

The First NFL Gay Player—Let's Throw a Parade

On Sunday night, news outlets reported that NFL prospect Michael Sam is gay. By all accounts, Sam is a beast on the defensive side of the gridiron. He was the Southeastern Conference defensive player of the year. His talent is undeniable, and on merit he deserves to be drafted.

However, he has done what no NFL player has done before—declared himself openly gay—and ESPN is falling all over itself to declare him the next Neil Armstrong. I am sure President Obama will give him a call this week.

As I watched his interview Sunday night, I could not help but be moved by this young man's courage. Don't get me wrong, I view homosexuality as a sin—an aberration of healthy human sexuality, just like adultery and pornography.

But still, knowing what I have suffered as a Jewish believer in Jesus—being ostracized by friends, family and my community (I must say that on all accounts, things are much better today than 30 years ago)—I know it took courage for him to do this. But not nearly as much courage as it would have taken in the past.

While Sam will suffer from some segments of society, he will be hailed a hero from many more segments. The upside is endless. He will be compared to Jackie Robinson. Just wait.

ESPN is celebrating this like he is the new Martin Luther King Jr. Hollywood and the left have conditioned us over the last decade to believe that gay is not just OK, it's cool. Shows like *Modern Family* portray just enough gayness to not turn people off. (There is a very good reason they never show Mitch and Cam half-naked, in bed or passionately kissing!) They go through everything a traditional couple goes through. And just

about every movie these days has the “cool gay guy.”

Former NFL star Jeff Saturday wasted no time in throwing out—I am sure, fully convinced of its truth—the debunked Alfred Kinsey lie that 10 percent of all humans are gay. That would mean every NFL team already has five gay men—in the closet, of course—and that one of every two families of five has at least one who is gay.

This is ridiculous. The Family Research Council states that 2-3 percent of men have same-sex attraction, as do 2 percent of women. This seems closer to reality.

But getting back to Michael Sam: Should he be drafted? Of course he deserves a job. In my 48 years, I have worked with gays and lesbians. I have befriended them. And some I have seen leave the lifestyle. You will never reach people with whom you are unwilling to associate.

I have never believed that someone from a sexual orientation that I strongly disagree with doesn't deserve a job. And yet, in employing them, I would never compromise my stance against such behavior.

But we hire other sinners, don't we? We hire people who are living together outside of marriage, those addicted to pornography and adulterers. A friend of mine recently shared with me a report that 50 percent of born-again men *regularly* look at pornography. Yes, that is half of you who are reading! (Well, the males.) But you still have jobs despite your struggle.

To be clear, I didn't write that to shame you. Pornography is a horrible addiction, and we must pray for each other to stand strong in this area. I wrote it to say that sin comes in many forms (like jealousy, bitterness, unforgiveness) that we ourselves struggle with, and these sins do not disqualify us from employment.

However, Sam is not applying to be a mailman, an accountant, a waiter or an investment banker. He is seeking to be in the NFL. And in the NFL, men get naked in front of each other several days a week. And ESPN, *that* is the main issue, not whether or not he should have a job.

Let me just be honest. If I had a job whereby I had to undress and shower several times a week with a roomful of very fit, attractive females—well, let's just say I would struggle. And that clearly is the concern of heterosexual football players. It is a legitimate issue.

I am not an expert, but if someone says to me that they are attracted to men and then are going to see them undressed on an almost daily basis, it is going to make for an uncomfortable situation. Right?

But don't say it out loud—not unless you are willing to be skewered by the media elites. Oh, wait, too late. Jonathan Vilma of the New Orleans Saints already stated the obvious.

"I think that he would not be accepted as much as we think he would be accepted," Vilma said. "I don't want people to just naturally assume, like, 'Oh, we're all homophobic.' That's really not the case. Imagine if he's the guy next to me and, you know, I get dressed, [bare], taking a shower, the whole nine, and it just so happens he looks at me. How am I supposed to respond?"

Vilma made those completely honest and valid comments a few days ago—before Sam came out. For sure, he will be vilified and called immature. But come on, let's be honest: No one expects adult men and women to take mass showers together on the job—for the *obvious reasons*. But Vilma is juvenile and uneducated for not wanting to shower next to an openly gay man?

I wonder if more NFL players will have the courage to speak up. How ironic—in the past it was the homosexual who was

afraid to come out. Now it'll be the guy who doesn't want to take a shower next to the homosexual who will be shunned and shamed—and he will be told to keep his mouth shut.

Ron Cantor is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Cantor also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book, Identity Theft, was released April 16. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.