

Hope for a Voiceless Church

The battle to defend biblical marriage in America highlights a twofold problem that hits home for the church

Recently dozens of Christian leaders, ranging from Jack Hayford to Mike Huckabee, signed a statement that declares, "We stand in solidarity to defend marriage and the family and the society founded upon them." The same week, Exodus International, a ministry that for nearly four decades helped those with unwanted same-sex attraction find freedom through Jesus, announced it was shutting down and relaunching as a new entity that would honor the gay community more. Both these events came just days before the Supreme Court ruled to reverse the Defense of Marriage Act and opened the door again to legalize gay marriage in California.

It's yet another in a series of shifts that seem a setback for Christians. As expected, secular media played up the change with Exodus and the gay community's reaction to the rulings, while all but ignoring the Christian leaders calling for solidarity to defend marriage.

Has the church lost its voice?

I believe that to a great extent it has. But this isn't something that happened overnight or even this year; it's been going on for decades. We should have spoken up when marriage was first assaulted with the concept of "no-fault divorce," and when the first gay-friendly programs began airing on TV, and when outspoken homosexual celebrities first began using their platforms—and were cheered on by the liberal media—to persuade the public that their lifestyle was now the norm. Instead, very little was said.

So here we are today: a church that has become more and more influenced by the secular culture. A church that now grapples with increasing immorality within the body. A church in which

the rate of marriages ending in divorce and of those who view pornography are virtually the same as the rest of the world.

I'm lamenting facts you already know, but my point is this: In these troubling times the church must *be* the church not only through what our Christian leaders say in public, but also in our local congregations, in our communities and in how we live in private.

Against this huge onslaught of immorality in our culture we can be beacons of light only if we walk the walk *and* talk the talk in grace and love. Too often we come across as being unkind and bombastic. I think this is what Alan Chambers, the president of Exodus, meant when he apologized on national TV and pointed out that many Christians have been heartless in their dealings with those who struggle with same-sex attraction. His new ministry is called Reduce Fear, and I agree—we need to reduce fear. We know perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

But we also must stand for truth. In the same way that we shouldn't abandon the ideals of democracy and give in to the demands of terrorists like the Taliban, so should we not cave in on the ideals and truth of God's Word when there are cultural terrorists who want their view to become the norm.

Andy Comisky, a former president of Exodus, wrote a thoughtful blog post about this only days before the ministry shut down in which he said, "I am troubled by Christians who now claim that God made them gay and cry victim at anyone who believes otherwise. Doubtless some have been treated heavy-handedly by churches or promised quick cures by homely, uninformed ministries. But instead of submitting their wounds to God and trustworthy healers, these ones allow bitterness to transform them into the most virulent proponents of gay identity and practice. And in Jesus' name and authority, the wounded become deceived, then deceivers."

(To read more of Comisky's blog, as well as the statement on marriage from Christian leaders, visit .)

Within the church many have already been deceived. The gay agenda's rhetoric and tactics are anything but loving and accepting (yes, there's a double standard), yet many believers cower as soon as they're labeled hateful bigots. We must recognize this is a time when Christians must be bold and have clarity. We must stand up and speak truth, but we must speak in love. And until we learn how to view this explosive social issue as a two-sided coin—with both love and truth—we will remain a voiceless church.

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