

Let the Separation Come

As much as I am constantly tackling controversial subjects, I am also working for the unity of the body, trying to major on the majors on my radio show (which reaches quite a diverse audience) and often interacting privately with those with whom I differ. Yet I recognize that sometimes division for the sake of truth can be healthy. Now is one of those times.

This past Wednesday, May 14, I gave a lecture at the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C., from noon to 1 p.m. It was also aired via live webcast, and the talk focused on issues related to my latest book, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*

Shortly before the lecture, I was informed that at the exact same time and also live online, there would be a panel discussing Matthew Vines' new book, *God and the Gay Christian*, with participation from Rachel Held Evans, Tony Jones and Jay Bakker, all of whom highly praised the book.

What excellent timing, and what an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast these two very different views. (For the record, my book is not a response to Matthew's book, and the fact they came out at roughly the same time is providential rather than planned.)

One view says that while God deeply loves all people and offers them redemption in Jesus, under no circumstances would He ever bless or approve of two men (or two women) having sex together.

The other view says that under the right circumstances, God would bless and approve of two men (or two women) having sex. (For those who think that sex is not the issue, bear in mind that one of the major arguments made by same-sex "marriage" advocates like Matthew Vines is that it's better for gays to be able to "marry" than to burn with lust, based on a serious

misapplication of 1 Corinthians 7.)

Without a doubt, this issue will become a great dividing line in the church, and I, for one, welcome it, since it points to a much deeper divide in our approach to God, His Word and the people He wants to redeem. Ultimately, it will separate those who put God first and ask, "How can I fulfill His desires?" from those who put themselves first and ask, "How can He fulfill my desires?" (Although some will take extreme offense to this statement, if you analyze the major "gay Christian" arguments, they often boil down to this perspective.)

I do believe that many professing Christians who advocate same-sex relationships do so because they know homosexual couples who care deeply about each other, who are fine people in many respects, and who have wrestled mightily with reconciling their faith with their sexuality. And so these Christians go back to the Scriptures and ask themselves if, perhaps, the Bible does allow for committed, same-sex relationships. "How," they wonder aloud, "does the law of love, which does no harm to its neighbor, address this question?"

But that is the problem in a nutshell, and it is reminiscent of what happened with Balaam, whom Balak sought to hire to curse Israel.

When Balaam asked Yahweh if he should go and curse Israel, the Lord answered him emphatically: "You are not to go with them. You are not to curse this people, for they are blessed" (Num. 22:12, HCSB).

There was no ambiguity there, just as there is no ambiguity in what the Bible says about homosexual practice. Every reference to it in the Scriptures is decidedly negative, there is not a single positive example of a homosexual relationship in the Word, and marriage, by its God-ordained definition from the beginning, is the union of one man and woman for life.

As for Balaam, he made the mistake of asking God a second time if He should curse Israel after being offered more money, and this time the Lord told him to go, ultimately to his lasting shame. Obviously, God doesn't change His Word.

Of course, I'm not comparing gay theologians (or their straight allies) to Balaam in terms of being motivated by money—honestly, such a thought doesn't enter my mind, no more than it enters my mind to write articles or books or take theological stands for the sake of financial gain—but I am saying that they are making a similar mistake of starting with a clear word from God and then questioning the Scriptures based on their own experiences (or the experience of their friends).

Some might argue that this is similar to a cessationist being miraculously healed, as a result of which he goes back to the Scriptures to re-evaluate his beliefs and then changes his position. But the two situations hardly compare.

In the case of cessationism, the early church embraced and operated in the gifts of the Spirit, there have been healings and miracles through the centuries, and there are scores of verses that point directly to the ongoing supernatural ministry of the Spirit.

In the case of same-sex "marriage," such a concept was unknown throughout church history until recent years (despite John Boswell's weak attempts at historical revisionism), and there is not a single verse supporting the position while, in reality, the testimony of the entire Bible is against it.

That's why most of the pro-homosexual interpretations of Scripture are completely new innovations, meaning that not a single biblical scholar or theologian came up with these interpretations before the sexual revolution. That alone should tell you something.

Earlier this year, I interviewed Methodist pastor Frank

Schaefer, who had been defrocked by his denomination for performing the wedding of his son to another young man. He explained to me that he had already been questioning what the Bible said about homosexuality when his son came out to him, after which he became convinced that God wanted to bless committed same-sex couples.

I asked him what would happen if his son came to him one day and said, "Dad, I've made a terrible mistake. God is not pleased with my relationship, and the Spirit is convicting me that I'm in sin." Would he feel the need to re-evaluate his beliefs again? He responded, "Oh my goodness, would it ever. Absolutely. It would definitely challenge me."

Need I say more?

The question of "gay Christianity" is not a minor issue, as it affects our views of the authority of Scripture, the meaning of marriage and sexuality, and the importance of gender distinctions, not to mention having massive implications for the society at large.

That's why I welcome the coming separation over this issue. And as painful as the division will be within churches, denominations, ministries and even families, it is absolutely necessary and unavoidable.

That doesn't mean that we attack each other or speak and act in ways that would dishonor the Lord. But it does mean that we hold firmly to our convictions before Him, regardless of cost or consequences, knowing that God's ways will be vindicated in the end.

Michael Brown is author of *Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding With Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality* and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *The Line of Fire* on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of *FIRE School of Ministry* and director of the *Coalition of Conscience*. Follow him at AskDrBrown on

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