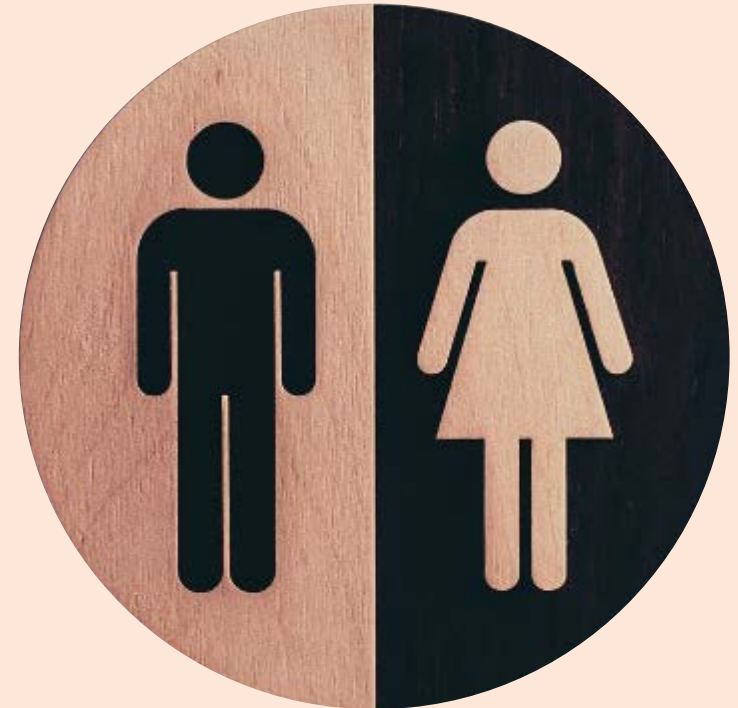


Jesus, Gender & Sexuality

Week 1: Jesus and
Difficult Questions





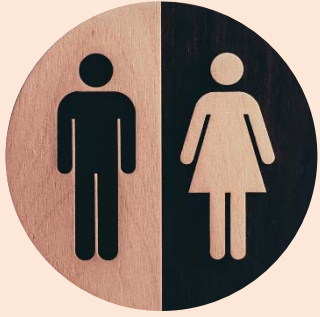
Jesus, Gender and Sexuality

- Question time after the service each week:
 - You can put your hand up ...
 - ... or ask a question at [slido.com](https://www.slido.com), #872255
 - Grab a coffee and come along – we will aim to start 5-10 minutes after the service ends.
- Aggressive questions will not be tolerated; arrogant questions will receive short shrift!
- Feedback, in person (preferably) or by email will be welcomed.



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Some arise in our “**culture war**”:
 - What is a woman?
 - Is gender different to sex?
 - 71 genders (facebook, 2017) vs. “over 100 ... no limit” (Civil Service this week)
 - What if we continue to believe that marriage is heterosexual – and say so?
 - What is “conversion therapy” and how should we respond?
 - How do we engage with media obsessed with identity and sexuality questions?
 - The BBC News game!
 - Roughly one third of internet traffic is porn: how do we respond?



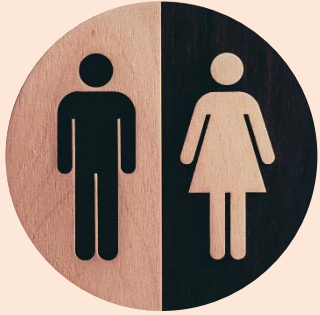
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Although there are some voices being raised *against* the consensus:
 - Why are people having so much *less* sex than previous generations?
 - The BBC (!) recently broadcast a programme praising the positive legacy of Mary Whitehouse for “her decades-long battle against the normalisation of pornography and child exploitation”.
 - “The chilling crushing of free speech needs to be countered” (Nadhim Zahawi, today in the Mail on Sunday).



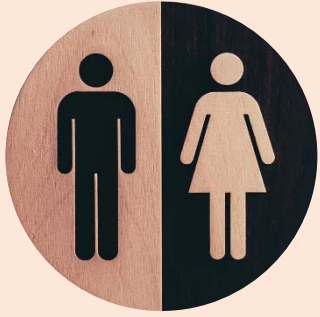
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Some arise in our **workplace or school**:
 - LGBT history *month* (February) and Pride *month* (June) vs. Intl. Women's *Day*
 - Should we wear the rainbow?
 - What about pronouns?



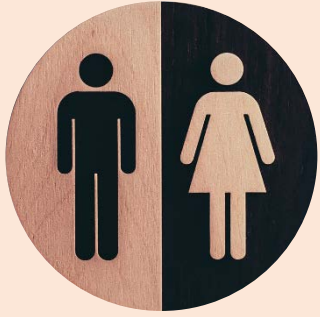
What pronouns do you prefer?

- Co, co, cos, cos, coself
- En, en, ens, ens, ensself
- Ey, em, eir, eirs, emself
- He, him, his, his, himself
- She, her, her, hers, herself
- They, them, their, theirs, themself
- Xie, hir, hir, hirs, hirsself
- Yo, yo, yos, yos, yoself
- Ze, zir, zir, zirs, zirself
- Ve, vis, ver, ver, verself
- If other, please enter them here:



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Some arise in our **workplace or school**:
 - LGBT history *month* (February) and Pride *month* (June) vs. Intl. Women's *Day*
 - Should we wear the rainbow?
 - What about pronouns?
 - I know two clergy in our region, working full time as chaplains in church schools, who were dismissed for teaching Jesus' view of marriage. One was referred to Prevent!
 - How do you respond as a parent if your school introduces SRE provided by an organisation dedicated to “smashing heteronormativity”?



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Some arise in our **family or friendship** groups:
 - Your friend (or your son, brother or cousin) invites you to his wedding. As a Christian, do you go? Before you say yes:
 - What if he's marrying another man?
 - What if he's marrying someone born male but who now identifies as female? Vice versa?
 - What if he's marrying a woman and the relationship began with an adulterous affair that broke up both previous marriages?
 - What if he's marrying a divorcée? (As both Edward VIII and Prince Charles did.)
 - Would it make a difference if he was (or claimed to be) a Christian?



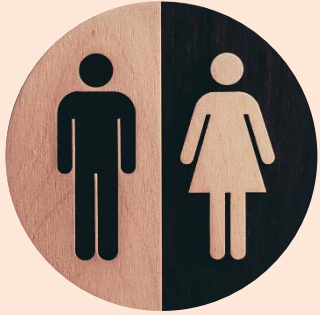
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Some are **deeply personal**:
 - Does God still love me if I'm gay, bi or trans?
 - Should I marry a non-Christian or does God want me to stay single?
 - Everyone says not having sex before marriage is foolish and even damaging. Should I listen to them or to God's word?
 - I'm addicted to porn – but no-one knows. Does it matter? What should I do?
 - I don't feel like I'm really a man/woman. Am I trans? What does that mean?
 - What does following Jesus mean for me when I'm trapped in a loveless marriage?
 - What does Jesus say about identity, singleness, marriage, divorce and remarriage?



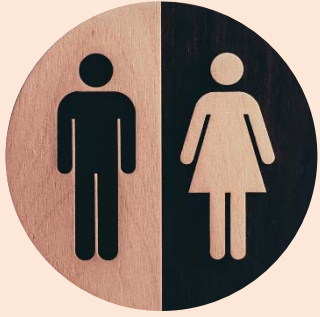
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions, questions, so many questions ...
 - Some are **occupying (destroying?) our church**:
 - Will the Church of England endorse same-sex marriage – as the Methodist Church, Church of Scotland and Church in Wales have recently done?
 - If we do, what does that say about our loyalty to Jesus?
 - If we don't, what does that say to our hostile culture?
 - Why wouldn't we, if we accept (heterosexual) remarriage after divorce and the ordination of women as presbyters/priests. After all, until 20-30 years ago, the church argued that the Bible was clearly against those developments too.



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- We're here to listen to Jesus' answers!
- *Are* these the sort of questions we should ask Jesus?
 - Liberal Christians say no: he is more concerned about love and poverty.
 - But consider his attention to these alongside sexual issues:
 - Love – 14 references (mutual love, love of enemies, neighbours, each other)
 - The poor – 15 references (good news to the poor, giving, caring for the needy)
 - Sexual ethics – 26 references (*moich-*: relationship breach; *porn-*: illicit sex)
 - So yes we should: people were as confused, sinful and damaged in his day!
 - And the gospel is still “good news”; the power of God to save those who believe.



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Consider the questions Jesus was asked:
 - 13 were hostile – and one went unanswered;
 - but all 28 questions his disciples asked him were answered.
- That doesn't make it easy!
 - Sometimes Jesus answered a question with a question;
 - sometimes he didn't answer straight away;
 - sometimes his answer was a rebuke; and
 - frequently he answered by turning the tables on the questioner!



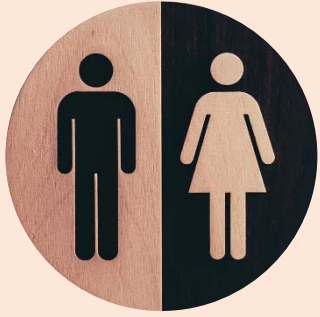
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Hostile questions:
 - Jesus' teaching provoked them then – and still does today.
 - “... a man with a shrivelled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’ He said to them, ‘If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’” (Matthew 12.10-12)
 - But the hostile questioner is unlikely to be satisfied with the answer:
 - “But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.” (v14)
 - We shouldn't be surprised if Jesus' teaching provokes implacable hostility!



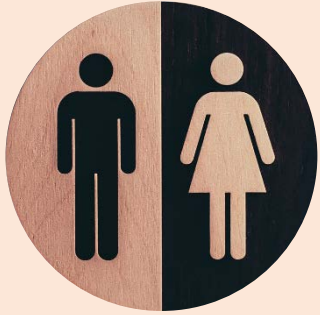
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Honest questions from disciples:
 - We ask him to teach us – and then listen to his answers!
 - “The disciples came to him and asked, ‘Why do you speak to the people in parables?’ He replied, ‘The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.’” (Matthew 13.10-11)
 - We know and love him, and therefore follow and obey his word:
 - “If you *love* me, you will *obey* what I command.” (John 14.15)
 - “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep *follow* him because they *know* his voice.” (John 10.3-4)



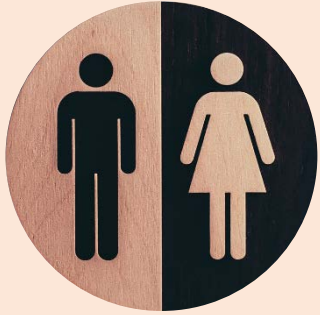
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- He will ask us some difficult questions too:
 - “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16.15)
 - If he really is Christ, the King, then we must obey him.
 - “Do you truly love me?” (John 21.15-17)
 - Will he have *first* place in our hearts? And will we obey him even at cost?
 - “You of little faith . . . why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14.31)
 - The scale of the battle, and the weakness of the church, may make us fear . . .
 - “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?” (Matthew 20.22)
 - Faithfulness in these areas will stir ridicule, rejection, hatred and worse.



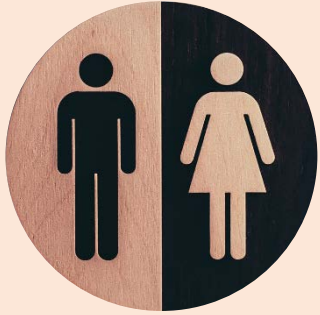
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- Questions of gender and sexuality are legion!
 - They come from the culture, our workplaces and schools, in our families, amongst our friends. They can be deeply personal. They are dividing the church. If we take our Christian faith seriously, we need answers!
- So, let's ask them of Jesus.
 - If you are willing to put aside your hostility, come and ask your questions of Jesus. Be warned – the answers may not be easy or swift, and he will ask you searching questions of his own. But if we know and love him, then he will answer us, and enable us to follow and obey him.
- But *how* do we listen to his voice?



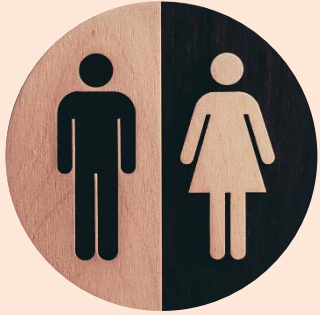
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- *Can* we hear Jesus' voice?
 - Some say no, because we don't have access to it.
 - Yes we do! Real Issues: Who chose the gospels? (March 2018)
 - More commonly in the church, one hears, "Yes, but only in his quoted words in the gospels." If 'only' Moses or Paul said it, we can safely ignore it!
- What does Jesus say to us about how we hear his word?
 - "... go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28.19-20)



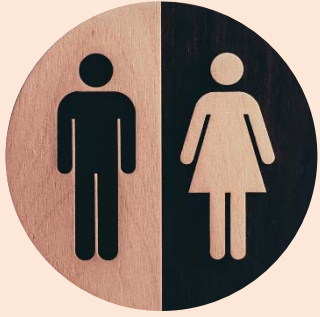
Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- What does he “command” about the Old Testament?
 - It is about him (Luke 24.44)
 - We need his help to understand it (v45)
 - He does not come to abolish the Old Testament, but to fulfil it (Mat. 5.17)
 - He endorses it entirely (v18) – every “jot and tittle” (AV)
 - Specifically, he roots his sexual ethic in it (Mathew 19.4-5) and underlines the continuing authority of the 10 Commandments (v18-19)
 - In sum, “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10.35)



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- What about the New Testament?
 - Its ultimate author is the Holy Spirit – sent by the Father to teach us the words of the Son through the unique ministry of the apostles.
 - “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14.26)
 - “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” (John 16.13-14)



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- In other words:
 - “*All Scripture* is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness ...” in issues to do with gender and sexuality and all else besides! (2 Timothy 3.16)
 - To be clear: what Paul (or David, or Moses or John) says, Jesus says. Jesus’ answer to all our questions is the Bible – all of it is his word.
 - This is why Paul commends the Thessalonians: “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2.13)



Week 1: Jesus and Difficult Questions

- So, let us bring our questions to God's word!
 - The Lord declares, "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66.2)
 - Jesus promises: "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3.19-20)
 - "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
(v22)