

Reaching Gays for God

✖ A

few years ago a Christian friend of mine, who happens to be an ordained clergyman, was participating in a pro-life march in New York City.

Several evangelical and Roman Catholic groups were represented, so

there were, predictably, vigorous counter-demonstrations. Many of these

were led by gays.

My friend said that for many long minutes a counter-demonstrator

kept pace with him from a few feet away, screaming hateful obscenities

at him. His tirade slowing down for a few seconds, he shouted this

strange question at my friend: "Why do you people hate us?"

The question seemed quite unrelated to the pro-life issue,

which of course it is. The questioner identified himself as a gay

activist.

With remarkable presence of mind, and graciousness, considering

the hostility expressed toward him, my friend replied: "I don't hate

you at all. I've probably committed far worse sins than you have, at

least in my own mind."

Then, breaking away from his fellow pro-life marchers, he

simply hugged the man. Stunned, the would-be antagonist now kept pace

with my friend for a different reason.

Instead of hurling more insults at him, he peppered him with questions:

“Why did you do that? What were you trying to convey?” and so forth. He

was absolutely stunned that an evangelical Christian would ever express

any affection at all toward an obviously gay person.

The moral of this story is clear: Gays, in general, regard evangelical Christians not just as critical of them, but also as

implacably hostile toward them.

It is certainly true that a few conservative Christians—the handful, for example, who have waved placards reading “God hates

fags”—have expressed inexcusable enmity toward gays, undoubtedly

providing a basis for gays to use the term “homophobia.” It is also

true that most Christians simply don’t believe homosexual behavior to

be “natural,” but this attitude is equally true in societies where

there are few if any Christians at all.

The overwhelming majority of Christians I have met all over the

world don’t “hate” gays or wish them any harm whatsoever. But they do

believe the Bible emphatically prohibits all sexual acts outside of

marriage, including—but not singling out—homosexual activity, and

they clearly do not believe there is any notion whatever in the Bible

of a gay “marriage.”

So why is the gay perception that Christians “hate” them so widely held? Why, for example, are Christians not assumed to “hate”

bank robbers, forgers, adulterers, even murderers?

One reason is that very few churches have learned how to live out in

practice, in relation to gays, the principle of loving the sinner but

hating the sin. Evangelical Christian churches, by and large, have

failed to reach out effectively to the gay community.

This, in part, is due to sheer fear. If they exhibit grace and openness

to gays, will this be seen either by gays or other Christians as

“tolerance” of the gay lifestyle?

Alternatively, many churches would like to pretend the gay phenomenon simply doesn’t exist. If they have to express a biblical

position on sexuality, they may run the risk of the dreaded accusation

of “homophobia.”

Some of the fear is based on ignorance. The fact is, the gay lifestyle can be physically very dangerous. Medical studies galore have confirmed this.

Life expectancy can be up to 20 years shorter than for the heterosexual

population, almost entirely as a result of sexually transmitted

diseases. Depression, attempted suicide and drug abuse are significantly higher among gays and lesbians. This is true even in the

Netherlands, where 77 percent of the population fully accepts homosexual behavior, and so it cannot be attributed to traditional "homophobia."

By their own admission, gays are far more likely to be sexually unfaithful—even to partners with whom they claim to be in a "loving, committed, consensual relationship"—than heterosexual couples, hence more vulnerable to sexual disease than the general population.

In short, is this something Christians should encourage, regardless of moral attitude? Of course not.

This article is from the May 2003 issue of *Charisma*.