

Gay and Christian? Revisiting the Question of 'To Judge or Not to Judge'

There is a lot of confusion today over the subject of judging, and it seems that the one thing all of America knows is that "Jesus taught us not to judge." What does the Bible really say about judging?

I devoted an entire chapter to this subject in *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* and with every day that goes by, the question becomes more relevant. Does God's Word give us clear directives here?

If you look in 1 Corinthians, Paul writes that the spiritual man makes judgments about all things (2:15), he tells us not to judge anything before the appointed time (4:5), instructs us to judge those within the body who claim to be believers but are walking in open sin (5:12) but reminds us that we are not to judge the world in that same way (5:13), tells us we are to judge disputes in our midst since one day we will judge angels (6:1-3), encourages the Corinthians to judge what he writes (10:15), asks them to judge whether it was right for a woman in their meetings to pray with her head uncovered (11:13), and then tells them they must judge themselves when partaking of Communion so they will not be condemned with the world (11:31-32).

Paul has a lot to say about judging.

As for Jesus, in Matthew 7:1-5, He teaches us not to judge hypocritically or superficially and not to condemn, while in John 7:24, He teaches us not to judge by outward appearances but to make righteous judgments.

In reality, the world could not function without proper

judgments being made, from judges in the courts to parents in the homes to every individual believer.

All of us make judgments every day—you will make judgments as you read this article—but are we making righteous judgments or are we being judgmental?

I recently wrote an article entitled “Let the Separation Come,” explaining that the divide over homosexual practice within the body is absolutely necessary, as painful as it may be.

Since then, the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) confronted Steven Cobb, president of both WaterBrook Multnomah (which publishes authors like Randy Alcorn, David Jeremiah and John Piper) and Convergent Books, which published Matthew Vines’ pro-homosexual book, claiming that he was an evangelical.

Rather than repenting of his error, Cobb pulled his publishing conglomerate out of NRB. (For my earlier article on the subject, see “A Shameful Day in Evangelical Christian Publishing.”)

From a scriptural perspective, and based on the NRB’s Code of Ethics, the NRB engaged in righteous judgment. (The code states, “I will refrain from any sexual conduct or lifestyle, such as homosexuality or adultery, which is inconsistent with Scripture, or any promotion of the same.”) It will be interesting to see what WaterBrook Multnomah’s fine Christian authors and staff choose to do in the coming days.

A few days after the NRB’s interaction with Cobb, Howard Books, the Christian imprint for Simon & Schuster, announced that it was publishing a book by music artist Jennifer Knapp, first well known for her contemporary Christian recordings but today known as an out-and-proud lesbian while still a professing Christian.

The book is a clear apologetic for “gay Christianity,” as noted in the press release from Howard Books, which states that Knapp “talks about the importance of her faith, and despite the many who claim she can no longer call herself a believer, she maintains that she is both gay and a Christian.”

Interestingly, journalist Jonathan Merritt points out that Knapp bluntly told *Christianity Today* in 2010, “I’m in no way capable of leading a charge for some kind of activist movement,” adding, “I’m not capable of getting into the theological argument as to whether or not we should or shouldn’t allow homosexuals within our church.” How things have changed!

As for Howard Books, it is a member of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, and the ECPA would do well to follow the example of NRB’s president and CEO, Jerry Johnson, who explained, “This issue comes down to NRB members producing unbiblical material, regardless of the label under which they do it.”

Either Howard Books repents of its wrong decision to publish this book or it resigns from the ECPA (or is forced to resign by the ECPA). They cannot have it both ways.

The same goes for Knapp, for whom we should pray and reach out with gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Either she repents of practicing homosexuality or she no longer claims to be a follower of Jesus. To do both at the same time is impossible, no matter what gay apologists and their allies tell us. God and His Word have not changed.

And if she refuses to repent, all Christian venues should stop working with her, while continuing to pray for her and appeal to her, as per 1 Corinthians 5.

At the same time, we are to reach out with compassion and longsuffering to all nonbelievers who identify as LGBT, not making their sexuality the issue at all, and under no

circumstances should we separate ourselves from them (as long as that doesn't mean partaking of their sin; this is the same with all nonbelievers).

Again, this is in harmony with Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5, and this reflects the heart of God, who loved us and sent His Son to die for us while we were yet sinners, lost in rebellion and guilt (see the whole New Testament for this!).

When I share the gospel with someone who tells me they are gay, I make clear to them that homosexuality is not the principal issue, that the real issue is their lack of relationship with God—that they are not so much sinners because they are homosexual but they are homosexual because they are sinners and that Jesus paid for every sin in their lives. And I explain the message of repentance and faith, speaking the truth in love.

There is good news for all in Jesus, even for the very worst of sinners, including people like me, saved in 1971 from heroin and LSD, from lying and stealing, and from all kinds of wickedness and pride.

At the same time, because of who Jesus is, true believers must separate from those who claim to know Him and yet walk in persistent, open and unrepentant sin.

This too is the gospel.

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