

# What the Bible and 'Fifty Shades of Grey' Have in Common

The American Library Association (ALA) has released its list of the 10 "most challenged" books. A challenge is "a formal, written complaint filed with a library or school requesting that a book or other material be restricted or removed because of its content or appropriateness." A book that is challenged may or may not be censored by the school.

*50 Shades of Grey* made the list for obvious reasons: "Sexually explicit, unsuited to age group." Eight other books were challenged for similar reasons: homosexuality, violence and/or offensive language. But included on the list is "The Holy Bible." Reason: "Religious viewpoint."

In related news, a student at England's Sheffield University has been expelled because he quoted the book of Leviticus in support of Kentucky clerk Kim Davis's position on same-sex marriage. Social work major Felix Ngole's Facebook post was private and could be seen only by his friends. Nonetheless, university administrators ruled that his post "may have caused offense to some individuals." They determined that his Christian views regarding marriage would render him unable to serve as a social worker.

Meanwhile, the Southern Poverty Law Center has listed what it calls "hate groups" around the U.S. In the Dallas area, four Ku Klux Klan groups made the list. But so did Probe Ministries, led by my dear friend Kerby Anderson. Probe was cited for being "anti-LGBT," but Kerby is one of the most gracious and godly ministers I know. His position on this issue is nothing more than biblical orthodoxy. If his ministry can be maligned as a "hate group," what other biblical

churches and ministries will soon be slandered as well?

The “separation of church and state” is quickly becoming the “separation of religion and state.” There is a massive push today toward privatizing faith in every dimension of society.

If students cannot read the Bible, which contains the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule among so many other texts vital to our history and culture, how can we say they are truly educated? If a student cannot cite the Bible on a private Facebook post, how can we say that his school is truly an academic institution? If a ministry cannot believe the Bible without being a “hate group,” how can we say our society is truly a democracy?

We can despair of a nation that has degenerated so quickly into the darkness of immoral relativism. But this is not new territory for God’s people. Jesus warned his first followers, “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). “Tribulation” translates *thlipsis*, a word used for the giant weight that crushed grain into flour. In other words, you will be ground down and crushed by the fallen world you are called to serve.

Then our Lord added: “But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). That’s just what early Christians did. From Stephen’s courageous martyrdom to John’s faithfulness in exile, they embodied the proverb, “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1).

Now is not a time to condemn lost people for acting like lost people or to retreat from a culture that needs our witness more than ever. It is a time for courageous compassion, for public faithfulness, for optimism born of trust in the God who rules the universe.

We are not the victims of culture, but victors in Christ (Rom. 8:35-39). We may be rejected by our broken society today, but we are accepted by the King of eternity. And when the light

shines in the darkness, “the darkness has not overcome it”  
(John 1:5).

It never will.