

Let's Help Lauren Daigle Rather Than Condemn Her

We've seen this show before. A Christian recording artist (or author) becomes very popular, reaching beyond a typical church audience and becoming popular in the larger world. He (or she) is then asked about homosexuality and fudges the answer. In turn, the church quickly condemns (him or her). Can we do better this time around?

I'm talking specifically about the very popular Christian recording artist Lauren Daigle, whose career skyrocketed when she recently appeared on the shows of Ellen DeGeneres and Jimmy Fallon. She received plenty of criticism (from some Christian circles) for those appearances, but many others saw the good in it.

After all, if you can sing your song (or tell your story) before the non-believing world, why not do it? Why not let your light shine in dark places? How else will it be seen?

It's one thing to compromise our faith to share our faith. That's a lose-lose scenario. But if you can be yourself and reach a larger audience, why not?

Unfortunately, during an interview with celebrity publicist Domenick Nati (who actually attended our school of ministry years ago), Lauren gave a very weak answer on homosexuality, drawing a tremendous amount of criticism and even condemnation. (Others have been more redemptive in their approach.)

As one who is on the front lines of the culture wars, I fully understand this reaction. After all, I have personally reached out to people like Vicky Beeching, Jen Hatmaker (and her husband Brandon), Dr. Tony Campolo, Jim Wallis and Rob Bell for their compromised views on homosexual practice.

And I have decried the fact that so many pastors and leaders do not speak out and make their biblical views clear.

But it's one thing entirely when a recognized worship leader like Beeching or a respected octogenarian like Campolo changes their views after years of reflection and goes public.

It's another thing when a young Christian singer gives a weak answer during an interview. That's why this article is not about Lauren. It's about us. It's about our response.

Perhaps the first thing we should do is reach out to Lauren and say, "We're thrilled with the success God is giving you, and your music has been a tremendous blessing to us. And we're cheering you on when you have the opportunity to appear before the secular world. What a great open door!

"We're also praying for you because we know the temptations and challenges you face are great, and we'd love to spend some time with you looking at the Scriptures together and helping you formulate solid answers to tough questions. Can we do that together?"

A colleague of mine, himself a Christian songwriter and worship leader who also graduated from our ministry school, wrote this to me today:

"I just wanted to reach out to you right now because my heart is kind of breaking ... but I have no voice to interject in the conversation.

"For the past several months I've been praying tremendously for Lauren because of the reality that this trap was eventually going to be set for her to be hopefully hanged by. What I had not considered in my prayers is that ... she would be publicly lynched by the Christian media."

And this colleague who wrote these words is uncompromising in his faith and his stand and would say in a heartbeat that

homosexual practice is sin. Yet his concern was not so much for Lauren's response (which, of course, left a lot to be desired) as much as over the church's response.

Another young man, also a friend and colleague who is not afraid to call out sin and to rebuke compromise publicly, posted this on his Facebook page.

"So Christians everywhere are apparently upset with Lauren Daigle because she didn't stand up for truth, but the problem is that they just can't seem remember the last time they did either. People are writing to me everywhere today because in many circles I'm known as a prophet who speaks out with boldness and courage. Pastors and saints are asking me to come out tonight and blast Lauren Daigle. Well I've been in prayer all day, and I feel absolutely zero unction from the Holy Ghost to address Lauren Daigle. I actually feel a tremendous unction to address the hypocrisy in the body of Christ."

For posting these words, he, in turn, is being condemned by other Christians, receiving an immediate spate of hate mail.

Again, if anyone can understand the negative reaction to Lauren's words, I can.

I have been marked by major left-wing groups (including the SPLC, the HRC and GLAAD) as one of the most dangerous, vicious, homophobic, transphobic voices in America, and the secular media has been warned to stay away from me. (For me, these accusations and attacks, while sad in themselves, are truly a badge of honor. See Matthew 5:10-12.)

It's very possible that no evangelical leader has written more books and articles on LGBT issues in the last decade than I have. And I am very jealous for our witness before a watching world, concerned at our lack of clarity and courage.

So, yes, I fully understand the disappointment in Lauren right now.

But unless you've been in that situation yourself, you have no idea how you would perform. And even if she did fall short in her answer, now is not the time to condemn her. It's the time to reach out to her, pray for her, and make ourselves available to strengthen and equip her.

Perhaps God wants to use her voice to bring healing and hope and faith to a hurting world. Let's help her complete that mission rather than become yet another Christian casualty.

The temptations that come with fame and influence are great, far greater than most of us can imagine. And the temptation to "not offend" is always great, lest we seem like stereotyped, unloving Bible-bashers.

That's why Lauren needs our help and support rather than our wrath.