

What the Church Could Learn From LGBTQ+ Activists

In October 2007 I delivered a series of lectures on the subject of “Homosexuality, the Church and Society.” These lectures were held at the Booth Playhouse in the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in the heart of Charlotte, North Carolina, and they attracted considerable attention from the local media. One of the lectures was titled, “What the Church Can Learn from the Gay and Lesbian Community,” and in the 90-minute talk, I made eight specific points.

In my just-released book “Turn the Tide: How to Ignite a Cultural Awakening,” I reproduced that lecture in full. Here, I’ll provide a bulleted version of those eight points.

1. Change did not come about merely by going to gay meetings but rather by being gay 24/7. It was the same thing with civil rights. Change did not come about merely by people going to civil rights meetings but rather by joining the civil rights movement. And so, sooner or later, American Christians will have to learn that our emphasis must be on *being* the church more than on merely *going* to church. We must get out of the audience mentality and become part of a functioning body.

2. Even a tiny minority with determination and vision can change the world. Trusting in numbers and political power has always been a trap for the church, since we take our eyes off the cross—which speaks of sacrifice and service and humility—and put our faith in the power of human might. Fidel Castro said, “I began the revolution with 82 men. If I had [to] do it again, I’d do it with 10 or 15 and absolute faith. It does not matter how small you are if you have faith and plan of action.” In the words of Edmund Burke: “Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.”

3. You must come out boldly! Gay activist Marc Rubin looked back at Stonewall 30 years later and asked, “How did that singular event in June 1969 become the fountainhead for so many of the changes that have made the world so different for queers 30 years later? It spawned the Gay Liberation Movement.”

He added, “First there was The Gay Liberation Front proclaiming loudly, clearly and brilliantly, the truth that gay is good, that queers had embodied within them all of the genius of humanity, and owned all privileges of that status. ... And so, gay shame was replaced by gay pride—in the public square, and quite boldly.”

How much more then should we, the redeemed, blood-washed followers of Jesus, be unashamed? (See Matt. 5:14-16, Mark 8:38, Rom. 1:16, 2 Tim.1:8, 1 Pet. 4:16.)

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We, of all people, should “come out” and be bold and unashamed—and it begins with the leadership. The early gay activists risked life and limb for their cause, knowing that coming out could cost them everything. Yet we who claim to have eternal life and an intimate relationship with God aren’t willing to risk personal insult or loss of income or family rejection or denomination pressure for our convictions and faith. How can this be?

4. We must focus on changing the world, not escaping from it. While gay activists were launching their revolution—and getting it written into law—a broad, counterculture revolution was impacting our society. Yet at this same time, many Christians were expecting Jesus to come any moment and get them out of this world, basically handing society over to those who opposed their values.

One group fought for change; the other group looked for

escape. Who succeeded? We're still here, still talking about the end of the world, while others have succeeded in changing the world. Retreat always spells defeat.

5. Revolutions require strategy, including winning the battle of words and ideas. No one understood this better than Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen. Their bestselling 1989 book, "After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s," built on a shorter article titled "The Overhauling of Straight America." In this article, they outlined a six-fold strategy, with this ultimate goal: the "conversion of the average American's emotions, mind and will, through a planned psychological attack, in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media."

What is our strategy?

6) Remember to focus on the children. This is almost a mantra in gay activist circles: The children are being hurt. Consider how this affects the children. Always talk about the children!

Need I say more to followers of Jesus today? Either we speak up for the children and make their solid upbringing and education a priority, or someone else will. Are we going to sit idly by and let our kids become victims?

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7. Remember to reach out to the marginalized. This lies at the heart of gay activism, which began with a G—gay—then quickly redefined itself as GL—gay, lesbian—and then GLB—gay, lesbian, bisexual—and then GLBT—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender—and beyond, including Q for queer or questioning, I for intersexed and P for something else.

As the body of Christ, we cannot affirm homosexuality in any way, but we must reach out to the marginalized, to the

stigmatized, to the outcasts and to the outsiders. Jesus especially cares for them (see Luke 14:12-14, 15:4-7).

8) Unity is essential. Although in some ways the homosexual community is as diverse as the heterosexual community, in other ways there is remarkable unity, solidarity and the ability to mobilize for action in the gay community.

Yet the church is often famous for its disunity and splits. Could it be that we are fighting for our own little kingdoms while gays and lesbians are fighting for a common cause, in their minds, simply the right to exist as human beings? The New Testament clearly calls us to unity. Jesus taught it, prayed for it and died for it, and the other New Testament authors echo this call. Without unity, we are doomed to fail.

It has been said that "Jesus transforms people, and people transform society," and the bottom line is this: Either we will transform our society, or our society will transform us.

Which will it be?

I asked this question in 2007. I'm asking it again today.

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