

The Gay Protest That Encountered the Love of God

Last week, Scott Volk, one of the pastoral leaders at FIRE Church, my home congregation, received a call from the local police informing him that there would be a **gay protest** outside our building on Sunday morning.

The leader of the protest announced on Facebook, “We will meet just before service begins, and protest as they gather, we will have a silent protest as service is going and let them have it as they leave for the day. Remember we will be peaceful and respectful, something they don’t understand. We are going to STAND TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY to show that our love is stronger than their hate.”

In response, I wrote on my blog: “On behalf of FIRE Church, I want to extend to you the warmest welcome and let you know that we are thrilled that you are here with us on Sunday. We have been **praying** for you for a long time!

“As always, you will only meet with love, kindness, and respect from the FIRE leadership and congregants, and we proclaim to you once again the amazing **grace of God**. Jesus died to save us from our sins, heterosexual and homosexual alike, and only in Him can we find forgiveness, redemption, and transformation. Jesus alone is the Healer, Savior, Deliverer, and Transformer.”

On my radio show, I also encouraged them to come in good numbers so we could greet them, and Scott posted a note on Q-Notes, a local gay website that had announced the protest, saying, “As the pastor of FIRE Church, I just want you to know that you’ll be greeted with the same love and compassion as we always endeavor to show anyone—you are more-than-welcome! You make mention of the ‘hate’ that we show. Yet, in all our years

here we've only desired to reach out with love to everyone in the local community here whether they are labeled as gay or straight. Hopefully, you'll see that love demonstrated on Sunday as you protest."

Not surprisingly, given the suspicion, and misunderstanding that exists, Scott's gracious invitation drew some hostile responses:

David: "Love is the most disfigured mask that hate wears."

Sue: "If what you think is reaching out in love is perceived as hateful attack, perhaps you should reconsider your actions."

David: "You can fool yourself, Mr. Volk. You can fool your parishioners. But you can't fool God. He knows what's in your heart, and it isn't love. It's hate."

Tom: "What these fire church people probably don't understand is that spending an eternity ANYWHERE with them is what I would consider a true HELL. They should concern themselves with their own pathetic lives and leave other alone to theirs ..."

Scott responded by inviting them to his home for dinner to spend a night with him and his family. And he explained that, "to call someone hateful without ever meeting them, seeing them, or hearing them speak, is an indication of a heart that needs love. I make myself available."

On Sunday morning, Aug. 26th, about 10 protesters showed up (we were disappointed there were so few) and some of our FIRE leaders met with them, offering them water and snacks, sharing God's love and truth with them, and then inviting them to join us in the service. After a few minutes they left, explaining that we were too nice and loving to deserve a protest!

Bear in mind that these protesters know the stands we have

taken for **biblical values** and some of them have listened to my radio broadcasts or read my writings, so they recognize how strongly we differ with them on many key issues. Yet they also recognized our genuine love for them and saw that we were not full of hate. The love of Jesus, flowing out of **Spirit-filled**, godly hearts, makes an impact that cannot be denied.

Scott shared this good news on the Q-Notes website, along with the invitation to those calling us hateful to join him for dinner at his house. In response Spydre wrote, "I want to hear more about this Jesus," and Jaybea commented, "Even I would be welcome there? It would be an honor to meet Scott Volk and Dr. Brown. I'm beginning to see light as very attractive." How amazing!

The next day, Monday, Aug. 27th, the leader of the protest called into my radio show to apologize publicly for the protest, explaining that their "anger ... was aimed [in] the wrong direction." And then he said these words: "Once we got there Sunday morning we were greeted with absolutely perfect love. I mean, it was fantastic." Praise God!

After the broadcast, we exchanged contact information and are looking forward to sharing a meal together and, more importantly, candidly sharing our hearts. This is genuinely good news.

When the Lord called me to get involved with homosexual issues eight years ago, He said to me, "Reach out and resist," meaning, "reach out" to the people with compassion and "resist" the activist agenda with courage.

Is it possible to do both? By God's grace, the answer is yes, and in the end, love never fails.

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