

The Great Deception

I used to cringe whenever the topic of homosexuality came up in church. It wasn't because I had anything to hide, but because of how poorly we Christians have dealt with this hot-button issue in the public arena. As with many things, we've become known more for what we stand against rather than the God we represent.

The "God Hates Fags" and "God Abhors You" signs obviously don't help reflect the heart of Jesus, nor do they accurately reflect the beliefs of most Christians in America. But it hit me recently that maybe the more embarrassing, cringe-worthy believers aren't the extremists wielding such signs but those who, like me, have stood on the sidelines and done virtually nothing to change the public opinion of God or His people.

Homosexuality is anything but a simple topic—certainly not one that can be reduced to a protest sign. As we've tried to represent in this month's *Charisma*, it involves multiple angles that, if expressed without the Holy Spirit's filter of truth, grace and love, can be easily misunderstood amid all the lies and political speak surrounding the issue.

That often happens to people such as Lou Sheldon, who's spent the last 40 years standing for biblical principles while exposing the radical gay agenda. Sheldon shares a hard-hitting message (p. 32) that, unfortunately, many Christians (particularly younger ones) disregard these days because they don't want to be seen as too far right or left. Some of us have distanced ourselves from the "gay debate" to remain in dialogue with those struggling with same-sex attractions. While that sounds noble, we've done it at the cost of catering to gay activists who, as Sheldon proves, couldn't care less about "dialoguing" with anyone who doesn't fully support the gay lifestyle.

Combined with that all-too-real fight are the personal stories from those who, like Janet Boynes (p. 40) know firsthand what it means to struggle with same-sex attraction. Boynes spent 14 years steeped in a lesbian lifestyle, all while wrestling with an unrelenting awareness of God's pursuit of her. Since radically encountering God, she's continued to point others toward His empowering love that can overcome any sin.

Though it may seem odd that we've paired Sheldon with the likes of Ron Sider (p. 44) in the same issue, I think it's telling of just how multifaceted this conversation regarding the church and homosexuality must be. Like Sheldon, Sider's well-written message (this one on gay marriage and Christian infidelity) is a tough pill to swallow, one that sticks a finger in the chest of the church as only a respected, church-loving believer can.

Sider writes with the same sentiment I felt as I edited these articles: I can't afford to stay silent any longer on this issue. To do so is to be deceived into believing that my inactivity is Christlike love. Sadly, that same lie has lulled most of the church into ungodly silence and passivity. Yes, we hate the sin, not the sinner. But loving like Jesus requires action, especially when helping those who struggle with homosexuality meet a God whose love makes even the worst protest sign irrelevant.