

Ex-Gay Songwriter Believes You May Be Born Gay, but It Doesn't Matter

He penned the words that many of us know by heart:

Taking my sin, my cross, my shame

Rising again I bless your name

You are my all in all

When I fall down, You pick me up

When I am dry, You fill my cup

You are my all in all.

What you may sing as a feel-good song to remind you of God's grace represents the powerful journey songwriter Dennis Jernigan walks as he allows Jesus to give him a new identity from what the world wanted.

"I thought God hated me," Jernigan says, explaining how he thought his sexual orientation was too much for even God to overcome. "Any sermon I heard, it was very clear I would go straight to hell, so it was built in me that the sin was already there."

Decades later, Jernigan says the power of Jesus allows him to walk in freedom. The songwriter says he wants the church to know that it's possible to embrace the gay community where they are and challenge them to meet God.

The answer, he says, is Jesus.

As someone who is now happily married to a woman and the father of nine children, Jernigan says the battle for his

identity started in his mind and played out in the homes of believers who were willing to war with him.

“I never thought I’d be attracted to a woman, but everything changed because I changed the way I thought and put off thoughts until I didn’t think them anymore,” Jernigan says.

It’s renewing of the mind described in Romans 12 the church should consider as they approach the sensitive topic.

“I have a Christ-centered worldview, everything I believe comes from that point,” Jernigan says. “Find out who your Creator says you are, not who you feel you are. If we don’t think the way God designed us to think, we’re going to latch onto something. What we put into our minds is what we put out. I agree with that, I am brainwashed, you need to be transformed by renewing of your mind.”

Though gay marriage has hit the headlines this year, Jernigan says it is far from a new thing. Rather, the issue is coming to the forefront because of a progressive society.

“God has been setting people free from identity issues for thousands of years,” Jernigan says.

Despite the history of freedom, the American church, he says, is in dire straights, especially as political culture demands an acceptance of sin: 48 percent of religious congregations now allow practicing homosexuals to be full-fledged members, according to a Pew research study. The same study reveals 26 percent of congregations allow people with same-sex attraction to volunteer in leadership positions.

The majority of white mainline protestants (62 percent) now support same-sex marriage, with Catholics (57 percent) hovering close behind, according to a different Pew study. White evangelicals have the least support, with approximately 24 percent in favor of gay marriage.

It's a fight the church needs to engage rather than cowering in fear, Jernigan says.

"(The church) just don't know how to deal with it," Jernigan says. "They don't understand the Word of God. What I mean by that is answers are in the Word for how we respond to sin and sinners. We can judge what is right and what is wrong all day long, but we are never to condemn. Jesus basically said to judge what is right, but told those around the woman (in John 8), 'No one condemns you, so neither do I.' That makes it easy to walk in the culture."

However, this doesn't happen in the pulpit. For Jernigan and his family, ground zero of the fight against sin begins in their living room.

"Even to this day, my wife and I (host a) meeting every Wednesday night where people can come," Jernigan says. "It's just like Vegas: what happens in the living room, stays in the living room. People feel safe."

If believers genuinely want to change the culture, here's where the rubber meets the road, Jernigan says: "What if every believer in America saw their home and family as a conduit of healing? We'd change the culture overnight.

"Stop expecting church, church leadership to minister to people we're involved with. Never once did we go to barn to get the harvest, but we went to the field. ... We are all as new creations called to be ministers of reconciliation."