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FLOOR DEBATE

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the floor has been here or was here when in the past I talked about the attitudes I had toward gay people when I was growing up. "Gay" was not a word that was used. "Lesbian" was not a word that was familiar to us when I was growing up. They were called the f-words: a fruit, a fairy, funny, or a faggot. And not one of those words was designed to be anything other than the max in delivering an insult, a put-down, debasement. I was reared in a fundamentalist holiness church, where they professed to believe every word of the Bible as it appeared. Even where there were contradictions, they believed both sides of the contradiction, because they had to. And what made me really doubt them was when they said that nobody would be in heaven except the people in that little church building where we were meeting. And at other times, they talked about that vast, overarching sky, with millions of stars. They didn't know there were billions. They didn't know there may have been thousands of galaxies. But with their limited understanding and knowledge, all those billions of stars, heaven was up there someplace. And the sky was farther than I could see. And it seemed like God, if God was as smart as they said God was, would not need all of that space for the few little people in this church building where I was attending. So I didn't believe that. Especially when there were people in that building whom I didn't believe were going to make it to heaven either. So I began to question other things that they said. As a whole, many black people are very narrow-minded when it comes to gay men and lesbian women. And I shared in that. I never did anything harmful to them, because to be frank, when I was younger, I didn't even really know what those terms meant. I didn't know what being a homosexual meant. But I knew whatever it meant, it was not good, and anybody who was that was not going to heaven. But there were people in that church where I attended who were not homosexual, and in my mind, they were not going to heaven either, so homosexuals were no worse than the people in this church, and some of them were probably better than these people. So I had a lot going through my mind. And I was thinking about things even when I was younger. Didn't always arrive at the right conclusion. Sometimes couldn't arrive at a conclusion at all. As I got older and became more aware of what actually happens to people who are homosexual or deemed homosexual, my attitude began to change. I would be aware that these people