

It was nice meeting you at my friend's party, and I appreciate your openness in our discussion. Most people aren't courageous enough to discuss their opinions with someone with another view.

Out of everything we talked about, I find myself really grieved over your story of how your Son felt he was treated during his time in AWANA, and you feeling the Preacher was disrespectful and hateful. May I speak into this?

We can know of people first hand, and we can know of someone by how they are represented by the people that know that person. For instance, before we met last night, my friend could have related things about me to you, and my friend's representation of me could have contributed to what you knew, second hand, about me. If my friend knew me well and fairly represented me in a way that was true to the facts, he would be doing you and me a service. In the same way, if my friend was mistaken about me, or misrepresented me, then I wouldn't be correctly understood, and you would have a choice of how to view me. This is why it seems so important that whoever we are trying to understand needs to be met first hand, and any representations need to be checked out before fully believed.

Unfortunately, I find it is easy to dismiss people who are represented badly by others. In your case of the Church, the Pastor, and God – myself being a person who knows and studies my relationship with Him – I don't believe God was correctly represented to you and your family. As a friend of God, I'm sorry about that and how it has affected you and your family. What you described to me was not a fair show of who God is and how He expects to be represented.

Another aspect of all of this is the relationship between the truth about God, a person's understanding of it, and how we process it. If $2+2$ equals 4, it is a truth in itself. We can accept the evidence and agree, or, for whatever reason, we can argue it, misrepresent it, hurt other people with it, even outright reject it. But, no matter what we do that misrepresents the truth, it remains the truth in itself. The thing about any real truth is that it cannot be redefined into a non-truth. However, it can be represented in a non-truthful way, and the person exposed to this bad representation can conclude it is not truth. If either the representative or the person exposed don't know and accept the truth for what it is, they will be wrong in how they process it.

A Christian or a Pastor who misrepresent God is in error, and the recipient will have to choose to judge whether the God they describe is fair or is unfair. If we simply accept any representation of the God we have not investigated ourselves, we're likely to be missing out on the most important issue any of us will face. It is always better to judge God first hand, for ourselves.

From what you described to me, I believe you were presented with a partial truth, even if they could have been well-intentioned people. This doesn't change the fact that it directed you and your family into unfortunate conclusions about God. However, I humbly suggest that you too have a responsibility to investigate God to best draw your conclusions, first hand.

The reason I say this is mainly because the God I (and hundreds of millions of others) know would not have responded to your Son's sexuality in the way you described that the Church did. And in response, I also humbly suggest you have chosen to dismiss the most important Person in your life. My hope is you will re-approach the person of God yourself, and draw your conclusions of Him honestly, first hand.

How other people can lead us feel is a reality. The problem with this is that if we are directed by our feelings more than we are directed by the truth, we can find ourselves passionately insisting that $2+2$ equals something other than 4. But, if 4 is a very important issue for us, we will be denying the truth and taking ourselves away from whatever important thing the truth would bring us.

I will end on this, with the largest assurance I can offer you as a friend of God: He loves you, and your Son, and your family. Whatever He has given us to understand Him is undeniable truth. Whether we understand Him and accept His truth is the most important issue in any person's life. He knows we don't understand and even agree with Him in an endless list of issues. However, He is patient, loving, understanding and merciful. With 100% certainty, if we approach Him and leave our demands behind, and ask Him for help in understanding Him first hand, any of us can begin to see all aspects of God, and ourselves, and of life on His truthful, loving terms. Rejecting Him because of a poor representation,

or because of an unwillingness to consider accepting His answer to 2+2, is a tragic mistake. He loves us and wants us to enjoy Him in the truth concerning Him and all aspects of life.

We've only just met, but I care about you and your family. If I can be of any help to you on these topics, I'm willing and available.

Sincerely,
Mike Scheffer