

Why United Methodists Should Split Over Same-Sex Marriage

There's a sharp division among the **United Methodist Church**—so sharp, indeed, that it threatens to slice the second-largest Protestant denomination in the United States in half. And maybe that's just what needs to happen.

Don't get me wrong. I believe it would be a sad day, indeed, if the United Methodist Church split over an issue—same-sex marriage—that is so crystal clear in the Bible and is forbidden in the denomination (see Lev. 18:22; Matt. 19:5). I don't want to see this happen! And I'm glad that John and Charles Wesley, founders of the Methodist movement, aren't here to witness what appears to be the deterioration of a denomination birthed in prayer in the 1700s. Although perhaps the story would be different if these bold **intercessors** were still among us.

We previously covered how a group of 80 pastors is suggesting the United Methodist denomination is facing an imminent split because of an inability to resolve long-standing theological disputes about sexuality and church doctrine.

"We can no longer talk about schism as something that might happen in the future. Schism has already taken place in our connection," said the Rev. Maxie Dunnam, a retired president of evangelical Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, who joined the statement.

However shocking it seems, Dunnam may be in the minority among his fellow Methodists. Would you believe, according to a survey from Corporate Research and Research Now of Dallas, more than 90 percent of the denomination's members agree that the church should *not* split over issues concerning human sexuality even though the Bible is clear on these issues?

What's more, 63 percent of survey participants said the controversy was distracting the church from more important issues, including poverty, falling membership and engaging youth, *USA Today* reports.

Really? So we should focus on poverty, engaging youth and driving up church attendance and ignore one of the most important cultural issues in church history? What prevents us from focusing on all of these issues? Why do we have to exclude **human sexuality** for the sake of the others? I was shocked when I read Rev. John Hill, senior pastor of the 2,700-member Suntree United Methodist Church in Melbourne, Florida, say that "It's distressing to me that we're still focusing on minor issues—same-sex, homosexuality."

Wait, what? Minor issues? With perversion rising at mass proportions—polygamy is finding its place on TV, polyamory is being mainstreamed, and all manner of immorality is gaining a stronghold in our culture—how can any one who claims Jesus is Lord consider homosexuality's inroads into the church a minor issue?

Hill is one of several hundred United Methodist pastors who signed a proposal released last Friday that aims to keep the denomination from splitting over the homosexuality issue. The proposal, titled "A Way Forward," "offers churches and regional bodies the option to make up their own minds on issues like affirming gay clergy and same-sex marriage," reports *The Washington Post*.

Make up their own minds? It's not our place to make up our own minds about what the Bible clearly calls sin. It's our place to believe it, obey it and stand for it. We're supposed to do preach Christ to a lost and dying world, not invite gay clergy to preach in our sanctuaries and conduct **same-sex marriage** ceremonies in the name of Jesus.

I'm all for unity and I'd hate to see the United Methodist

Church split. It would be tragic on many levels. But how can two walk together unless they agree? (Amos 3:3) How can some uncompromising **Methodists** who are standing on the unadulterated Word of God also stand in alignment with Methodists who are ready, willing and already ably compromising the will of God? They can't.

The Methodist Book of Discipline clearly states that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching in the denomination and forbids weddings or ceremonies celebrating same-sex unions. Yet some Methodist pastors are willfully breaking those codes. If those gay-affirming pastors won't repent, the Word of God—which is sharper than any two-edged Sword (see Heb. 4:12)—needs to do its work. Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword."

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