

*The more we learn to see how someone's experience shapes their positions, the more empathy and love we can bring to the relationship.*

**mixtapes** (continued from p. 3)

sitions, the more empathy and love we can bring to the relationship. This should open us to challenge their assumptions—and let them challenge ours—because experiences are not infallible.

Jesus and Paul both defused divisive arguments by pointing people with differing mixes back to the truths of the big story God is telling through our world (John 8:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:10). This perspective causes us to raise our eyes to what really matters in our approach to life: the glory of God and the fullness of truth.

We love like Jesus loved not just by trying to convince others of our positions, but by first understanding how they have arrived at their positions. Then, we can invite them to address the true heart issue: trusting that God can guide us towards the fullness of truth together!

#### Questions:

- How would you rank the importance of these sources in your own life, based on how you form your beliefs and responses? Do any of them seem overemphasized, undervalued, or out of order? How does your stack impact your relationships in life and ministry?
- Evaluate your experience of each of these sources. How does your lens for life color that experience?
- Observe the story of Jesus and the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11). What was His position? What was His posture toward her? Toward the Pharisees and onlookers?
- Think about a specific issue where you often encounter conflict. How could you redirect the discussion to the big story of what God is doing? ◀

**what i said** (continued from p. 1)

ity, would have rubbed their hands in glee as they read this: Paul was showing THEM!

But Paul turns to those same Jews in Romans 2: “You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself!” Paul makes the *exact* same move as Jesus with the adulterous woman! The appropriate posture comes as we realize we *all* fall short of God’s intentions. None of us are able to live fully into God’s intentions for abundant life. None of us can meet God’s standards. That’s why Romans 1 and 2 flow together into Romans 3: “For *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and *all* are justified freely by his grace.”

That morning, I shared the gospel with that young lady *and* myself. I explained that both she and I fell short of God’s design, and both she and I needed His grace to be made right. My position was clear, but so was my posture. It was not an easy conversation, but she left wondering in curiosity at this gospel she had never heard, and I left newly thankful for Jesus’ posture—toward both of us. ◀



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# upfront

Real-Life Stories and Practical Tools  
to Advance The Navigators Calling

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## what i said and how i said it

by Pastor Kenneth Robertson (EDGE Class of 2007)  
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“Pastor, I don’t know what to think. A loving God can’t possibly think this about me, can He?”

The voice on the recording belonged to a young woman who described herself as bisexual (attracted to men and women). She had been build-

*Jesus’ position towards sin was MORE radical than the would-be stone-throwers’, but His posture was far more gracious.*

ing trust with our community over the last few months and had even begun to read her Bible. But that morning, she had read Romans 1 in her devotional time: one of the famous “clobber” passages concerning same-sex relationships. And she had, indeed, felt clobbered. I immediately called back and set up a coffee meeting for the next day.

What would I say?

I knew my “position” on the issue. I knew that God had clearly revealed in the Scriptures (including Romans 1) a true, good, and beautiful vision of human sexuality. I knew this vision was often twisted by our choices, the choices of others, and the continued brokenness of our bodies and minds. I knew the statistics relating to same-sex attraction, the best research on how those attractions form, and the latest guidance on how to counsel those wrestling with the issue. I knew plenty of ways to express my position.

But *how* would I say it?

Jesus was famous—even infamous—for welcoming those who did not fit the strict Jewish moral code of His day. Although He stood apart from the promiscuity of prostitutes, the greed of tax collectors, and the brutality of Roman soldiers, He nevertheless opened His arms to welcome them into fellowship. Perhaps the most famous example comes in John 8, where Jesus acknowledges the sin of a woman caught in adultery. However, He counsels those pious souls preparing to stone her that the person who has no sin should throw the first rock. Jesus’ position towards sin was MORE radical than the would-be stone-throwers’ (sin was even in them!), but His posture was far more gracious.

Following Jesus is not just about what we say but how we say it. Following Jesus into this combination of position and posture is certainly not natural, but the very Scriptures we meditate on and memorize often show us the way.

The next morning, as I sat with the young lady, I explained the context of Romans 1. The church in Rome was filled with Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) embroiled in a culture war for control of the church. The Gentiles were famous for their “loose” morality, and in Romans 1, Paul clarifies that this new life in Christ implies a release of the old ways of living. His position on their prior sexuality was clear (despite efforts in our own day to reinterpret the plain sense of the text). The Jews, who championed a far stricter moral-



**what i said** (continued on back)

## the main thing

by Lyndi Lee Markus  
Editor-in-Chief, *Upfront*  
Train – Develop – Care



“I know you believe in Jesus, so I don’t condemn you for being Catholic,” ten-year-old me generously (read: patronizingly) told my ten-year-old best friend. “Well,” she

retorted, “I don’t condemn you for not being Catholic.” I stared, dumbfounded....Could she *do* that?

That was my first striking exposure to an opposing ideal that would exist alongside my own. My little friend and I, coming at the world from different corners, somehow still met in the middle. We stayed friends.

I may not be proud of my benevolent speech now, especially as I’ve grown in my appreciation for the liturgy and tradition of the Church’s history, but a couple of thoughts stand out to me from that experience with my friend.

Through my own childish lenses for faith and family, I was reckoning with a tension we’ll all encounter at some point—loving a friend while realizing we were very, very different in crucial ways.

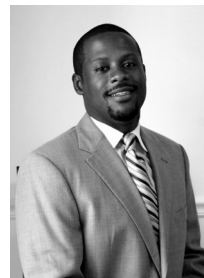
My superior attitude toward her came from fear—a desire to be right (and the perceived threat of being proven wrong). I also defined “evangelism” in a way that had nothing to do with the fact that the gospel meets each of us exactly where we are, but instead with the narrow view that everyone should believe as I do.

How easily we allow our pet opinions to become hills we’ll die on—altars where we martyr the faith of those who disagree, even though we can’t see what God is doing in their hearts!

God, from a position of perfection, looks on us with a posture of love, asking questions instead of condemning, letting truth speak for itself in the dark places of our hearts and asking us to speak it back to Him (Genesis 3:1-13; Exodus 14:5-25; Jonah 4:1-11).

Is there a truth He’s asking you to speak today? ◀

## gentle and right



by Osaze Murray  
Director of Training  
Train – Develop – Care

“Why do you want to do this now?” my business partner asked. “It’s not the right time.”

I sulked for a moment, then retaliated. “I’ve been doing most of the work all on my own for the past month. What does it matter to you when we decide to do it?”

(This wasn’t true, but it felt like it.)

Obviously, we didn’t see eye to eye. My reaction was to totally disregard his position on the matter and inflate my own. That soon soured our friendship to the point where I doubted I’d get an invitation to his wedding. Troubled, I turned to another godly friend who would surely agree with me. I even presented Scriptures to back up my perspective!

My friend said, “How much do you value the relationship?”

I considered. “I value it very much.”

“Then it’s probably best you apologize,” he said. “That’s more important than being ‘right.’”

I’m thankful I chose a friend who had the same posture Jesus showed in situations like that. Look at Mary and Martha, sisters who were deeply loved by Jesus. When He and His disciples visited, both sisters wanted to be good hosts, which in that culture indicated deference, honor, and respect. Martha got to work feeding all those men. Mary chose the role of a disciple and sat at Jesus’ feet, listening to Him.

Even if you’re not familiar with this story, you can imagine how Martha felt. “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” Instead, Jesus went to the heart of the matter, speaking tenderly to Martha. “You are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42).

Mary made a good choice, but so did Martha. After all, she could have complained to someone else. Instead, she went straight to Jesus.

When I have a different position than someone I love, how do I respond and to whom do I run? Do I understand why the other person holds their position? Am I curious? Confession time: God, I want to be gentle, and I want to be right; very rarely can I be both. Give me your posture. ◀

**Position:** What we believe

**Posture:** How we respond to those who believe differently



## position mixtapes

by Pastor Kenneth Robertson and Lyndi Lee Markus

How do we know what we know? How do we determine our position, or what we believe, on various issues? We all combine different sources of knowledge in different ways, resulting in a highly personalized position mixtape.

The four sources of knowledge are Scripture, personal experience, reason, and tradition. How we mix these often determines our position (kind of like your preference for a certain kind of music can determine how you build a playlist). But your mix can also lead to heated disagreements or misunderstandings with people who stack these sources in a different order... especially those who may not share your beliefs.



In **Scripture**, God makes Himself known. Christians believe this is the ultimate measure of all truth, but both our own brokenness and our mix of these other sources can influence how we experience and filter Scripture as we form our position (solid hermeneutics are important!). Non-Christians may not give Scripture any weight at all.

Our **personal experience** gives us a unique view of the world and powerfully shapes our beliefs. (e.g., someone who grew up with a loving father will naturally see the world very differently than someone who experienced abuse.)

**Reason** helps us make sense of how the world fits together. Scientific evidence can reveal truths about God’s creation and therefore about its Creator.

**Tradition**, which includes church history, family, and culture, connects us with Jesus, the disciples, leading thinkers, our cultural roots, and our forebears in the faith through thousands of years of history.

Each source of knowledge is a gift from God, and they’re meant to be used together. We may know Scripture should be our primary source, but... do we live that way? Different cultural eras tend to lean more heavily on different sources of knowledge. In our age and culture at large, personal experience seems to rule the day!

These sources influence not only our position, but our posture toward those who disagree with us. Here we see how personal experience is a huge help in our communication: It gives us our own particular lens of age, ethnicity, background, brokenness, and so on. The more we learn to see how someone’s experience shapes their po-

**mixtapes** (continued on back)

## The POSTURE CHALLENGE

by Cynthia Hagen  
Train – Develop – Care

Are you up for a challenge?

If so, ponder your position (what you believe) and your posture (how you respond to people who disagree) in each of the following sticky scenarios.



- Two single Bible study leaders in your ministry start dating. Both agree to live by what the Bible says about sex, but they end up sleeping together regularly. What are your position and posture towards them as individuals? As Bible study leaders?
- A church in a denomination you strongly disagree with invites your ministry to join a city-wide campaign to stop sex trafficking in your area. The cause is close to your heart, and you’ve prayed for opportunities to network in the community. What do you do?
- You desperately need a worship leader for Nav Nite. A transfer student with years of experience offers to take this on. The student has great character, knows the Word, follows Jesus and mainstream Christian doctrine on most points, but differs on a few you consider important. What now?

**In any head-to-head situation, especially when your conviction is strong, how can you apply the paradigm of posture and position to walk in confident Christlikeness? If you feel daring, discuss these with a follower of Christ who might think differently than you.**