

Should Pastor Andy Stanley Be Called Out Publicly for His Recent Actions?

I do my best to be sensitive in the language I use, not wanting to drive people away from a life-giving message because of controversial terminology. Yet there are times when being blunt is essential, and now is one of those times.

That is why Pastor Andy Stanley must be called out publicly for inviting practicing homosexuals to speak at his Unconditional Conference. The fact that these men claim to be committed Christians makes the sin all the more grievous.

I'm speaking specifically of Justin Lee and Brian Nietzel, both of whom are not only openly "gay Christians" but are also "married" to their same-sex partners. This means, that, according to the plain teaching of Scripture, they will not inherit the kingdom of God (see 1 Cor. 6:9-10) and their actions are detestable in His sight (Lev. 18:22).

Justin and Brian might be very gracious and kind men. Their partners might be terrific people in many ways. They might even model certain aspects of Christian compassion and grace and profess some orthodox beliefs.

But that only magnifies the level of deception involved, since Satan himself comes as an angel of light (see 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

It is true that, on the Sunday following the Unconditional Conference Pastor Stanley reaffirmed that biblical marriage is the union of a man and a woman and claimed that his church did not condone sin, although he made other statements that muddied the water and caused confusion.

But he also stated that both Justin and Brian have spoken to his people before, with his blessing and approval. This means that on several occasions, he has willfully exposed his flock to their message and example, thereby undermining the positive statements he made in his sermon. This is as destructive as it is confusing.

Pastor Stanley, with whom I've been in friendly correspondence and interaction since 2015, pressing him for clarity on these issues, emphasized that the purpose of the conference was not to debate theology. Rather, it was to help parents understand how they should deal with their kids who identify as LGBTQ.

He didn't want this generation of Christians to perpetuate the errors of past generations, where parents often rejected their kids or tried to strongarm them into becoming straight. It was time, he said, for this to stop. The church must do better.

On this we agree, point for point. We need to do better. We need to show unconditional love. We need to recognize how deep these struggles can be. And we need to understand the degree to which Christian young people, in particular, can suffer an acute conflict over these feelings, which they did not ask for. Yes, let us be educated and let us love well.

But under no circumstances should we affirm a child's gay or bi or trans or queer identity. Even more emphatically, under no circumstances should we tell them that they can follow Jesus and be in a same-sex, sexual or romantic relationship. God forbid. To do so is to be complicit in their demise.

In a statement to The Roys Report, Justin Lee claimed that he didn't "take any position on topics like same-sex marriage or sexual behavior" at the conference.

Instead, he stated, "My primary message was that Christians should look to Jesus and to Scripture—not to me or any human source—for determining what is God's will. And that Christians who follow Jesus's example can treat others with love and

empathy without compromising on truth.”

But what about his personal example? What about the example of Brian? What about their online resources and teachings?

To paraphrase, “I’m not taking a public position here on same-sex marriage or sexual behavior. But in my personal example, in which I am in a same-sex marriage and have sex with my male partner, I’m shouting quite loudly to all of you.”

The very presence of Justin and Brian at the conference, along with men like Christian ethicist David Gushee, who believes that God affirms committed, same-sex relationships, sent a clear message to all those in attendance. “Yes,” they were saying, “your kids can practice homosexuality and follow Jesus at the same time.”

And these men were not just given a platform but were honored and celebrated for who they are. Otherwise, they would not have been invited to speak.

Consider that it was Justin who founded the “Gay Christian Network,” with most of the adherents in the network affirming same-sex, “Christian” relationships.

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And Justin’s new organization, called Nuance Ministries, recommends groups like the Reformation Project, which actively seeks to change church views on the Bible and homosexual practice.

As for Brian, his bio states that he “is a gay man committed to his faith and love for Jesus. He grew up in the Evangelical Church and struggled with his sexuality, then later in life found his peace with God. *He is now happily married to his husband Dan and is a proud father.* He founded the organization

Making Things Right to invite Christians to reimagine their relationship with LGBTQ+ people” (my emphasis).

To repeat: this is detestable in God’s sight, no matter how loving, kindhearted, caring and “Christian” Dan and his partner may be. They are in fundamental violation of the order and plan of the God who Himself is love. They are sinning and they are leading others into sin.

Yet it is men like Brian and Justin whom Andy chose to have speak at his conference—not ex-gays, not compassionate Christian counselors with a very different approach, not biblically grounded theologians, not parents of LGBTQ identified kids who unconditionally love without affirming.

How many parents, then, were misled by the examples of Justin and Brian? How many will, in turn, fail in their responsibilities towards their children? How many will embrace a grace (really, pseudo-grace) at the expense of life-changing truth?

To give an extreme example, think of having a conference on sexual purity in which you invited a “Christian porn actress” to share her own story. “Don’t look to me,” she says to the interested audience. “Look to God and to the Word. I’m just encouraging you to be compassionate and understanding towards those who struggle with porn. And if you’d like more information, you can visit my website, ‘.’”

As crazy as this seems, is it any crazier than Andy Stanley inviting professing Christians who are “married” to their same-sex partners to speak at an LGBTQ related conference? Can you imagine Paul asking a homosexual “Christian” couple to share with the Corinthian church about the importance of being loving towards children who struggle with same-sex attraction?

To the contrary, Paul would have lovingly and firmly called them to repent, and if they refused to repent, he would have called on the Corinthians to excommunicate them (see 1

Corinthians 5).

Rather than do this, Pastor Andy Stanley gave them a platform—a very big, influential platform. What a horrible shame. And what lasting damage this will do.

To be sure, all of us fall short of God's glory and live in daily need of His grace and mercy. And without question, if we turn to Him in repentance, the blood of Jesus will wash us clean. But if we continue in unrepentant sin, let alone justify it, we will face His judgment.

It was the Puritan Thomas Manton who said, "First we practice sin, then defend it, then boast of it."

This is exactly what Andy Stanley and the Unconditional Conference have done, platforming practicing homosexuals who claim to have the blessing of God on their same-sex relationships.

May God grant them repentance before it is too late. And may all of us take careful stock of our lives before Him.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Paul wrote these words to Timothy: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.

Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4:1–4).

Need I say more? {eoa}

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