

Why Won't the Gay Theologians Debate?

Almost 20 years ago, I was speaking with an older Jewish couple who seemed very close to putting their faith in Jesus as Messiah, but they were not 100 percent sure.

I said to them, "Later this week I'm debating an Orthodox rabbi. Why not come to the debate to hear both sides of the issue, and then you can make an informed decision?"

Thankfully, they came to the event, they listened with open hearts and minds, and by God's grace, they came to faith.

More recently, I was invited to speak on a college campus about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, representing the Israeli side.

I requested instead that a debate be scheduled with a qualified Muslim or Palestinian representative so that the audience could hear both sides. When no one came forward, I requested that after the lecture there be an open microphone Q &A so the audience could challenge what I presented.

Why do I do this? It's because the truth has nothing to fear, and I am quite ready for my beliefs and viewpoints to be challenged.

If you believe you are on the side of truth, you need not be insecure.

Then why are "gay Christian" activists and theologians so unwilling to debate the issues publicly? Why do they consistently refuse public dialogue, especially when those who want to dialogue with them are committed to doing so with civility and grace?

Bear in mind that they are writing books, preaching messages,

using social media and holding conferences, all with the goal of actively challenging the views of conservative followers of Jesus, seeking to overturn the Word and 2,000 years of consistent church tradition. Yet at the same time, when openly invited to debate their controversial new viewpoints, they grow silent. Why?

For many months now, my friend and colleague Dr. James White has invited Matthew Vines to debate him, since Matthew had become the poster boy for gay Christianity despite his lack of theological training. Matthew's serious research and winsome personality caused his talks to go viral, and since he has targeted conservative churches for his activism, it seemed only right for Dr. White to propose a formal, moderated debate with him.

In fact, Dr. White offered to pay his own way and attend a forthcoming "gay Christian" equipping conference in which he would debate Matthew or a qualified professor for the learning benefit of their attendees, but even that invitation was refused.

Back in June, I was able to do a 45-minute radio debate with Matthew on national Christian radio (with webcast as well), but that was only because Matthew didn't realize he would be debating me when he accepted the invitation. (You can watch the debate here, in which not one single verse supporting homosexual practice was offered by Matthew; for a synopsis of my viewpoints, which also express my heart, go here. On an interpersonal level, Matthew never responded to a single communication I sent him over the months.)

Dr. White and I have suggested to Matthew that he and New Testament scholar James Brownson debate Dr. White and me, since Matthew relies heavily on Prof. Brownson in his book. (Prof. Brownson is a respected scholar and also heterosexual.)

Finally, after months of non-communication, Matthew recently

interacted with Dr. White, explaining why he refused to debate him and why he had no intention of engaging me. He wrote:

“I am happy to do dialogues, debates, etc., with anyone when I feel that the event is likely to be constructive, respectful, and relationship-building. I did a ‘debate’ with Michael Brown this summer that was largely a waste of time, because Brown is not interested in listening to and learning from LGBT people, only pontificating about them.”

Come again, Matthew?

I’ve spent much of the last 10 years listening to LGBT people, amassing a large library of books simply to hear their perspective, taking every personal opportunity I have to sit with those who identify as LGBT—especially professing “gay Christians”—and specifically asking them to tell me their stories, yet I have no desire to listen?

According to Matthew, unless I’m willing to listen and learn from LGBT people, which must mean come to agree with them, he’s not willing to debate. And we’re supposed to take this seriously?

Matthew and his team are on the offensive, thinking somehow that they will be able to change the positions of committed followers of Jesus (trust me on this; it’s not going to happen on any substantive level), yet they won’t debate unless someone basically says, “You’re making great points, and I’m learning a lot from you.”

Who ever heard of prerequisites like this for debate?

I read Matthew’s book carefully, including every endnote, praying for greater sensitivity of heart as I read, just as I have often prayed with tears of love when interceding for the well-being of those who identify as LGBT, but that’s not enough. You’re simply not allowed to reject their arguments as baseless. If you do, there will be no debate.

Matthew continued, explaining, "I see James White in the same vein as Michael Brown. He has shown no desire whatever to learn from or listen to LGBT people. He simply wants to preach condemnation to people he hasn't even bothered to get to know. There are far, far better interlocutors, and far more respectful conversations I am happy to have. That isn't one of them."

This too is remarkable. Dr. White has debated or dialogued with atheists, agnostics, Mormon apologists and Muslim leaders, including debates with Muslim apologists right in their mosques.

You don't get into a mosque to debate without being respectful and gracious, yet that's not good enough for Matthew or, apparently, Prof. Brownson as well.

Ironically, on numerous occasions I have told local "gay Christians" that I'd love to sit down with them and hear their stories, also telling them I'd be glad to have a meal together just to get to know them better. In the vast majority of cases (including all instances where I've offered to do this with a group of people), my invitation has been declined or ignored, yet I'm the one unwilling to build relationships.

Prof. Robert Gagnon, the foremost authority on the Bible and homosexuality, would be delighted to debate Prof. Brownson or any qualified gay theologian, yet he too is studiously avoided, despite his sterling academic background and his gentle demeanor. Why?

Dr. White ended his dialogue with Matthew by stating, "I stand ready to work with Matthew Vines to arrange a meaningful, constructive, respectful debate—but one that does not begin with my capitulation as the prior condition of the debate taking place!"

Precisely so, leading again to the question: Why are gay theologians and their allies so unwilling to debate the

relevant issues, especially when they are so aggressive in arguing against our position? Why have Dr. White and I debated top scholars and religious leaders (from Jewish to Muslim, from atheist to Catholic, even debating each other), yet these gay activists are so reluctant to debate?

Why not put the issues on the table in full-length, moderated, civil debate?

Why not model in public how to have serious differences without personal acrimony?

What do these activists and theologians have to hide?

This is not a macho challenge to engage in verbal fisticuffs. It is an open invitation to examine critically important issues in a way that the entire body can observe.

Why not do it?

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