

'You Could Feel the Evil Spirits at Work,' Pastor Recalls One Year After Pulse

It was a year ago today. I was boarding an early-morning flight to Los Angeles when I saw on the news on the in-flight TV of the horrific terror attack on the Pulse gay and lesbian nightclub in Orlando. My heart sank as I watched the havoc caused by hate and evil spill over onto the streets of that city. I finished my ministry commitment and boarded the next flight to Orlando.

It was my first time in an atmosphere like that. There was heightened demonic resistance at the scene of the attack; I could feel it when we turned onto Orange Avenue. Police had blocked off the roads, and reporters and news cameras were everywhere. You could feel evil spirits at work. Some pastor friends and myself met down at the scene of the shooting and began to pray. We didn't have a hidden agenda or ulterior motives but just went to simply pray into the city and for those affected. Our assignment was to bring light into darkness and let the love of God burn bright in a dark world.

As the weeks and months following this terrorist attack passed on, pain and confusion were still fresh in people's mind. What was clear is that the church and gay community were not on the same page. There still is a great divide today. The gay community wants the church to abandon clear, sound doctrine to embrace sexual orientation, desires or preference. The church continues to lack love and compassion while looking down on those whom they determined to have greater sin than their own. All of us are sinners in need of the same Savior. We must begin to embrace the internal dilemma of loving the person who is engaged in sin without embracing and affirming the sin. The church hasn't done the greatest job of this over the years.

The best example of this is the one Jesus gave us in John 8:1-11. A woman was caught in the very act of the sin of adultery. The religious leaders were ready to punish her obvious blatant sexual sin. Then Jesus stepped in! John 8:10-11 says:

When Jesus had stood up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are your accusers? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

Jesus met her with grace. There was love in voice and compassion in his eyes he loved the woman in sexual sin right where she was. Jesus didn't judge her. He didn't condemn her. He simply showed her the Father's heart of never-ending, unyielding and relentless love. Then Jesus revealed his own mind. When Jesus told the woman, "Go and sin no more," He spoke truth in the midst of grace. Jesus is the mercy seat and in Jesus we find the example of Grace and truth. John 1:14 says; "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Only in Jesus do grace and truth coexist in perfect unity. This must be our message as the church. Despite your sexual temptations or sexual sin, grace knows no sexual orientation it can't reach, and neither does truth. We must all take our sin and shame, our struggle and our pain, our temptation past and present to the feet of Jesus, where grace meets truth that sets you free. That's the place we will leave our life of all sexual sin and live a life of freedom that is only found in Jesus.

I wrote in my book, *Gay Awareness: Discovering the Heart of the Father and the Mind of Christ on Sexuality*, "The church has lost its voice to the gay community because of the hypocrisy of those who claim to follow Jesus." We will never

reach people we don't love, and we will never have a voice into their lives and communities without genuine authentic relationships. Our assignment today needs to be the same as mine on Orange Avenue outside that gay nightclub that day, to bring light into darkness and let the love of God burn bright in a dark world. {eoa}

Landon Schott and his wife Heather founded The Rev Ministries and , a 24/7 online youth and young adult network dedicated to turning the heart of a generation to Jesus through Christ-centered media. Landon has authored Jezebel; The Witch Is Back and Gay Awareness: Discovering The Heart of the Father and the Mind of Christ, which was released March 2016. Connect with Landon on Instagram or Twitter @LandonSchott.