

Can a Christian Be Gay?

Departing a restaurant where we celebrated my wife's birthday recently, I got a 10 p.m. call on my cellphone. The lady in Kentucky needed help because her bank teller friend, who identifies as a Christian, was confused about homosexuality.

Her unmarried female friend read a book called *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Debate* by Justin Lee, 36-year-old founder of the Gay Christian Network that "helps educate the Christian community about sexual issues from a biblical standpoint." Having feelings at times for members of the same sex, the woman's friend was being influenced by his theories and asking, "Is it OK to be a gay Christian?" "What about same-sex marriage?"

Lee encourages his followers to embrace counsel from the New Testament (Rom. 14) and "not quarrel over disputable matters" and choose one of two paths:

- Side A: God allows permanent, monogamous gay relationships.
- Side B: Gay Christians remain celibate.

What follows is my way of helping someone like this lady. In a day where even the president of the United States, for whom I pray daily, seems to be either naïve or misinformed, as a professing Christian on this critical topic, I hope to offer help in the national conversation.

I approach this subject not as an angry, mean-spirited extremist but rather in a spirit of humility, as a would-be friend of both supporters and opponents. As a Christian who was formerly a "rock star" drummer in a band called the Lost Souls (and I was lost!), I admit the church has unfortunately fallen far short in our testimony, due to divorce, hypocrisy and uncharitable attitudes in our ranks. Yet I want to be part of the generation arising that is not so much imposing but

proposing a better way that really does lead to peace, freedom and long-term happiness in human relationships.

I've engaged and befriended gays and regularly attended their gay pride events for over a decade in different states. I've stood at the bedside of my buddy John who changed from gay to straight but later died of AIDS and requested I do his funeral (which I did, with his daughter and over 50 of his past gay friends present).

We're on a journey of discovery, and I hope this following counsel helps multitudes who are being asked similar questions as me.

Let's Not Be Non-Specific but Straightforward

The entire Bible unambiguously defines marriage between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24 in the Old Testament; Matt. 19:5 in the Gospels; Eph. 5:31 in the New Testament). Outside that state, obedient Christians are called to sexual purity/celibacy (Eph. 5:3-6; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:3-8).

Paul says, "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4, NIV).

Dr. Timothy Keller, world-renowned author and pastor, had to respond to similar inquiries at Oxford University. He lovingly and succinctly helped students with sound counsel from Scripture. He told them:

1. As Christians we're called to love not disdain our neighbor—atheist, gay or antagonist.
2. If you call yourself gay and Christians disagree with you, that doesn't mean you're being judged unfairly.

3. The Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is not God's way or design for His creation.
4. Don't let your sexuality destroy your objectivity (to come to grips with biblical truth).
5. Admittedly, some church people have attraction to the same sex but do not allow themselves to be governed by those feelings (temptations). Their identity in Christ is central, not their sexual identity. This shift is what frees them to both change and live changed.
6. God designed us for human intimacy—companionship, touch and sexual expression—in the right place and right time, but people can choose to fulfill normal desires in unrighteous ways. Key: it is a choice!

Not long ago, *Sex and the City* starlet Cynthia Nixon caused a firestorm when interviewed in a New York magazine saying she did the heterosexual thing for a while but then chose to go gay.

Rosaria Butterfield, author of *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, describes how she was a leftist lesbian professor who “despised Christians then somehow became one!” Now she's married to a pastor, raising her children in North Carolina.

Understanding the Bible Correctly

Today, there's a lot of misunderstanding regarding Scripture because some gay-affirming leaders and churches take a “salad bar” approach, conveniently selecting passages that support positions while neglecting other more challenging ones.

Some people are dishonest with Scriptures (intentionally or unintentionally): “Where in the Bible does it even mention cocaine or pornography?” “I haven't seen gay marriage in the Bible once!” (This actually came from a chairman of one of our political parties.)

Others “cherry pick” verses to defend conduct without taking

into consideration the context or the whole of what Scripture teaches on a topic ("A text out of context is a pretext."). The fact is, the Good Book doesn't categorically say, "Don't judge"; "Don't dance"; "Don't drink"; "Don't enjoy sex"; or dozens of other so-called "prohibitions" many erroneously believe. Neither does it tell us in every situation to "turn the cheek"; "hand over our cloak"; "give and expect no return"; or scores of other recommendations that need to be clearly explained in their context.

Sometimes people try to discredit the Bible by mocking its content and citing Old Testament passages that seem outdated or severe in application. What they don't understand is this: There are basically three types of laws prominent in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible: 1) ceremonial, 2) hygienic and 3) moral.

The first two (ceremonial and hygienic) don't apply anymore for those who are part of the New Covenant since the time of Christ; otherwise there would be no more football (handling a pig skin was a no-no), and the over-40 crowd couldn't approach the altar of God with a disability or during that "time of the month." ("You mean I can go get a Wendy's cheeseburger with bacon, have some Red Lobster jumbo shrimp or enjoy a Honeybaked ham?" Absolutely!) Yet the moral laws do still apply—not for or as a means to redemption but to show us our need to be redeemed!

It really is time to gain a better understanding of the Bible, not primarily as a harsh legalistic code of dos and don'ts but rather as a guidebook of timeless wisdom. It also provides us with a coherent framework for outlining society's problems, then prescribes answers to remedy them.

Our challenge is simple: Will we follow a secular or a scriptural worldview? I suggest we embrace our Creator's ways for His creation. "For best results, follow instructions in the manufacturer's handbook!"

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