



Worshipping the Creature

By Josh Williamson

When the Apostle Paul entered Athens, we are told that his spirit was “provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols” (Acts 17:16). As a result of this alarming situation, Paul began to proclaim the gospel in religious settings and also in public marketplaces. For Paul, his love for God and love for neighbour drove him to make much of Jesus in all settings.

While I certainly am not the apostle Paul, I do have a slight understanding of the anguish he must have felt when he saw people not serving and worshipping the only true God. When I arrived in Newquay in England as a Pastor/Missionary, I saw a community that openly and proudly worshipped and served the creature, rather than the Creator. The difference between Newquay and Athens is that the shrines here didn’t come in the shape of so-called gods, rather the shrines here were rainbow coloured. Everywhere we went in Newquay we saw rainbow seating, rainbow images, rainbow flags, rainbow celebrations – the list goes on. Newquay seems to have made itself to be the Cornish hub for the LGBT community.

This grieved me; and the reason it broke my heart is because I saw image bearers of God embracing a lifestyle choice which will end in their own damnation. It broke my heart to see people enjoying the pleasures of sin, while at the same time ignoring the God who made them. I truly love the LGBT community; I want what is best for them, which is Jesus.

The love for the lost in Newquay drove us as a church to reach out to the community. We went door to door chatting to people about Christ, and we distributed Bibles and tracts. We preached in open-air meetings and invited people to gospel events. When COVID lockdown commenced, we developed an online evangelistic focus to help minister to our community. Through

all of this we saw the church grow; people in the community were finding Jesus. During this time, we also had many excellent gospel conversations with members of the LGBT community. We studied our culture and context, and we made sure that Jesus was clearly proclaimed.

Something I have learned in seventeen years of evangelistic work is that gospel advance always meets opposition, and that is what we are seeing currently. In August, Cornwall Pride announced that they would be holding their Pride parade in Newquay. As a church, we didn’t want to see this celebration of sin take place, so we began to pray. Our prayers were for the conversion of the LGBT community and also that the parade would be cancelled – the Lord answered one part of the prayer, and we are trusting Him for the other.

Two days after our prayer meeting, Cornwall Pride released a statement announcing that due to financial and COVID reasons the parade would be cancelled. We believe that God uses ordinary means to achieve His plans, so we rejoiced in answered prayer. We were neither gleeful nor angry at the LGBT community; we were simply thankful that the Lord restrained sin.

As local news reported the cancellation, I noticed that on the news Facebook page, that many people in Newquay were commenting that it was good that Pride had been cancelled. The feel of the community indicated that the event was not welcome this year, so I added a two-word comment to the many others on social media: “Wonderful news.” This comment was then targeted by someone who asked, “Why is it wonderful?” To which I answered, “Because I don’t believe sin should be celebrated.”

This opened up the conversation to questions: Who are the children of God? is homosexuality a choice? What about those practising homosexuals who claim to be Christians? I tried to answer with Scripture and point people to Jesus. My whole purpose in replying to anyone has always been to tell them of the wonderful news of Christ coming into this world to save sinners.

In reply to my gospel comments, I began to receive death threats, my wife was threatened, and some took my image and added it to homosexual pornographic photos. I chose not to reply to all the anti-Christian comments.

Cornwall Pride, seeing all of this then took screenshots of my comments (though they edited them) and that of another person who had actually made derogatory comments. Then they went to my private Facebook page and took screenshots of things I had said on my wall. The names were redacted from their images, but they posted them all together making it look like they were all said by me. Of course, in all of this our church was mentioned. Cornwall Pride then engaged in a campaign of whipping people into a frenzy and called on people to report me to the police for hate crimes.

In the days that followed we had threats of protest at the church and the promise that if LGBT people saw me, then they would do me physical harm. During all of this the Church Secretary and I met with a transgender person and a leader of Cornwall Pride in order to hear their story and concern. We met in a public place, and we made sure that hospitality was provided to them. This conversation went well, and it appeared that all were on friendly terms. We listened to them, and they listened to us. We shared of the love of Jesus, and then with their permission we gave them both a gospel leaflet. The meeting ended on friendly terms.

However, that wasn't the end. The transgender person whipped up the LGBT community and threats began to come in again. This time there were threats to burn down the church, to hold sexual orgies at the church and physically harm me. Due to

the nature of these threats we were forced to contact Devon and Cornwall Police (who are sponsors of Cornwall Pride). Unfortunately, the police refused to investigate; never once did they ask us what was happening, instead they told me that we can have our views in our 'safe environment' (i.e. the church), but anything said publicly may be against the law if it offends the LGBT community.

Since then we have had Stephen Hick, Newquay Town Councillor and Cornwall Pride Leader call on me to be deported to Australia for daring to say homosexuality is a sin. In addition, he has called on businesses and individuals not to talk to us and to deny us use of premises. I am not sure how Mr. Hick plans to identify the church members, but perhaps he wants us to wear little yellow crosses.

As I write this article the situation is still very live, but despite all the opposition (I wouldn't call it persecution) we are seeing gospel advance. We have had many wonderful Christ-centred conversations with non-believers, and even with members of the LGBT community. Some of these conversations have included people who indicate they want to leave the LGBT lifestyle and come to Christ.

We have also seen churches encouraged around the world; including the persecuted church in Iraq when national media ran a story in support of us.

Through all of this our desire is that Christ will be lifted high, the church strengthened and the lost converted. We really do love the LGBT community; but love demands we cannot stay silent. It would be hateful for us to ignore the sin. What is loving is pointing to the truth on sexuality and gender, then calling on all people to repent and trust in the Lord Jesus who died for sinners and rose again.

Pastor Josh Williamson.