

A Father's Response to 'An Open Letter to the Church From My Generation'

Dear College Kid,

I really appreciate you taking the time to share your heart, and I'm so sorry you felt it necessary to choose between loving your gay friends and staying in church. But I know that you're speaking for millions of kids your age who have dropped out of church for this very reason.

Now, I am by no means a young person myself—I'm 58 years old with two grown daughters and four grandkids, and my wonderful wife, Nancy, and I have been married for 37 years—but I spend a lot of time with college-aged kids as a professor and mentor. And the young people I know actually have a very different perspective than yours: They love Jesus, they love their churches, they love their gay friends, and they don't feel any conflict over it. In fact, they believe that by loving Jesus and by being part of a loving church, they can be the best possible friends to other LGBT young people.

And these young people don't believe they need to reinterpret or rewrite the Bible in order to love other gay kids. Do you think that could be a possibility?

So, your open letter doesn't actually speak for your entire generation, just a good portion of it. And just as you don't like it when others make generalizations about "your generation," my young friends don't like it either.

Are they entitled to have a different point of view? Will you be tolerant toward them when they don't agree with your perspective, or is conformity to the new perspective the only thing that's acceptable? And if some of them whom I know

personally have found something better than being gay, will you reject them or mock them or cast them out?

Jesus saved me when I was a rebellious, LSD-using, heroin-shooting, 16-year-old hippie rock drummer. I was part of the counterculture revolution of the 1960s. I wanted to change the world. The older generation just didn't get it. They had all these hang-ups and old-fashioned ways, and I knew better. That's what I thought back then.

Today, more than four decades later, I'm more revolutionary than ever—more radical and more committed to changing the world. And I hate stale, status quo Christianity. That's not who Jesus is, and that's not what Jesus came to do.

But when I read your open letter and watched the Macklemore "Same Love" video that you linked, I don't see anything radical or revolutionary there at all. I see the new status quo. Lady Gaga sings "Born This Way," and Macklemore raps it, and that's the new gospel, followed by masses of young people. And this is supposed to send a message to the church?

You talk about listening to "hateful preaching" over the years, and it hurts me as a church leader to hear that. But it's not hateful to say that God intended a man to be with a woman (hey, this is not rocket science, and Jesus said it clearly too), and it's not hateful to say that a kid should have a mom and a dad. Who decided that this was "hate"?

You can call this "BS" or even "holy BS," but I call it beautiful truth, part of the rhythm of life that God, our loving Father, intended. In fact, that's the first thing I noticed on the Mackelmore video: It takes a mom and a dad to produce a child, and that's something we should never forget.

An 11-year-old girl named Grace Evans who testified before the Minnesota legislature about redefining marriage said it so well: "Since every child needs a mom and a dad to be born, I don't think we can change that children need a mom and a dad.

I believe God made it that way. I know some disagree, but I want to ask you this question: Which parent do I not need, my mom or my dad?"

Maybe Grace should write a letter from her generation to your generation? Maybe you've just bought into the latest social fad without thinking through the implications for the young people who will come after you?

I'm glad America is becoming a safer place for kids who identify as gay. No one should be bullied for being different. Period. But that doesn't mean we make marriage genderless or celebrate homosexuality. That doesn't mean we suddenly discover new ways to change the meaning of the Bible. And when Macklemore says, "It's human rights for everybody," just remember that gays are not the only ones who want to redefine marriage. Do you really stand for marriage equality for *all*?

To be totally candid with you, I always listen to young people and ask for their insights, and I'm sure that your generation cares a lot about fairness and justice and equality. But could it be that my generation is not totally ignorant about these things? Could there be a reason that one of the Ten Commandments says, "Honor your father and your mother"—or is that outmoded now too? Is there no wisdom we can impart to you about marriage and family and gender?

Yes, my generation has made a mess of marriage with all our no-fault divorces and all the scandals with our famous preachers and all the pornography in the church, but we messed things up because we didn't hold on to God's Word and to the foundations of marriage ourselves. Now you want to change those foundations? You will live to regret it, I'm sure.

You wrote, "We know conservatism; we know tradition. But we also have Twitter, we watch SNL, we listen to Macklemore, and we read Tina Fey."

Of course, I get your point (you live in South Dakota!), but

here's a word of wisdom for you: Twitter is not the place to discover the meaning of life; *Saturday Night Live* is not the place to learn moral values; and Tina Fey is not on a par with Moses, Jesus and Paul.

Could it be that part of the problem is that your worldview has been shaped more by the media than it has been shaped by the Lord? Is that part of the reason that polls indicate your generation thinks 31 percent of the population is gay (as opposed to the accurate 3 percent or less)?

In "Same Love," Macklemore says, "We paraphrase a book written 3,500 years ago," and in another of his songs he says, "The present is, right here, through the breath, watch it, Atheist Jesus piece, hangin' on a cross." Is he the new spiritual guide?

I look at him as a very sincere, lost young man and say, "How incredible it would be if he came to know the love of God!" You look at him as a spokesman for your generation and feel he has a message for the church.

Of course, from your perspective, the church is "scared of change. We always have been." Maybe so, but most of the people I run with are challenging church traditions all the time. In fact, one of my books is called *Revolution in the Church: Challenging the Religious System With a Call for Radical Change*. It's just that I'm 100 percent sure that God does not approve of homosexual practice and homosexual relationships, and I've prayed over this and wept over this and studied the Scriptures in the original languages and listened to "gay Christians" until my heart was ready to break for them. Are you 100 percent sure that our understanding of God's heart and God's Word is wrong?

You wrote, "When scientists proposed that the Earth could be moving through space, church bishops condemned the teaching, citing Psalm 104:5 to say that God 'set the earth on its

foundations; it can never be moved.' But the scientific theory continued, and the Church still exists."

The truth is that scientists within the church were responsible for many of the major scientific breakthroughs over the centuries, and there's nothing in the Bible that tells us we should believe that the sun goes around the earth. But there's a lot in the Word about sexuality and marriage, and having talked to many who left the "gay lifestyle" (their words, not mine), I'm all the more convinced that God's ways are best. (Some of these young people are still same-sex attracted, but they love Jesus and are totally content with Him, even if He never changes them).

You wrote, "We want to stay in your churches, we want to hear about your Jesus, but it's hard to hear about love from a God who doesn't love our gay friends (and we all have gay friends). Help us find love in the church before we look for it outside."

I'm committed to doing that very thing, but how about we make a deal? Let's get some key folks from your generation and my generation together and spend a few days before God, worshipping Him, loving on Him, studying His Word, asking for His heart toward all people, and learning from each other. And rather than following "my Jesus" or "your Jesus," how about we commit to follow the Jesus of the Scriptures, regardless of cost or consequence?

Will you do it?

Michael Brown is author of *The Real Kosher Jesus* and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *The Line of Fire* on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of *FIRE School of Ministry* and director of the *Coalition of Conscience*. Follow him at AskDrBrown on Facebook or @drmichaellbrown on Twitter.