

Farm Owners Fined \$13,000 for Saying 'No' to Lesbian Wedding

Christian farm owners in upstate New York who declined a lesbian couple's request to hold a wedding ceremony on their property have been fined \$10,000 and ordered to pay the women \$1,500 each.

Cynthia and Robert Gifford, who own Liberty Ridge Farm near Albany, rent their facilities for birthday parties and about a dozen weddings each year.

When Jennifer McCarthy and Melisa Erwin, a same-sex couple from Newark, New Jersey, requested to use the facility for their 2012 wedding, Cynthia Gifford offered the farm for a reception, but not for the wedding ceremony. Weddings typically are conducted on the first floor of the Giffords' home or in an adjacent field.

"It literally hits close to home," said the Giffords' lawyer, James Trainor. He said the farm owners attend a community church and cite their religious belief of marriage being only between a man and woman for declining to hold a same-sex wedding on their property.

Administrative Law Judge Migdalia Pares of the Bronx rejected the owners' argument that the farm, which is also their home, is not a place of public accommodation and is therefore not subject to the anti-discrimination provisions of New York's Human Rights Law.

The decision said Liberty Ridge qualifies as a public accommodation because it regularly collects fees for space, facilities, services and meals, so it cannot be considered "distinctly private."

“The fact that the Giffords also reside at Gifford Barn,” the decision says, “does not render it private.”

The farmer owners must pay \$13,000 in fines and restitution, the agency ruled. Trainor said the Giffords are considering whether to appeal or pursue further legal action.

“Liberty Ridge Farm ... has employed gay people and has conducted events for same-sex couples,” Trainor said. “The Giffords’ objection was to hosting and participating in the wedding ceremony itself and not to providing service in general to lesbians.”

McCarthy asked if it was legal for the farm to have a policy not to have ceremonies on the site, and Gifford responded that it was because “we are a private business,” according to the case.

The women, who are now married, filed a complaint with New York’s Division of Human Rights, and the administrative law judge said that Liberty Ridge “unlawfully discriminated against complainants solely on the basis of their sexual orientation.”

The farm case represents the most recent legal challenge to private businesses that provide services for weddings but refuse service to same-sex couples.

Last year, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that a Christian photographer could not refuse to shoot gay-wedding ceremonies. Even though at the time the state did not officially recognize gay marriage, the court ruled that declining to photograph a gay wedding was similar to declining to work at an interracial wedding.

Most recently, a Pennsylvania bridal shop owner and a bakery owner turned away separate lesbian couples. Pennsylvania started allowing same-sex marriage in May after a federal judge struck down a ban on gay marriage in the state

constitution.

Earlier this year, several states, including Kansas and Arizona, considered legislation that would allow people who object to same-sex marriage to cite their religious beliefs as a defense if faced with a discrimination lawsuit. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer vetoed the bill in her state; the Kansas bill died in the state Senate.

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Faith in Christ Comforts Parents of Beheaded Journalist James Foley

The parents of murdered journalist James Foley say their faith is helping them get through.

Foley was a graduate of Marquette University, a Jesuit institution in Milwaukee. He had previously spent 44 days in a Libyan jail during that country's civil war.

In the Marquette alumni magazine, Foley wrote about the power of prayer and faith in difficult circumstances.

On Wednesday, Foley's mother gave thanks for "so many prayers" of support. His father said James is "finally free" and "in heaven."

Pope Francis is expected to reach out to the family Thursday.

Foley was apparently murdered at the hands of ISIS, which was captured in a grisly video the terrorist group released Tuesday.

Foley was a seasoned foreign correspondent on assignment for the *GlobalPost* when he disappeared in northern Syria in November 2012.

Samaritan's Purse Doctor Recovers From Ebola, but Graham Still Urging Prayer

Today I join all of our Samaritan's Purse team around the world in giving thanks to God as we celebrate Dr. Kent Brantly's recovery from Ebola and release from the hospital. Over the past few weeks I have marveled at Dr. Brantly's courageous spirit as he has fought this horrible virus with the help of the highly competent and caring staff at Emory University Hospital. His faithfulness to God and compassion for the people of Africa have been an example to us all.

I know that Dr. Brantly and his wonderful family would ask that you please remember and pray for those in Africa battling, treating and suffering from Ebola. Those who have given up the comforts of home to serve the suffering and the less fortunate are in many ways just beginning this battle.

We have more than 350 staff in Liberia, and others will soon be joining them, so please pray for those who have served with Dr. Brantly—along with the other doctors, aid workers

and organizations that are at this very moment desperately trying to stop Ebola from taking anymore lives.

Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, is the president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse. This article originally appeared on .

Same-Sex Parents May Land on California Birth Certificates

Birth certificates in California would be changed to more accurately reflect families in which parents are of the same gender under a bill passed by the legislature on Wednesday.

The bill, which now goes to Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown, would allow parents to identify themselves as father, mother or "parent" when a child is born, a nuanced change from the current birth certificate that backers say is more reflective of growing rights for and acceptance of same-sex couples.

"This bill seems subtle, but I think it's going to make a profound impact on how people view each other," said the bill's author, Democratic Assemblyman Jimmy Gomez of Los Angeles.

The measure, if signed by Brown, would be the latest in a spate of actions taken by states to recognize the rights of same-sex couples.

In March, a baby in Tennessee became the first child in that state to have two women listed on her birth certificate, although one was in the spot marked "father."

In Florida last year, a judge approved an adoption of a baby

girl that listed three people as parents on her birth certificate: a lesbian couple and a gay man, who was the sperm donor for the baby but sought a bigger role in his daughter's life.

California already allows same-sex couples to put their names on a child's birth certificate, offering the choices of Mother/Parent and Father/Parent, Gomez said.

The applications for the new birth certificates, which will be available in 2016, allow both parents to choose any of the three ways to identify themselves—as mother, father or simply as a parent.

“It's a recognition that families come in different compositions now,” Gomez said.

The bill, backed by the LGBT-advocacy organization Equality California, passed the state assembly on a vote of 58 to 15. Six members did not vote.

There were more than 15,000 same-sex couples with children in California in 2010, according to the U.S. Census.

Additional reporting and writing by Sharon Bernstein in Sacramento; editing by Eric Walsh

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How God's Heart Breaks

How do we break God's heart?¹ The Message version of the Bible interprets Ephesians 5:30, this way. “Don't grieve God. Don't

break His heart.”

Reading the whole of the verses and chapters that come before this one leads me to believe the main we we break His heart is by not following what He’s told us to do. It breaks His heart when we go our own way and do our own thing instead of listening to Him.

His Holy Spirit has given us life but we squander it. We make our temple a garbage dump for unhealthy food, unhealthy attitudes, unhealthy outlook, unhealthy demeanor. We don’t take care of ourselves

Truth here: We don’t even like ourselves much. And yet, Jesus gave His very life for us. We cannot wrap our brains around the magnitude of that unfathomable gift. If we can begin to do that, even in part, we will want to redeem the time, change, transform, morph into this amazing creation that He has designed us to be.²

Transformation, being made new, created in the image of Christ, born to fly is not something we make ourselves do. It is something He creates in us when we submit to His grace completely.

I don’t know about you, but I take God’s gift of grace as something that just is, not something that is as deep as the ocean, as wide as the heavens and as vast as all seven billion people on the earth today and the billions who have lived on the earth.

He loves each and every person, knows them, completely, inside out. I have over 15,000 combined “likes” and “friends” on my two Facebook pages. There is no way I can know every one of these people.

Only a handful do I know well and fewer than that can I call by name when I meet them on the street. And yet if we were to meet God on the street, He would know our deepest secret, our

darkest fears, our most embarrassing moment; the dream that resides inside of us that hasn't even passed our cognitive brain yet.

He knows us and if we will submit to Him, He will lead us a step at a time. We quote Ephesians 2:8-9 a lot, the fact we are not the ones who save ourselves but it is God giving us a free gift by His grace. Available to us if we exercise faith to receive it.

But we many times leave out verse 10. In The Message it says: "We neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing."

He created me and you to do something specific. I am understanding that I don't really have to know the specifics of what I am to do. I only need to know who I am in Him. I only need to follow His each and every leading in my life.

A friend of mine has struggled with knowing the specific thing she is to do. She's talented, gifted, inspired and all of that leads her to want to do so many things in the Kingdom. She's learning, as we all must learn, to just listen to what God is telling her to do next.

It's really that risky step of faith. Why am I getting my degree, God? He may not show you why. He may just affirm to you it's your next step.

Planning these days is difficult for me. I try not to plan too far in advance lest the Lord interrupt my plans. I still plan. I have a full calendar. But God knows He's my calendar keeper. Any time He wants to interrupt my calendar and add a new date, I'm game.

This living not knowing is not scary, but it is an adventure and a new way of life for me. I no longer have to know why. I

leave the whys up to God. I leave the hows up to Him as well.

Because I know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it is God's power energizing me to do anything I do. "God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us."³

I realize this life I am living is really about God developing His character in me. He wants me moldable and ready to be a soldier in His army, ready to be placed wherever He needs me. That means I have some work to do to be ready, to be fit, to be moldable.

"We do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you."⁴

What Paul is telling the Ephesian church rings true to me. The truth of the matter is we all have certain things we don't want to give up and yet we want to be useful to the Kingdom.

Usefulness only comes when we allow God to transform us from the inside out. Having God produce His character in me means, I must take off a lot of me-ness (you do notice how the word sounds like meanness when you say it) and put on Him-ness (which if you say it with proper enunciation would be humility, plain and simple.) OK, so it doesn't sound like it but it should look like it.

We are to be like bricks in His wall, building a kingdom, standing in place, remaining strong and true. We are not necessarily called to be the prettiest brick, the most adoring brick, the brick that can preach the best or sing the best.

We are called to be content with holding place, cooperating with those around us, becoming strong and stable until our character has become strong and secure. Then He may call us to be the foundational brick for some other project. It's all in how adaptable we are willing to be.

All I have ever dreamed of being is an author. I knew God had gifted me with the ability to write, so some day I would write a book, maybe lots of books. I couldn't see past that one thing. It was my focus.

So, He used that to bring me to the place where I now am content with being placed in whatever position He needs be to be in. I've spoken many places to many groups, been on television, radio and in articles. Led workshops. And lead an online coaching group.

What happens next? I don't know. He only ever gives me the next step. That's all. The next step. What's the one after that? Where's it all leading?

God only knows. And that's just fine with me.

Living not knowing means I don't have to have it all figured out. It's a freeing feeling. It's God working in me.

That, my friends, is the best feeling this side of heaven.

¹ Ephesians 5:30 MSG

² 2 Corinthians 5:17

³ Ephesians 3:20 MSG

⁴ Ephesians 5:19 MSG

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Amazon in print, Kindle and Audible [HERE](#). This story is from her blog, .

Church Sues Satanists for Allegedly Stealing Communion Wafers for Black Mass

Oklahoma's Catholic Archbishop filed a lawsuit on Wednesday to halt the use of what he said were stolen communion wafers destined for a satanic black mass ceremony to be held next month in Oklahoma City.

The lawsuit filed in Oklahoma County District Court claims the black mass is a deliberate attack on the Catholic Mass as well as the foundational beliefs of all Christians.

"I have taken a legal step to combat this blasphemous and obscene inversion of the Catholic Mass," Archbishop Paul Coakley said in the lawsuit.

According to the lawsuit, the Holy Eucharist can only be distributed by an ordained minister of the Catholic Church and must be consumed immediately and never taken outside of the church.

The Angra Mainyu satanic group named in the suit as a defendant planned a countersuit claiming defamation and will go on with its black mass at the Oklahoma City Civic Center, according to Adam Daniels, the group's leader.

"I will allow the lawyers to pull that onion apart," he said, adding the communion wafers being used in the black mass were not stolen.

The Black Mass of Oklahoma has been held for several years and has faced resistance from state and local leaders as well as setting off anger in a state where many identify themselves as deeply religious Christians.

Officials for the Oklahoma Civic Center said that since the center is a city-owned facility, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution does not allow for them to turn away productions based on their content.

A Black Mass involves a sacrifice to the devil, a practice known as inversion of the Christian ritual. According to the Angra Mainyu website, it is a modern form of ritual to celebrate the perversion of the Catholic Mass.

Writing by Jon Herskovitz; editing by Eric Walsh

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Robin Williams Was Part of the Baby Boomer Suicide Epidemic

Robin Williams' suicide not only rocked the entertainment world—it rocked people in many parts of the world who loved his comic genius. In the wake of his untimely death, mental-health experts are pointing to statistics that reveal Williams' silent suffering was part of an epidemic.

Suicide is a top-10 cause of death—more people die from self-harm than from car accidents—yet we don't hear much about it

until someone of notoriety ends their life. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the suicide rate has jumped nearly 20 percent over the past 10 years even as heart disease, HIV and cancer death rates are declining.

The stats look worse when we come to Robin Williams' generation: the Baby Boomers. According to the CDC, the **suicide rate** among Americans aged 45 to 64 has climbed over 30 percent in the past 10 years. Cut another way, the category of upper-middle-aged white men has seen a 50 percent rise in suicides.

Why Are So Many Baby Boomers Committing Suicide?

Why are so many Baby Boomers committing suicide? What is the root issue? Where does it start? I've wondered this on a personal level as my uncle committed suicide a few years ago—and he was a Baby Boomer.

“Suicidal thoughts have numerous causes,” according to Mayo Clinic. “Most often, suicidal thoughts are the result of feeling like you can't cope when you're faced with what seems to be an overwhelming life situation. If you don't have hope for the future, you may mistakenly think suicide is a solution. You may experience a sort of tunnel vision, where in the middle of a crisis you believe suicide is the only way out.”

As it turns out, **suicidal thoughts** are not uncommon. Nearly 8.3 million adults age 18 and older in the United States—that's 3.7 percent—had serious thoughts of suicide in the past year, according to a study called “Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors Among Adults > 18 Years” released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although some suicides are impulsive, most are planned out. More than 2 million adult Americans made a suicide plan in the past year, and about half that many went through with the plan.

Suicide Starts With a Thought

As I've said before, suicide starts with a thought. Indeed, every action we take starts with a thought. As one who struggled with depression for years, I am not trying to oversimplify the solution, but rather merely point out one contributing factor. Many of the harmful actions we take originate from the seed of a thought Satan whispers to our souls. That seed grows as our minds reason out the benefits of acting on the thought. For those contemplating **suicide**, I believe the seed grows in their minds as they reason themselves out of living because life's circumstances are too overwhelming.

When the enemy plants a vain imagination in our minds, we have two choices: cast it down or meditate on it. When we meditate on vain imaginations, we tend to connect demonic dots that create skewed pictures of reality. Believing what we see in our thought life is real, we talk ourselves into taking action based on a wrong perception. Although there are issues of chemical imbalances, I believe this is what happens with many **suicides**. The enemy plants a seed in the form of a thought that an already distraught soul doesn't discern as a demonic attack on their life.

Winning the Battle Against a Silent Epidemic

If we want to win the battle against suicide among Baby Boomers—or any demographic—we need to, among many other things, take a hold of Scriptures that instruct us about the battle in our minds. Paul told us, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Cor. 10:4-6). No one can take your thoughts captive for you, but you can take your own thoughts captive, and it starts with girding up the loins of your mind (1 Pet. 1:13).

Paul also offered this advice: “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:8-9). If we do what the Word says—if we meditate on what the Word tells us to meditate on—the enemy’s seeds won’t take root in our souls.

If you see someone struggling with depression or hear them speak disturbing thoughts that aren’t in line with the Word of God, pray and ask God what He would have you do. Then do it. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, and the enemy is targeting our spiritual leaders in this hour. Let’s rise up and battle against this disturbing trend in the Name of Jesus.

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Pro-Life Law Closes 5th Abortion Clinic in Ohio

A suburban Cincinnati clinic will stop performing surgical abortions as a result of a 2013 state law that bars agreements

to move women needing emergency care to public hospitals, an attorney for the clinic said on Wednesday.

The Ohio Department of Health had ordered Women's Med in Sharonville, also known as Lebanon Road Surgery Center, closed after it could not procure a required transfer agreement with a non-publicly financed hospital.

Hamilton County Judge Jerome Metz stayed the order in January, but ruled last week he did not have jurisdiction to continue his stay. The clinic decided not to appeal, according to clinic attorney Dorothea Langsam.

Langsam said the clinic will still provide other women's health services, and is considering the option of medical abortions, in which drugs rather than surgery end a pregnancy.

Women's Med is the only clinic within 100 miles that provided abortions between 18 and 22 weeks of pregnancy, which often address fetal anomalies and high-risk pregnancies, clinic spokeswoman Valerie Haskell said in a statement.

Ohio abortion clinics are required to have hospital-transfer agreements so patients can be admitted in case of complications.

Last year, Ohio became the first state in the country to block taxpayer-financed public hospitals from forming transfer agreements with abortion providers. Clinics must have arrangements with private hospitals, or doctors with privileges at such hospitals.

A push by conservative Republicans to put fresh restrictions on abortion at the state level has resulted in a rash of new legislation over the past three years.

"If a facility fails to ensure that they are operating at the legally required health and safety standards to protect women then certainly they should close," said Michael Gonidakis,

president of Ohio Right to Life, an anti-abortion group.

Four other Ohio abortion clinics have chosen to close since the beginning of 2013, according to Kellie Copeland, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio. Three licenses for clinics in Cincinnati, Dayton and Toledo are pending with the health department.

Copeland said she believes Republican Gov. John Kasich wants to close the remaining Cincinnati clinic, which would leave the largest metropolitan area in America without an abortion provider.

Reporting by Kim Palmer; editing by Mary Wisniewski and Eric Walsh

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You Might Be a Porcupine if ...

I'm not sure exactly when the moment occurred, but recently I've discovered that I'm an animal ... a porcupine, to be more precise. Let me explain.

For many years, I've been speaking at events around the country. One of the topics I speak on is how to love your family well. I share how it's easy to love people who are sweet, kind and lovable. But then ask, "So how do you love people when they're unlovable? How do you love the prickly porcupines in your life who hiss at you, irritate you, wound you, or cause you pain?"

I then go on to share about the nature of the porcupine. And

the most recognizable feature of this rodent is that it intrigues us all with its quills, which can number as many as 30,000. The quills are stiff hairs with barbed tips on the ends. The porcupine has quills on all parts of its body, with the exception of its stomach. The longest quills are on its rear end. When irritated or threatened, the porcupine stamps its feet, growls, hisses, and places his snout between his forelegs and spins around, presenting its rear to the other animal. If the porcupine hits the animal with its quills, the quills become embedded and can cause enormous pain.

The Porcupine Me

For some years now, my wife, Susan, has joked about my sometimes “porcupine-ish” tendencies. I’d even laugh about it with her every once in a while. But I didn’t think too much about it until recently. Last summer, our team gathered to brainstorm some new topics for my blog. I thought it would be great not only to speak at events about this topic but also to write about it and share it with my blog audience. As we gathered around the table, I held up a picture of a porcupine. I then said, “What’s the first thing you think about when you see this?” One of our team members, Daniel, blurted out, “You!” Everyone chuckled. I even got a kick out of it too.

I then fired Daniel (just kidding). Our team knows I always want them to be honest with me. His comment made me realize that I’m not talking about something I don’t know anything about. I can speak from personal experience as a porcupine and also as a person who has dealt with many porcupines in his life.

Born or Bred a Porcupine?

So, was I born a porcupine, or did I become a porcupine? Is it a genetic predisposition, or have external things influenced me? In other words, is it nature or nurture? I believe the answer is “yes.” It’s both. I was born a selfish creature that

wants what he wants when he wants it. I was also raised in a world that has influenced me as well.

You Might Be a Porcupine If ...

Comedian Jeff Foxworthy has a well-known gig where he gives a lot of funny examples of how "You might be a redneck if ..." Well, check out these porcupine characteristics and evaluate whether you think you have any porcupine-ish tendencies.

- Porcupines have sharp quills on its back, sides, and tail, but its belly is tender and vulnerable. So, if you are often prickly, even though you have a lovable, tender side, you might be a porcupine.
- Porcupines are very vocal animals, with a variety of calls including moans, grunts, coughs, wails, whines, shrieks and tooth clicking. If you make a lot of unnecessary grunting, or do a lot of whining or complaining, you might be a porcupine.
- Porcupines are often solitary animals. If you find yourself wanting to be alone a lot, and being with other people too much makes you grumpy, you might be a porcupine.
- When irritated or threatened, a porcupine will turn its back, raise its quills and lash out at a predator with its rump. If you easily get defensive, show your backside, and angrily lash out at others, you might be a porcupine.
- A porcupine's quills have sharp tips and barbs that cause serious pain and make them difficult to remove. If you say or do things to others that deeply wound them and cause long-term pain, you might be a porcupine.
- Porcupines mate in late summer and early fall. this one doesn't exactly fit.

The First Step to Recovery

So, how did you do? Are you, or is someone you love, a

porcupine like me sometimes? They say the first step to correcting a problem is admitting you have one, so join me now in saying:

“My name is _____, and I’m a porcupine.”

Feel better? Me too!

Now that I’ve admitted to being a porcupine, I need to share with you that, sometimes, especially in my younger years, I have gotten irritated or lashed out when things haven’t gone my way, when my expectations have not been met, when I’ve felt disrespected, or when I’ve been lied to. They’re called trigger points. Trigger points are things that make our quills stand on end and evoke our “fight or flight” response.

So, in an upcoming blog, I’ll further address those porcupine trigger points and how to deal with them.

Are you sometimes a porcupine? If so, what porcupine traits have you exhibited? Please share in the comments below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .

Why Do We Put ‘Christian Celebrities’ on a Pedestal?

Gungor. Vicky Beeching. Mark Driscoll. David Yonggi Cho. What do all these names have in common? Controversy.

Of course, a blogger like myself could not go silent on these issues.

When situations like this arise, we are challenged, confused, disillusioned. We often resort to bashing, freaking out, and being disgusted (or excited) when a Christian celebrity falls.

When I think of the aforementioned names, I think of children of God who followed the call of God, were used mightily by God, and are being honest with their struggles. Mistakes have been made; power has been abused. But that's no excuse to write people off.

An Issue of Worship

Allow me to issue a challenge—to you, to me. This is about worship. When situations like this arise, I wonder whom we are worshiping, what we're prioritizing. Our worship culture so often becomes a consumer game of digesting the latest, greatest songs and resources, idolizing the people who carry the gifts of God.

The problem with idolizing the carriers of God's anointing is that they weren't meant to hold the weight of such admiration. It wasn't made for man, but for God alone.

When they fall, our spirits fall because we've placed too much stock in a human. When they reveal a deep-seated belief you didn't expect them to have, your world can be rocked to its foundation.

Of course, this is a big deal because these leaders have massive, global influence. We wonder what effect their belief or sin will have on others.

Truth is, we can't look to the conduit of God's gifts as our source, but to Christ. Then, we are free to receive the ministry of those we don't agree with. We can bless and encourage and pray for those with contrary beliefs without tearing down, because it's not our job to police the church.

I don't agree with Vicky's life choices and wouldn't make them

my own. Gungor's perspective on the Bible is a little troubling. But that doesn't force me to choose between love and hate, compassion and spite.

Rather, I can respect and reach out.

Criticism and the Cross

We can still sing Vicky Beeching's worship songs. We can be strengthened and inspired by her powerful intellect.

We can still draw near to Christ through Gungor's music. We can still be influenced by Mark Driscoll's preaching. No matter how imperfect they all are, it doesn't negate their ministry.

Honestly, we all encounter struggles and face questions without easy answers. Few of us are bold enough to speak up and say "I'm struggling with my sexuality. I'm struggling with the reality of God. I struggle with the love of money."

What these people invite us into is recognizing our own humanity and bringing them into the context of conversation. Think about the thousands of Christians around the world who have questions, struggles and doubts. If we as the church won't allow their questions to be heard, where is the best place?

We all have questions. Imperfection is part of our nature on this earth. Let your criticism of others be shrouded in prayer for their well-being.

Let's look to the cross. Let's make the person of Christ our hero, our daily source. Consider the possibility that your greatest hero of faith could disappoint you with a belief they have. Stay rooted in Christ, and pray for those you look up to.

I'd love to hear from you and continue the conversation.

What has been your response to all this controversy? What do you believe? Let's have a conversation here in the comments.

David Santistevan is the worship pastor at Allison Park Church in Pittsburgh. For the original article, visit [.](#)