation with a colleague, a business partner, someone that you work with, someone at school. And we don't want to just wait until we develop this really close relationship before we start talking about this and hopefully any interaction with us they'll understand that we love Jesus. And that will quickly escalate any

conversation between that person and myself to biblical, godly things, and we'll begin to have an opportunity to address all sorts of things that maybe in their life or maybe in my own life as well.

Gwen Sellers

And definitely, I think when our words are backed up by our actions, yeah, that makes just a huge difference. And I've noticed too, I mean, sometimes words aren't even required. I mean, people just being around you seem to recognize stuff that that you didn't even say. And yeah, and I was kind of shocking when it happens, but yeah, but I guess that's how it should be.

Nelson Domingues

Yeah, we don't make apologies for God's word. It should be something that should be clear. If it's called sin, it's sin and we shouldn't go around claiming it's not or that it's any less offensive or anything like that. I mean, we need to be very clear that sin is sin. It's wrong. It's detestable to God. It draws you away from it, creates, makes you an enemy of God when when we're living lives steeped in sin. It it is very offensive, right? We don't want to lighten how desperate and how wrong any sin is, including the sin in our own lives, but we want to address it with kindness and with humility and with compassion and with love.

Shea Houdmann

And Nelson earlier you mentioned the sort of the reputation that Christians have for when we confront sin we do it so strongly that it comes across as as hate. And like so many things in the Christian life in this life in general, there's a balance in this. There's that one side where the God hates you sort of thing that's taking a hatred of sin far beyond its biblical grounds. Then, there's also the other side where loving the sinner so much that you never say anything. There's a balance between the two and just being completely honest, my tendency is to go on the not saying anything side. And it's very interesting just this morning, in a devotion I was reading it talked about how so you think you're doing that to be kind to the other person, but you're actually doing it to protect yourself because you don't want to invest yourself into a conversation that could be difficult. But that's what the gospel is all about, is pointing out both sin and that salvation is available through Christ. So let's not land on either extreme, condemning so sin so harshly that it comes across as hate, but also loving people so much that we don't point out the sin because that actually is not loving. Back to Ephesians 4:15 which you mentioned at the beginning, is the balance, speaking the truth in love. Both sides finding that balance. I hope you hear us, is struggling with what exactly is that bounce and how do you apply it practically, it's not easy. It's easier to talk about than easier to do, but neither extreme is what God calls us to do.

Nelson Domingues

I'm I'm reminded about Peters denial of Christ and Scripture. I mean, Jesus knew he would do it. He told him he would do it. He went ahead and did it. And Jesus could have ignored that. You could let it go. That's a real hard conversation to have to someone that you known for so long to have been so close to have dedicated your life three years and following we've seen miracles and and participated in those miracles and all of a sudden to deny them outright. I mean the shame and guilt, the sin that that was tremendous in Peters life and and Jesus confronting him. I mean think about how awkward and how hard and and difficult that would be to confront someone who has so wrongly hurt you even when you told them that they would. Even when you warned them that they would. And yet Jesus had that really

difficult conversation with Peter. And he takes the time to sit him down. They have a meal. They're over the coal fire and and and he reminds him about his love. And he reminds him that he has work to do, that he needs to feed his sheep. He needs to follow Jesus. And I think that's the way we need to be as well. That we can't be shy to have these conversations because who knows what will happen. I mean, if Peter never had that conversation with Jesus, he would live the life of shame. And I believe he would live life of shame and regret and and maybe just would have faded off into the distance as a fisherman again. But Jesus took the time to have an awkward conversation with him. And that conversation sparked love and interest and and revealed to Peter that he could be restored and forgiven. And that's exactly what happened.

Gwen Sellers

And I mean, I think you know well said by both of you, I'm thinking for me what I'm kind of coming away with is number one, do I do I really have a right view of who God is and what sin is? You know, like the bigger my view of God, kind of like the bigger my view of how bad sin really is. And then, yeah, do I have a heart of love enough that I'm willing to speak truth. Because you're right, Shea, like I don't. You know, if if we're not willing to speak truth, we're not really actually loving. But then, yeah, on the flip side is my life and my character backed up enough that when I do speak truth it really is coming out in love and not coming out, you know, for some other purpose. And yeah, all of that has to be a work of the Holy Spirit and that constant transforming and renewing of my mind. And I think, you know, starts in my heart with me hating my own sin first.

Shea Houdmann

Amen, both of you. Thank you for joining me in this very important conversation. And again, I hope your listeners hear us struggling with this and here we are advocating to love the sinner while hating sin. Also pointing out that's not always easy to do. I'm sure each of the three of us would readily admit that we failed on one side or the other on this issue, probably multiple times in our lives, but this should be our goal. Again, the exact phrase, love the sinner, hate the sin is not exactly in the Bible, but the principles are both there. So it's definitely something that we workout. Try to find that right balance, but beyond far above and beyond a balance that's apply God's word to how we we treat others, how we address sin, but also how we point people towards the Savior. This has been the Got Questions podcast on love the sinner while hating the sin. Got questions? The Bible has answers. And we'll help you find them.