

'I Am Michael' Looks Beyond the Cultural Battle to the Heart

When speaking of Michael Glatze's change of heart, many—including believers—will most likely point toward his miraculous deliverance from a homosexual lifestyle that included his adamant participation as a gay-rights activist. And certainly it is a cause for all of heaven to rejoice when someone not only turns his or her life around in such a manner, but also when that person becomes a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yes, Glatze's lifestyle transformation that took place in 2007—depicted in the recently released film *I Am Michael* starring James Franco—is cause for celebration. Many Christian fundamentalists might go as far as to say that it was a victory in the ongoing battle against the gay agenda.

But most won't find Glatze seeing it that way. As a matter of fact, Glatze, who, according to Wikipedia is the pastor of a small church in LaGrange, Wyoming, is now apologizing for what he termed as some very "hateful" things he said and did immediately after his life transformation took place. In essence, he became what he beheld and took to bashing the very group of people he formerly embraced as his own.

In other words, after he was saved, you might say that his heart still wasn't right. It certainly didn't reflect the attitude of Jesus. In a Facebook posting, which Glatze later said was not written with compassion, he said, " ... proud of my church. Presbyterian Church (USA) wants to ordain homosexuals; so, we're leaving the denomination. Biblical Christians just take a stand against apostasy, at all costs. 'Do not fear,' Jesus says, in Revelation 2:10 ... please pray for God's Holy

Power to blow through our town to finish this necessary job.”

Glatze, who co-founded the organization Young Gay America, was quoted as saying before he left the homosexual lifestyle behind, “Homosexuality is death, and I choose life.” He has also been quoted as saying, “Homosexuality came easy to me, because I was already weak.”

That isn’t exactly the best way to make friends in the gay community, one would think. And Jesus, because of his forgiving nature and mercy, would certainly have made friends among those in the gay community. Remember, he ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:10) and forgave the woman who was caught in adultery (John 8:3-11).

For Glatze, his real heart change came as he agreed to become a consultant for *I Am Michael*. He realized his attitude did not reflect the heart of Christ.

“I am sorry, and that’s one of the things I would say to anyone who has been hurt by any of the words of either my mouth or that I’ve typed out on a computer screen,” Glatze told Jake Reynolds of Openly Jake in a recent interview posted on YouTube after the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. “I’m sorry for any of the pain I’ve caused anyone. I’ve been dealing with that over the last three or four years especially.

“It’s been a process of healing, and we (he and his wife) have been going through that together. I was told that I had a barrier to compassion, and you can see that in James Franco’s eyes in some of those scenes. I’ve been letting that barrier down and so that we (he and his gay friends) could reconnect on a more heart-to-heart level. If there’s amends to be made, you need to make those amends.”

In other words, Glatze has discovered a way to reconnect with some friends and acquaintances in the gay community without either condoning their lifestyle or condemning them. After all, like us, they are children of God.

Like Glatze, some of us followers of Jesus have had to repent of our staunch judgmentalism and our condemning attitude. We never gave people like Glatze a chance; we simply wrote them off. Wouldn't you think Jesus might say to us, "You hypocrite!" (and perhaps, "Have you no compassion?")?

Some in the circle of believers might label this an attitude of "hyper-grace"—perverting the Word of God. But ask yourself an honest question: How would Jesus handle the situation?

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus forgives if we repent?

Certainly, I am not advocating that everyone should go out and watch this movie. From the still photos I have seen online, there are certain scenes that are simply not appropriate—scenes that the filmmakers apparently felt were necessary to portray the reality of Glatze's gay lifestyle earlier in his life.

In fact, following the YouTube interview with Glatze and his wife, Rebekah, Reynolds was quoted as saying, "The movie itself is politely ambiguous. It doesn't have a point of view, one way or the other. Half of it was really, really gay. It was so gay that I was like, 'Oh my (expletive).' Half of it, I think, the Christian fundamentalists would love."

That in itself should lead one to deduce that the particular scene Reynolds speaks of is inappropriate for not only Christian viewers but also those who are sitting on the fence on the issue.

And certainly, the film industry apparently took its liberties in *I Am Michael* to cater to certain audiences. While it isn't taking a famous Bible story and turning it into a farce by embellishment (aka *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Noah* or *Exodus*), nonetheless liberties were apparently taken, judging from the still photos.

However, this is a story worth celebrating, and Michael

Glatze's transformation should be celebrated. It's not only a major story of redemption in a culture gone mad with self-gratification and disobedience to God, but it is also the story of a change of heart—of which Jesus certainly would approve.

And for those who might tend to believe this is “secular humanism,” as it has been referred to as on a Facebook post, I encourage EVERYONE to read this book by Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau, both pastors and one a former homosexual himself, titled, *Compassion Without Compromise*. You just may see things in a different way.