

Loving Gay People: Compassion Without Compromise?

Let's be clear. Homosexuality is a sin. If the Bible is infallible—and it is—then Scriptures like Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:8-10 and Judges 19:16-24 cannot be misinterpreted.

But if the Word of God is without blemish—and it is—adultery is a sin too. So is lying, stealing, idol worship, hatred and other assorted transgressions and acts of ungodliness. Whether some in the church choose to believe it or not, there is no distinction between “venial” and “mortal” sin. It all requires repentance from believers of Jesus Christ.

And, as Romans 3:23 tells us, “... for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” So, EVERYONE has something in their lives of which to repent.

Certainly no one in the church who believes in the infallibility of God's Word is condoning homosexuality, nor should they. And certainly adultery among heterosexual couples should be brought to light as well.

But have we, as the imitators of Christ that we're instructed to be, forgotten about Matthew 10:42? The often-quoted scripture says, “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Doesn't the same principle apply in dealing with members of the gay community? Instead of pointing fingers, shooting harsh looks and shouting condemnation—behavior which, interestingly enough repels people instead of attracting them—shouldn't we be willing to sit and speak with them, get to know them and eventually share the gospel with them?

Ron Citlau and Adam Barr certainly believe so. Both pastors in the Reformed Church in America, Citlau and Barr recently authored a book titled, *Compassion Without Compromise* (Bethany House), in which they reveal how the gospel “frees us to love our gay friends without losing the truth.”

Their association with the Reformed Church might immediately put up a red flag for some readers. Citlau says the denomination is “being torn apart” because “a growing number of our churches and leaders are promoting a pro-LGBT theology, including many pastors and professors at our colleges and seminaries.”

Citlau and Barr are not among that group. They are firmly behind resolution R-28, passed at the RCA General Synod in 2013 that reads, “While compassion, patience and loving support should be shown to all those who struggle with same-sex desires, the General Synod reaffirms our official position that homosexual behavior is a sin according to the Holy Scriptures, therefore any person, congregation or assembly which advocates homosexual behavior or provides leadership for a service of same-sex marriage or a similar celebration has committed a disciplinable offense.”

At the 2013 RCA General Synod, General Secretary Tom DeVries quoted 1 John 4:18ff (NIV), which says, “‘There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment ... If anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his sister and brother.’”

“We’re going to be challenged in how we live this out together,” De Vries said. “My call would be for us to say, how do we begin to take steps of love? Steps forward, steps toward each other, and steps that declare that we love God, but we also love each other and others.”

Barr says that the struggle within the Reformed Church on this issue is simply a small manifestation of a fault line that is forming in the church.

“This isn’t just a debate over how we define doctrine,” he said. “In the end, our differences are producing diametrically opposed visions for gospel ministry.”

But that doesn’t mean that that churches shouldn’t be without compassion for the broken and hurting. If it weren’t for attitudes like that, Citlau might still be dealing with his own issues.

Now a husband and the father of four boys, Citlau escaped from a life of homosexuality and, in 1997, gave his life to Jesus and began attending a local church in Southern California.

“The reason I began to follow Jesus is because of the local community,” he said. “They didn’t demand that I change right away. They made me feel like I belonged before I was better. That compassion and caring attitude thrust me into eternal life. The church community loved me where I was at. I always thought that no one would love me if they actually saw who I was.”

You think a nonjudgmental attitude, prayer and a little compassion can’t help facilitate the miraculous transformation from a life of blatant sin to that of servitude to Christ? Like Citlau’s testimony, consider the story of Amy, a woman featured in Pastor John Burke’s book, *Mud and the Masterpiece: Seeing Yourself and Others Through the Eyes of Jesus*.

Just for kicks on a Sunday morning, Amy and her lesbian girlfriend decided to attend a church service. “Lets go just for fun! We’ll see how much we can push their buttons,” Amy told her girlfriend.

Amy admitted that she went to the church “on a mission to shock people.”

“Rachel and I would hold hands in front of people, but instead of the disgusted looks of contempt we expected, people met eyes with us and treated us like real people,” Amy is quoted in the book. “So, we started coming to church weekly. We kept moving closer to the front each week, trying to get a reaction so that we would be rejected sooner rather than later. When we couldn’t shock people, we stopped trying and started learning.”

What happened soon after cannot be contributed to anything but the transformational power of the Holy Spirit. Amy and Rachel stopped seeing each other, but Amy continued to attend church in search for “something.” It took a few years, but as she continued to learn more and more about Jesus, she discovered something that shocked her: God actually did love her.

God’s Word began to show her how the roots of her sexual issues were tied with her philandering dad. A seminar at Burke’s Gateway Church in Austin, Texas, helped Amy to bring closure to her brokenness.

Amy now leads Gateway’s ministry that helps people find healing and wholeness from many kinds of sexual and relational issues.

In Citlau’s case and with Amy’s, someone became compelled to Christlikeness and compassion. Read Colossians 3:12-13. The result was two more souls’ names written in the Book of Life.

But what happens when Christians simply give up on homosexuals and write them off as going to hell? What happens when there is little or no compassion for those that will at least listen? Read part 2 of this story to find out.

Shawn A. Akers *is the online managing editor for Charisma Media.*