

Megachurch Pastor Prayerfully Allows Gays Into Leadership

Is the Bible Belt coming unbuckled? Stan Mitchell, pastor of the GracePoint megachurch in Franklin Tennessee, has apparently taken his Bible belt off altogether.

Mitchell told his congregation—a congregation that includes superstar singer-songwriter Carrie Underwood—that practicing homosexuals can be card-carrying members of his Bible-believing protestant church and can even hold their gay weddings in the sanctuary.

“Our position that these siblings of ours, other than heterosexual, ... cannot have the full privileges of membership, but only partial membership, has changed,” Mitchell told the church.

“Full privileges are extended now to you with the same expectations of faithfulness, sobriety, holiness, wholeness, fidelity, godliness, skill and willingness. That is expected of all. Full membership means being able to serve in leadership and give all of your gifts and to receive all the sacraments; not only communion and baptism, but child dedication and marriage.”

Removing the Belt of Truth

Wait, what? Mitchell seems to completely misunderstand—or at least misinterpret—the Bible. Practicing homosexuals may indeed be faithful tithers and attenders, but one cannot reconcile homosexual lifestyles with holiness and godliness. As kind, generous and loving as some practicing gays may be, sexual sin defiles homosexuals the same as it does heterosexuals.

With his announcement, Mitchell has removed his belt of truth

(see Eph. 6:14), ignoring altogether Leviticus 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:10 and other verses of Scripture in coming to his decision. He set down a key piece of spiritual armour in a culture war that is seeing antichrist spirits watering down the Word of God.

The question here is this: How did Mitchell fall into this deception? What caused him to accept this strong delusion that counters the holy Scriptures? Mitchell is certainly not the first preacher—or denomination for that matter—to reject the Word of God on this topic. What happened?

A Divine Wind?

According to Mitchell's own testimony, the Spirit of God moved on his heart several years ago, causing him to reconsider his stance on full inclusion for practicing homosexuals at his megachurch. He calls it a divine wind, but God does not speak with a forked tongue.

"We were thrust, I believe, by a divine wind, into a prayerful, painful, invigorating, careful and hopeful conversation regarding sexual orientation and gender identity," he said. "My soul has been stretched to the point that if I do not say what I say today, I cannot be here any longer. I have felt this way for many, many years."

Clearly, Mitchell is in angst over this move, which I believe is the Spirit of God bringing conviction to his heart over his present unbiblical conclusion. Indeed, if the Spirit of God—or a "divine wind" as he called it—moved over his soul at all it was not to give practicing homosexuals church leadership positions or hold gay marriage ceremonies in his sanctuary. If the Spirit of God moved over him it was to pray against the deception he has now embraced.

Fear of Man Brings a Snare

So what happened? I don't have all the answers but I believe

it comes down to cowardice and compromise in the end. If we are willing to compromise God's Word in any area, we open ourselves up to all manner of deception. Mitchell may be dealing with the fear of man, since he's lost so many members while he wrestled with his revelation. The Bible says the fear of man brings a snare (see Prov. 29:25). He has certainly been snared.

Owen Strachan, assistant professor of Christian theology and Church history at Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky, put it this way: "If you fear man, God will become small to you. The approval of fellow sinners will matter more to you than obeying God by the witness of his Word."

I agree with Strachan, who also points out that many professing evangelicals today have no appetite to honor the Lord. He rightly notes that these professing evangelicals recognize that the winds of culture are against them.

"To the core of their being, they are afraid. Biblical Christians recognize, ultimately, that no person is our enemy. We have no Goliath to slay," Strachan says. "We do have a spiritual force against which we fight, one who would undo us, who would stop our mouths, and who would have us strain ourselves to win the honor of man instead of the honor of God."

There Is Still Hope

The only saving grace here is that Mitchell remains double-minded about his decision, which means there is still hope for him to come to repentance.

"I am not sure I am right, but I am sure I sense the presence of God, and I know I'm doing my best," he said. "And I believe before God Almighty to this we have been called, and here we stand."

I pray he turns from this skewed theology and repents

publicly, which could give other pastors the courage to do the same. I also pray that professing evangelicals—whether they are in the pulpit or the pews—will stand and withstand the winds of culture that are raging against us. The days are growing darker. The Great Falling Away is underway. And the next great move of God is emerging even now. I want to stand on the right side of eternity on these issues. What about you?

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