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## Love: Our highest calling

*Gay, straight or in-between—all are precious in Jesus' sight*



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KAMPALA, UGANDA—By now you've heard plenty about Uganda's new toughened laws on homosexuality, the news that spread to the West with the fanfare of a dark sporting event.

Even short of jail—terms range from seven years to life—it's a new day of survival in a horrible state-sanctioned chill.

Several weeks in, like so many things in developing nations, it's hard to know all that's happening. Was that murder really a robbery gone bad? And that street beating? Why did she really lose her job? Many things simply don't make the news here in Uganda.

What we know is that Uganda is not alone. Homosexual acts are illegal in 67 countries. In 10—all in the Middle East and Africa—they officially carry the death penalty. Just prior to Uganda, Nigeria

toughened its own anti-gay laws.

Uganda's influential Anglican Church pleaded for the government to reconsider. Some others didn't. One minister, to make his point, reportedly showed gay pornography to his flock of 300.

Then there's you, a believer in the West. Your church likely doesn't encourage much relationship with the gay community. At the same time, from the other side, you, so strangely religious, are easily stigmatized by mainstream culture.

Which is why a new way is needed, the way where there's no "us" and "them" but only "us," all of us broken in one way or another, getting through life in humanity's quiet desperation.

This is what Easter reminds us of, that Jesus loves the little children, the little gay children too. Jesus died for all the children, the little gay children too. Red and yellow, black and white—straight, gay, somewhere in between—we, all the world's dirty-faced children, are precious in His sight.

Moderate believers—not those with 'God Hates Fags' placards and not activists flying to Africa to warn locals about the so-called global gay agenda—have spent energy on other things. Fearful and hurtful things, like clinical and cold analysis of homosexuality that has missed the mark over and over.

None of this is our high calling. It's not the core of Christ. It's not the message of the resurrection. Relationship is. Gathering at the table is. Love is. Love, after all, destroys fear. And what's the most-used command in the Bible? "Don't be afraid."

Don't be afraid of death. Don't be afraid of life. Don't be afraid of... gay people. Really? Really.

This is why Exodus International, the long-time ministry that attempted gay reparative therapy closed its doors last year. President Alan Chambers apologized for "beating-up people for being human." He was earnest and sorrowful and full of remorse. "This is the great tragedy of the Church," he said. "We've turned

the grace of Christ into a bunch of rules and regulations."

This issue won't go away. In the West, any believers' response to homosexuality is the one litmus test, fairly or not, on which they're judged. Anyone who claims allegiance to Christ needs to come to terms with this.

Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, a declared Christian, claimed cultural sovereignty when signing Uganda's new law. Ugandan commentators say, in fact, he has his own fears, that in a religious and conservative culture this was a move to help win the next election. This, after 28 years in power.

As believers, that is thoughtful believers, we can make our own sovereign decisions too. One is to show common decency to other human beings: to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly.

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