

DAVID O. HARRISON

WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE OF ME?

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SIN,
SEXUALITY, AND THE CHURCH'S
RESPONSE

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CITATIONS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born and raised in England, David Harrison immigrated to Canada in 1973 at the age of 21. Life took a decisive turn when, at 35, he became a follower of Jesus Christ—a shift that would shape everything to come.

For 25 years, David was active at a Brethren Bible Chapel in Scarborough, serving ten of those years as an elder. At the same time, he ran a thriving audiovisual integration business in Toronto, equipping universities, law firms, and financial institutions with cutting-edge communication technology.

In 2006, David launched Bus Stop Bible Studies, a national outreach that placed Scripture-based messages on public transit systems across Canada—it's estimated that those messages were seen more than 1.25 billion times, each offering the hope of God's Word. He also served as Board Chair for Daystar Native Christian Outreach on Manitoulin Island for a decade.

"Retired" in name only, David and his wife Wendy host guests at their award-winning Airbnb in Muskoka, Ontario—recognized as Ontario's Most Hospitable Hosts in both 2021 and 2023. They attend Muskoka Community Church in Port Sydney.

The man who once failed English in school has since discovered a calling he never expected: writing. To date, David has authored six original titles and published six group study guides. He is also passionately working on a lifelong project to "translate" the entire library of C.S. Lewis into everyday English—seven volumes completed and counting, three of which became Amazon bestsellers. Yet among all his work, he considers *Stop Being Weird—Be New Testament Normal* to be his most important book to date: a heartfelt call for the Church to recapture the simplicity, clarity, and vitality of the early believers.



Cover image:

Pietà (1498–1499) by Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni.
Pietà is translated as *compassion* in English.

Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

John 13:1

DEDICATION

To my Aunt Barbara who prayed me into the Kingdom
and is now enjoying her eternal reward.

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

Hello.
I very much enjoy writing, primarily blogging¹, and I have done so for several years now. I never imagined that one day I would be writing a book, and not in my wildest dreams that it would be on the topic of sin, and homosexuality and gender identity—topics that causes me considerable personal unease. But here it is.

Is there a simple answer and a quick fix to the question of human sexuality? Certainly not. Will this book take you on a journey of discovery? I sincerely hope so. Did God lead me to write the words in this book? I make no claims in this regard, but I don't think I could have written the half of it without Divine inspiration.

May I encourage you to take advantage of the NOTES, THOUGHTS, AND QUESTIONS space at the end of each chapter; prayerfully and respectfully share your insights and feelings with others. Open communication is of paramount importance for Christ's Church.

If you feel so inclined, I welcome *critical* feedback. As I note repeatedly, this is a very sensitive subject. Contrary views and opinions are to be expected. I am not fishing for compliments.

- As you read, please consider, is what is written biblically sound and truthful?
- Is the book helpful in understanding the issues surrounding homosexuality and sexual identity, especially in the church?
- Is there information/content that you find redundant?

¹ davidsthoughts.ca

WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE OF ME?

- Is there information that appears contradictory?
- Are there instances where you find Scripture to be taken out of context, or where alternate passages of Scripture might be more suitable or meaningful?
- Do you have questions on the topic of homosexuality that are not covered in this book and should be considered for inclusion?

Please respond to dohauthor@gmail.com

In the perpetual wonder of grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

David Harrison, Author

Psalm 32. A Psalm of David.

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.

Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.

Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control."

Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord. So rejoice in the Lord and be glad, all you who obey him!

Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!

INTRODUCTION

Before I venture out into a subject that could be a veritable minefield, I thought it wise that anyone reading this book should understand exactly where my heart is. Sometimes others have the gift of expressing the feelings of the heart better than you can yourself. God inspired Jeremy McClung to do just that for me.

Jeremy McClung is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate at Wycliffe College, and he was recently honoured as the winner of the Toronto School of Theology's *Three-minute Thesis Competition*²². Jeremy was the founding pastor of the Church where my wife and I now attend.

As Jeremy explained,

"The basic idea is this: participants are given three minutes to explain the shape and significance of their thesis using a single static slide. The presentations are to be geared toward people with no prior knowledge of the field and they are judged by a panel of non-specialists.

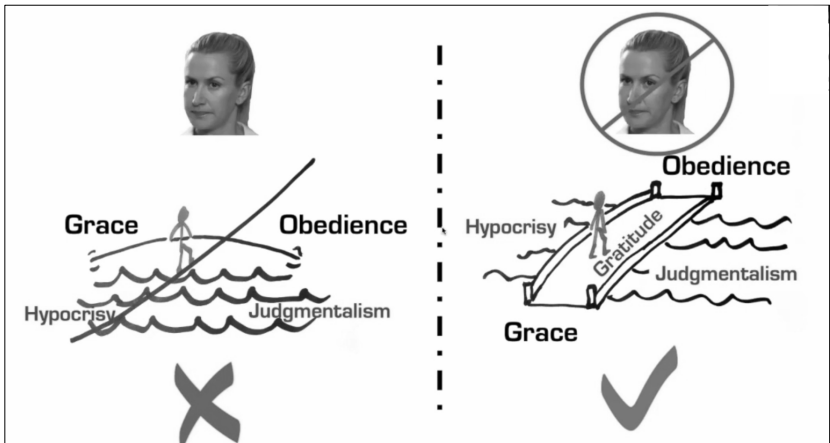
The goal is to deliver a bit of an elevator pitch, to communicate in a way that is clear and engaging and makes someone want to learn more about it (the thesis).

It took me a lot longer to prepare than I had expected, probably 15 to 20 hours for my initial presentation in the first round, and then after getting some helpful feedback, I spent another 5 to 8 hours refining my presentation and creating a slide to go with it before the finals. That may seem like a lot of time for a 3-minute speech but trying to boil down an 80,000-word dissertation into an 800-

²² wycliffecollege.ca/blog/ridding-world-angelas

word presentation is not easy. It forced me to think hard about what I wanted to accomplish in my research and to get creative in how I can present it to people who weren't theology students, pastors, or even Christians. And so, here's what I came up with as I delivered it on April 25th, 2022.

The title of my presentation is *RIDDING THE WORLD OF ANGELAS*. But don't worry, there's no violence involved.



One of the main characters in the hit sitcom *The Office* is an uptight accountant named Angela, pictured at the top of my slide. She's self-righteous, judgmental, and a complete hypocrite and, of course, she's a Christian. As a pastor, I often get frustrated with the way that Hollywood portrays Christians. I also realized that sometimes the stereotypes ring true. Many Christians are judgmental and hypocritical. But why? No Christian wants to be an Angela, so how does it happen? The reason is confusion around two aspects of Christianity I'll call 'grace and obedience'.

Grace means coming to believe that God loves us and is kind, generous, and forgiving. Obedience means us loving God by serving him and living according to his commands. Both of these are valid and important but when these two, grace and obedience, get out of balance it can create Angelas.

As you can see on the left side of my slide, if you lean too far toward grace it can lead toward spiritual laziness and hypocrisy. People who say they are Christians, but their lives contradict that. On the other hand, if you lean too far towards obedience you can fall into legalism and become judgmental where you assess yourself, and everyone around you, by your ability to keep the rules.

And so, for pastors and priests like me, who are tasked with teaching people what it means to be a Christian, it can be a real challenge to get this right, to try to teach people that God loves them as they are and calling them to change feels a bit like walking a tightrope. You lose your balance just a little, either way, and you and your listeners may fall into the waters below (hypocrisy and judgmentalism).

But if you look at the right hand of my slide, there's another way to look at the relationship between grace and obedience. That's not so much about balance as it is about *movement* from grace to obedience, over the bridge of gratitude.

Christianity always starts with receiving God's grace, which should naturally lead to deep gratitude. And it's then that we express our gratitude through our obedience. Over 500 years ago, John Calvin made this grace, gratitude and obedience pattern central to his theology. I hope that by helping preachers get this pattern right, more Christians will get it right. And there might just be a few less Angelas in the world!"³

If we are selective with a body of truth that is intended to be received comprehensively and not merely in part—if we are not very careful, we risk swinging the pendulum from loveless or conservative pride to lawless or liberal pride. Both are contrary to Scripture.

As I have meditated on Jeremy's wise counsel, I have come to the realization that *movement* is necessary in my life, moving from the

³ Used with permission.

lefthand side of Jeremy's slide to the right. And so, keeping grace, obedience, and gratitude continually in mind, I will step out...

I read a response to one of the many debates presently being held within Canada's Catholic School Board system, whether the School Board should endorse flying the Pride flag, to recognize Pride Month. This individual who wrote in support of raising the Pride flag above the schools noted, "They are all children of God." This is a misnomer⁴, one of many that trip up well-meaning Christians in the debate surrounding the issue of homosexuality. We are *not* all children of God. The truth is each of us are God's creation but becoming a child of God is a very discriminatory [selective] process and comes with specific conditions. In John 1:12 we read,

"Yet to all who did receive him [the Messiah, Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."

Sometimes, breaking a verse of passage into small chunks helps provide clarity:

- Yet to all who did receive him,
- to those who believed in his name,
- he gave the right
- to become children of God..."

Perhaps the most challenging question to answer is, "Can the church convey biblical truth without causing offence?" The simple answer is – probably not. Is it even the church's responsibility not to offend? The Bible unmistakeably teaches us that the good news of the cross is foolishness to those who will not believe. If even the Good News can be offensive, what hope is there for today's church leaders to convey biblical truths concerning human sexuality?

The challenge is daunting but try we must.

⁴ A wrong name or inappropriate designation.

One of the many godly individuals I asked to review this book started his comments by saying, “My view on this topic is that it will be the issue which satan will use to split the evangelical church in the next decade. So, it’s a serious one, and we must trust that He who is within us is greater than he that is in the world. And we need to pray to this effect.” These words are not only prophetic but, in many ways, they are historic.

My family and I recently attended the local Santa Claus parade. We live in a Muskoka community of 20,000 or so, and the parade is always well attended. With lots of floats and participants, the parade takes about an hour to pass by. There is always lots of hooting, hollering, and waving from the crowd, and parade participants hand out candy canes to the kids. This year, I believe for the first time, a truck drove by with no decoration except for a magnetic sign with the words, Muskoka Pride, on the driver’s door and a rainbow flag propped up in the back of the truck. The truck had a sole male driver.

What struck me, and no one could miss it, was that as the MUSKOKA PRIDE truck rolled slowly by the crowd stopped waving and cheering. Even the little ones fell silent. It couldn’t have been for more than the 30 seconds or so it took for the truck to pass, but the silence was deafening. This happened in a town where the local council supports ‘Pride Month’ and rainbow crosswalks.

I wonder what the truck driver was thinking.

This book had its origins in a personal blog⁵. I then imagined it being expanded and useful as a Bible study tool. As it grew beyond a typical study guide, it seemed to take on a life of its own. I am presenting in this book my side of the discussion and the discoveries I have made along the way. It is my prayer that The Church will take up this discussion of homosexuality within its confines, resolving to abide by God's teachings, follow Jesus' example, and look to the Holy Spirit for guidance. The stakes are enormous!

In his book, *God's Final Word – Understanding Revelation*, author Ray C. Stedman gives an excellent outline of Jesus' words to the Seven Churches, noting that the church in Pergamum, at the time, was "flirting with corruption and immorality." He conjectures that many of today's church congregations 'flirt with immorality', opening their arms to everyone in the name of acceptance and inclusivity, tolerating in their midst that which God calls "an abomination" – not at all referring exclusively to active homosexuality.

A crucial question we need to ask ourselves is, "Am I, or is our church or denomination, deliberately or misguidedly, flirting with immorality?" If the answer is "Yes", how should we expect God to react – His rebuke and discipline, 'spitting us out of His mouth⁶' or something else?

Conversely, we need to ask ourselves, "How are we going to attract, and offer a sense of belonging, to those who are in need of repair, to those who Jesus instructs us:

"...go and make disciples of all nations (the LGBTQ community included), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and

⁵ davidstoughts.ca/2019/07/01/leviticus-1822-part-1-leviticus-gods-love-story-the-gospel-in-the-old-testament/

⁶ Revelation 1:3-16

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”?

I recently read the book, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World*, by Pastor Andy Stanley. In this must-read book, Andy asks the question, “What does love require of me?” It is a question that has been haunting me since the moment I read it.

Concerning the topic of sexuality and God’s people, I believe this question is so important, and the challenge so significant, it is included in the header at the top of each page—to be a ‘constant reminder’ as we seek the right answers to some very challenging questions.

While I was searching for an appropriate cover illustration, I stumbled across a photo of Michelangelo’s *Pietà*, a depiction of Jesus Christ’s dead body in His mother’s arms. It reminded me that from the very beginning, Jesus’ mother, Mary (see Luke 1:38) and Jesus (see John 13:1) were both *all in*, nothing held back.

This leads to the naturally introspective question, “Am I *all in*?” How one chooses to answer this question will naturally lead to the beliefs one holds and the actions, the *Pietà* [compassion] specifically, one expresses.

It is easy to ask, “Am I *all in*?” but God has been challenging me that I still have a long way to go. Being ‘*all in*’ means being willing ‘to be humiliated in my own eyes⁷’, or to wash Jesus’ feet with my tears⁸ in the presence of everyone and not care what they think.

Please, Jesus, take me there.

I hope that in reading this book, and by taking the referenced Scriptures to heart, church leaders will find direction and encouragement in how to handle issues of homosexuality in their congregations.

⁷ 2 Samuel 6:22

⁸ Luke 7:37-39

INTRODUCTION

If you have been persuaded towards a more liberal, accommodating view of homosexuality, I would simply ask that you invest the time to read this book through to the end.

We live in a world of broken and diseased hearts. People need to understand this and be brought to Jesus for healing. May you be encouraged to do so.

“...News about him [Jesus] spread..., and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon-possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. Large crowds followed him wherever he went...”

Matthew 4:24

CHAPTER 1 — JESUS

“...God is love.”

1 John 4:8b

We cannot possibly begin such a profoundly sensitive journey, discussing the core identities that some claim to hold to and the ramifications that consequentially arise, without looking at the person of Jesus Christ. Is He not the ultimate authority on *all* matters and the example we should try to emulate?

There are two key character traits we find in Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels. First, He spoke and taught as “one with authority⁹”. Jesus knows what He is talking about. Jesus can plumb the uttermost depths of our souls. There is nothing that can be hidden from Him¹⁰. Second, Jesus shows how important we are to Him, and demonstrated how we are to show that importance to others.

One of the most remarkable things about Jesus is his affection and gentleness towards sinners—not the righteous. He pursues the sick—not those who seem to be healthy¹¹. He goes to those who are broken and falling apart—not those who think they have their act together. He intimately embraces those who are damaged and dirty—not those who think they are clean.

⁹ Matthew 7:29

¹⁰ John 4:17-18

¹¹ Mark 2:17

In his book, *A Gentle Answer*, Scott Sauls points out that, “Jesus turned towards those who were accustomed to being ignored, mistreated, discarded, and despised by most. If you were sick, poor, sexually damaged, or paralyzed by guilt and shame, Jesus would move towards you, and tell you what nobody else would: *“You matter.”*”

Then, in the next breath, Jesus would say, “Follow me.”¹²

Scott Sauls goes on to note, “Jesus and Christianity do not discriminate between good people and bad people. Instead, Jesus and Christianity discriminate between humble people and proud people.” In James 4:6 we read, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Jesus taught us to “...love your neighbour as yourself.” He also taught us to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” Jesus gave us at least 49 commands (see APPENDIX 10 for the full list), one of which was, “If you love me, obey my commands.” I presume He meant *all* of them, not just a selective few. In all three above instances, the commonality is love.

Like many, I do not do a particularly commendable job of being ‘the hands and feet of Jesus’. I tend to be pragmatic—black and white rather than emotional. But, despite all my weaknesses, God has seen fit to use me on occasion to help and encourage others. If you find some of my writing black and white and unemotional, perhaps even seemingly uncaring, I simply ask that you see past my foibles knowing that I have plumbed the depths of God’s grace firsthand.

Whoever may be reading this book, take note: *you matter to God!* Jesus proves it.

¹² Matthew 19:21

CHAPTER 2—GETTING PAST THE LIE

“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.”

Isaiah 45:5

As I have spent time reading and seeking answers for this study, I knew something was missing, something I was unable to put my finger on. I found that ‘missing something’ and it is summed up in six words found at the very end of this chapter. No peeking!

If you do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, or perhaps you hold onto a liberal interpretation of the Bible, this book may not be for you. However, if you are seeking to understand deep biblical truths, then you may find the contents of this book helpful in your studies.

I will start the conversation, again referencing a short excerpt from Scott Sauls’ book, *A Gentle Answer*¹³. Scott Sauls is the senior pastor at Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He writes,

“And then there is Holly, a woman in her early twenties who occasionally slips into the back row of the balcony of our church on Sundays. Recently, Holly asked to meet with me in my office to discuss a personal struggle of hers. Her posture was what seemed to be a combination of warmth, respect, and anxiety, all bunched up together. The warmth and respect came from the woman she is—a kind-hearted, loving, inquisitive, sensitive,

¹³ [amazon.com/dp/1400216559](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1400216559)

tender soul. The anxiety came from what she saw as a conflict between her sexuality and her faith. On the one hand, she was in a relationship with a woman who she described as the love of her life and a person she could not envisage having to live without. On the other hand, she knew her Bible well, which told her in no uncertain terms what seemed to be an impossible choice. “Is Jesus asking me to choose between *him* and *her*?” she asked me through tears. “If he is, then how could he put me and so many others in an impossible position? I never asked to be attracted to women. I never wanted to fall in love with a woman. And yet I have. And I also love Jesus, or at least I *want* to love him. But it seems that he is putting me in a position of having to choose between two loves. How can he do this to me?”

Without explicitly acknowledging it, Holly identifies the root problem she is confronted with. Following Jesus is an either/or proposition, not and/both.

Was Holly ‘all in’?

If you identify with any one of the many gender orientation challenges the world offers, perhaps you are feeling ‘sexually damaged’ or confused, I hope you will consider carefully what Nabeel Qureshi, a devout Muslim, learned *and* that which he received. Indeed, the message God gave Nabeel is for everyone, especially Christ-followers. We each need to get past the lie that ‘*It’s about me.*’, all the while grasping that our wholeness and well-being are of paramount importance to God.

I recently purchased a copy of Nabeel Qureshi’s book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*¹⁴. Nabeel grew up devoted to Allah from his earliest childhood. The devotion to Allah and Mohamed’s teachings of this Moslem family would put many Christians to

¹⁴ *SEEKING ALLAH, FINDING JESUS* by Nabeel Qureshi © 2014, 2016, 2018 Kathryn Michell Qureshi, A Zondervan publication. Available on Amazon.

shame. His was a home full of love—attentive parents and a wonderful sister. The Moslem ‘church family’ he belonged to, especially in his childhood years in Scotland, were devoted to one another in every way.

During his first year at university in the USA, he met a friend, David Wood, a sincere Christ-follower who humbly demonstrated the love of Jesus to Nabeel. Over the course of three years, David patiently and painstakingly answered Nabeel’s challenges and questions concerning the deity of Christ. Ultimately, it was God’s pursuit of Nabeel that brought Nabeel home. It was an extraordinarily painful journey – first for God and then for Nabeel.

Copyright restrictions prevent me from presenting chapters 51, 52 and 53 of his book in their entirety as I would have wished. Please consider these short excerpts, in part anyway, as a book review, then do yourself a favour and purchase a copy. The chapters I reference are titled, *Time to Mourn*, *The Word speaks* and *Finding Jesus*.

TIME TO MOURN:

Leaving a way of life, that has been your whole life, all your life is not easy. Nabeel had reached the point in his journey where he knew he had to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The cost was going to be enormous. According to Moslem tradition and the teachings of the Quran Nabeel would lose his family, his friends and his community. Everything of personal worth would be gone.

“I began pleading to God out loud, “Ya Allah, O God! Give me time to mourn. More time to mourn the upcoming loss of my family, more time to mourn the life I’ve always loved.”

One evening Nabeel sought God’s comfort in two books; the Quran and the Bible. As he first flipped through the pages of the Quran, looking for verses of comfort, he realized that there was nothing there for him. Nothing. He picked up the Bible, acknowledging to himself that he had never read it for personal guidance before. He opened his NIV study Bible (a gift from

David) in the book of Matthew. Within minutes he found the following words:

“Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.”

Matthew 5:4

Nabeel wrote, “The words were like a current going through my dead heart, electrifying it once more. It was as if God had written those words in the Bible two thousand years prior specifically with me in mind.”

As one who had grown up Moslem, the idea of being blessed for mourning seemed beyond comprehension.

“Why would He bless me? And for mourning, no less. Why?”

He continued reading, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Not ‘blessed are the righteous’. We can hunger and thirst for righteousness but never attain it, yet God says He will bless us anyway? Who is this God who loves us so much, even in our failures?

“Tears flowed from my eyes once more, but now they were tears of joy. I knew that what I held in my hands was life itself. This was truly God’s Word, and it was as if I was meeting Him for the first time.”

As he continued reading, Nabeel felt that if he put the Bible down his heart would stop beating, “perhaps implode”. Nabeel suggests that some might ask why he did not just go ahead and recite ‘the sinner’s prayer’? He had never heard of the Sinner’s Prayer. All he knew was that he loved the God of the Bible.

THE WORD SPEAKS:

Some days later he came to Matthew 10:32-33,

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in Heaven. But