

Michael Brown: I Understand Why Some Call Us Hateful

More than 15 years ago, God called me to “reach out and resist,” meaning, reach out to the gay community with compassion and resist the gay agenda with courage. From that moment on, I knew that I would be branded a hater. But I do understand why.

For some, of course, it’s a matter of using a tried-and-true strategy. Demonize your opponents. Don’t deal with the actual issues but attack the people. Brand them Nazis and haters and homophobes and bigots. Don’t allow them to be taken seriously.

But for others, this is not a matter of strategy. They genuinely feel that we hate them or, worse still, that our God hates them.

After all, the vast majority of gays and lesbians would say that they no more asked to be homosexual than we asked to be heterosexual. They would say that their romantic attractions and sexual desires are as natural for them as our attractions and desires are for us.

Who are we to call their desires “unnatural”? Isn’t that hateful and judgmental?

And what about their loving relationships? Why are our relationships valid but theirs are not? Why is our love legitimate but theirs is not? Why is our commitment to our children beautiful but theirs is not in the best interest of their kids? Is this not hateful?

As for using the Bible, why is our citation of Scripture so selective, ignoring (or reinterpreting) the passages that seem to challenge our own lifestyles while emphasizing the passages that condemn homosexual practice? Isn’t this just another

example of religious hypocrisy and spiritual bigotry?

Why are we fine with no-fault divorce in the church, even though divorce tears up marriages and damages the children, but we will not accept a “married” same-sex couple with their adopted children? Isn’t the very fact that we put gay “marriage” in quotes a manifestation of our hatred?

More than 10 years ago, while flying to Rome, I had an extended conversation with an out-and-proud gay flight attendant. He was off duty for a few days and was using his flying privileges to visit his partner in Italy, and during our eight-hour flight, we talked openly and candidly.

His parents had rejected him because of their Christian faith, at one point reaching out to him with the help of their pastor, who sent him a very gracious, even compassionate letter. At least, that’s the way the letter sounded to me when this man repeated its contents.

I thought to myself, “This pastor did a really good job. He was biblical, but so full of love, and he hit the right notes with the right tone.”

The man then said to me (after recounting the contents of the letter), “It was so full of hate!”

What I perceived as a gentle, loving outreach was perceived by this gay man as hate.

This was not some rhetorical strategy or an attempt to win a point with me. The letter stung this man until that very day, many years after the fact.

Recently, I wrote an article rebuking the Church of Scotland for giving its clergy the right to perform same-sex “marriages.” I also urged the faithful clergy to issue one last word of warning and then to leave en masse, forming a new denomination.

But as my tweet linking to the article started to circulate, it drew some animated responses from gays and lesbians and their allies. They were celebrating the church's decision and proclaiming that once again, love won. And they were asking me pointedly, "Why do you have a problem with the church accepting people?"

After all, marriage is the ultimate expression of a couple's desire to make a lifelong, loving commitment. Shouldn't I be celebrating that, especially for two Christians? And isn't it good that these gays and lesbians want to marry in the church?

Isn't it also true that, in the past, many Christians used the Bible to sanction slavery, segregation and the suppression of women? Isn't that exactly what Christians are doing with the Bible today when it comes to homosexuality?

From that point of view, of course we are viewed as bigots and haters and homophobes. Why else would we treat other human beings like second-class citizens?

When I first began to focus on LGBT issues in 2004, it was because of the gay agenda. I immediately saw that this was the principal threat to freedom of religion, conscience and speech in our nation. I also saw that this was an issue that all of us would have to address someday. We would not get to sit this one out.

At the same time, I understood that we were dealing with both people and issues. And if I was to be in harmony with the Lord, I needed to have His heart of love and compassion for the people.

I understood that the rejection so many of them had experienced (at the hands of family and religion) had deeply wounded them. Consequently, what I perceived as loving and tactful would be perceived by them to be hateful and harsh.

That's why I sat with local gay activists and asked them to

tell me their stories face to face. That's why I immersed myself in their literature, wanting to understand the world through their perspective. That's why I even bought their theology and commentary books, reading every argument they brought in support of same-sex relationships.

That's also why I would sometimes pray for them in tears, saying, "God, I don't want to hurt people. I just want to help them."

And that's why I understand why I and others like me are perceived as being hateful.

At the same time, I am absolutely convinced that God's design for marriage and family is heterosexual. That two mommies or two daddies can never equal a mommy and a daddy. And that the LGBTQ agenda must be resisted in the best interests of our society.

That being said, I will do whatever I can to remove any stumbling block from my message, not engaging in name-calling, not speaking in derogatory terms and not repaying hatred with hatred.

In the end, love does win—God's unconditional, supernatural, transformational love. And that love calls us to reach out and resist.

When we are called haters and bigots, let's extend an open hand, saying, "Let's sit down and talk together." Then let's show our new friends the love of God, face to face.

That's what happened on that long flight to Rome.

As we were getting off the plane, I asked this man (after exchanging email addresses), "If you met someone who held to my convictions, would you consider that person a homophobe?"

He answered, "Absolutely."

I then asked him, “Do you consider me to be a homophobe?” He said, “Absolutely not. I heard your heart.”

Let your heart be heard too. {eoa}

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