

Truth and Personal Experience

Last week the mayor of San Diego, California abruptly reversed his public opposition to marriage for same-sex partners and publicly revealed for the first time that his adult daughter is a lesbian. The mayor said, “In the end, I could not look any of them in the face and tell them that their relationships . . . were any less meaningful than the marriage that I share with my wife, Rana.” It appears that the mayor’s views on “gay marriage” changed based primarily on his personal experience.

This reminded me somewhat of a question that is sometimes asked in discussions on subjects like divorce and remarriage or denominationalism. “*How would your views on divorce and remarriage change if your son or daughter were divorced?*” “*How would your views of denominationalism change if your son or daughter decided to ‘join’ a denomination?*”

Questions like these seem to imply that personal experience is the ultimate criterion in determining our views on any moral or doctrinal subject. Scriptural data, it seems, is either a secondary consideration, or it is twisted to support the inclinations of personal feelings and experiences.

While we all have personal experiences and feelings that help shape who we are and what we think, these things cannot be the ultimate basis for determining our views. Scripture alone, not personal feelings and experiences, must be, determined on God’s Word alone.

So, how would my views about gay marriage, or divorce and remarriage, or denominationalism change if my son or daughter chose to embrace any of these things? I pray that my faith would be strong enough that my views wouldn’t change at all. I pray that my commitment to God and his Word would be deeper than my commitment to my children. Isn’t that what Christ demands of his would-be followers? “*Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*” (Matt. 10:34-37).

—Dan Chambers