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Why is Sexuality so Important to the Church?

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Dr. Peter Jensen, the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, is one of the most influential evangelical leaders in the worldwide Anglican Communion. The archdiocese he leads is among the most conservative within the Communion and, not surprisingly, one of the healthiest as well.

In a recent address to the synod of his archdiocese, Archbishop Jensen explained why issues of human sexuality are so important to the Christian church. A church that will abandon biblical truth on issues of sexuality will set the pattern for denying biblical authority when addressing any issue. Consider this passage from his address:

As you know, I have taken the view from the beginning that the crisis over human sexuality is a very deep one indeed. The idea that we are somehow to blame for making so much fuss about sex is ludicrous. Human sexuality is so powerful a gift and so basic to our human nature, and so fraught with both good and ill, that it is bound to occupy a large part of our thinking. Indeed it is all part of our cultural reappraisal of the roles of men and women, with vast consequences for the quality of family life and the good of the begetting and nurturing of the race. In the end, it is also a crisis over biblical authority and its clarity; hence the importance of Biblical Theology. Here is a crucial sticking point. To accept various contemporary ways of reading scripture will leave us vulnerable at all points. We will not defend the uniqueness of Christ, if we will not defend the plain teaching of scripture on human sexuality.

Exactly. To allow these “contemporary ways of reading scripture” in matters of sexuality is to allow them in other theological contexts as well. These new “ways of reading scripture” are, in essence, ways of denying what the Bible teaches and what the church has always understood the Bible to teach. Other approaches include the argument that the Bible cannot really be understood, that it is a collection of discordant voices, or that whatever the Bible addresses (and condemns) is not equivalent to modern sexual practices. All of these lead to disaster and undermine the authority of Scripture.

More from Archbishop Jensen’s address:

This was at the heart of the discussions that I shared in public and in private with our fellow evangelicals and indeed with others. At the same time we have had contacts with others in Asia, Canada and South America. I have to report that there was virtually universal agreement about the significance of this issue. Our evangelical and other Bible-based colleagues agree that deviations from biblical teaching on human sexuality is not a matter which can simply be allowed to pass without strong protest and appropriate action. These are matters which affect our humanity itself. It is widely agreed that we must make as clear as possible and amongst as many as possible that we have reached the limits of tolerance when it comes to the teaching of scripture. Furthermore, it is for the good of the gospel and thus in the interests of the Diocese and that we support others with the same views and receive support from others. This is where true unity lies.

In other words, true unity lies in an embrace of the truth. Archbishop Jensen is absolutely correct when he asserts, “*We will not defend the uniqueness of Christ, if we will not defend the plain teaching of scripture on human sexuality.*” Once we decide to abandon a commitment to biblical authority, every doctrine is instantly negotiable. We do not have to wonder where that leads.

RESOURCES: Dr. Peter Jensen delivered the 2005 [Boyer Lectures](#), broadcast by ABC Radio National (Australian public radio). The lectures can be heard [here](#). A collection of his writings and other materials can be found [here](#). In a recent article on the wrath of God, Dr. Jensen wrote this:

[T]he contemporary church uses three strategies to soften the offence caused by the cross. The first is to cloud the whole thing with mystery. We are permitted to say that Jesus died for us but we are not permitted to say what this means and how it relates to sin and wrath and judgment. Second, is to offer some other explanation for the cross than what the Bible itself says. We are told that the cross occurred solely to demonstrate the solidarity of God with us in our suffering. Third, is to ignore the cross altogether and find the centre of Jesus' mission in the incarnation or even worse in his present friendship for us, sung about in endless trivial songs.

The wrath of God is as real as your sin. The only thing which can satisfy the wrath of God is a satisfaction paid for your sin provided by God himself. Jesus has done this by dying for you on the cross, saving you 'from the wrath to come'. Whether we like it or not, that is the heart of the gospel. Turn the wrath of God into something else, or ignore it, and you will not have Christianity, but some other religious look-alike. That is our choice.

Those words sound refreshingly like the great Anglican leaders of the past, such as [Bishop J. C. Ryle](#) (1816-1900), the first Bishop of Liverpool. An Anglican archbishop preaching on the wrath of God? Read it for yourself.

Archbishop Jensen's brother, [Phillip Jensen](#), is Dean of Sydney and its [St. Andrew's Cathedral](#). A gifted preacher, his sermons at the cathedral may be heard [here](#).

The Sydney diocese is an encouragement and hope in the Anglican Communion.



