

Should Christians Cancel Alistair Begg Over His LGBTQ Wedding Response?

Should Pastor Alistair Begg be canceled over his controversial comments about LGBTQ weddings and his subsequent refusal to repent? That's essentially the question at the center of ongoing debate over Begg's views on same-sex nuptials.

Begg came under fire for comments made on his podcast last September, during which he responded to a grandmother whose grandchild was preparing to be wedded to a "transgender person."

He said the grandma could attend and bring a gift so long as it was made clear she isn't in agreement biblically with the marriage. After debate broke out over Begg's position, the pastor—who still clearly affirmed his biblical view of marriage—delivered a sermon noting he was "concerned about the well-being" of the grandma's relationship with her grandchild.

"If I was on the receiving end of another question about another situation from another person at another time, I may answer absolutely differently but, in that case, I answered in that way, and I would not answer in any other way, no matter what anybody says on the internet," Begg said.

Shane Idleman, pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in California and a well-known commentator who routinely tackles hot-button political issues, recently tackled the complex debate over Begg's comments, offering his take on how believers should respond.

Idleman is in a unique position as a faith leader and also the head of a California radio network that features Begg Monday

through Friday.

After another organization, American Family Radio, announced it would stop carrying Begg's "Truth for Life" program, Idleman also started receiving emails about what he would do, which he addressed here:

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Idleman said it's clear Begg was concerned with helping people love their enemies well, and explained why he thinks the reaction has been so swift.

"I think everybody's on edge because of this ... gay marriage, LGBTQ agenda, and ... Alistair is very solid," he said. "He is solid on gay marriage. He's made that very clear before that it's not according to God's Word. So I think a lot of people were just kind of shocked."

Idleman said he listened to Begg's comments twice to be sure he understood them, and offered his own pastoral advice on the matter. While Idleman stressed the importance of reaching unbelievers, he also emphasized his belief that celebrating a same-sex wedding wouldn't be something he'd recommend.

"My personal opinion, for me, is—it would be hard to go and celebrate this union of marriage," he said. "To me, that wouldn't be necessarily loving my enemy."

Still, Idleman said he was concerned by the legalistic and rigid ways in which some have addressed—and dismissed—Begg in the wake of the controversy.

"It's OK to say, 'Wow, this kind of caught us off guard. Let me try to understand your heart. ... I don't agree with it,'" Idleman said. "But to completely write him off—and one radio network removed his broadcast ... talk about throwing the baby out with the bathwater."

Idleman said he very carefully offers advice when it comes to situations like the one to which Begg was responding.

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"I don't tell people, 'Here's what you should do,'" he said. "I say, 'You need to take it to the Lord. What is God telling you to do?'"

But Idleman was definitively clear he wouldn't personally go and celebrate the same-sex wedding. If it were one of his own kids or family members, he would be sure they knew he loved and cared for them despite his opposition.

"[I would say 'I'll] pray for you. I love you. I'm always here for you. You know where I stand, but I can't go and celebrate what God calls an abomination,'" Idleman said, expressing his desire in such a circumstance to speak "truth and love."

The preacher said he has listened to Begg for 25 years and would be cautious not to simply cancel him after one statement, especially considering his other doctrines that have always been biblically sound.

Idleman also responded to some of those definitively defending Begg on the matter—people arguing Jesus "ate with sinners, the tax collectors, the harlots."

While this is true, the pastor offered an important caveat sometimes lost in the mix of discussion.

"I don't think he went into the harlot's den," he said. "I don't think he went to the harlot's home and sat around and saw that debauchery."

Just the same, he said Christ certainly didn't go to the bars and get drunk with sinners.

"There's some boundaries ... that have to be established," he said.

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Billy Hallowell *has contributed to The Washington Post, The Daily Caller and The Huffington Post, among other news sites. Hallowell has worked as a journalist and commentator for over a decade.*