

How the Church Can Respond to the Gay Agenda

If one topic in our culture could be described as the “perfect storm,” I would have to say it is homosexuality. Social battle lines are forming around us as we grapple with homosexual marriage or civil unions, gay ordinations and homosexual theology.

How did we reach the point at which gay marriage is not simply on the horizon but happening all around us? And how should we respond as Christians in order to make a lasting difference in the lives of those who are caught in the trap of homosexuality?

Often when this topic is addressed, I find that the individuals personally dealing with same-sex attraction can be overlooked. But I see past the misplaced ideals and political propaganda to the individual. You see, I struggled with homosexual feelings and identity from childhood into my adult life.

Now I am a happily married wife and mother of three young sons. Because of Jesus, I am who I am today. It was not an instantaneous healing but rather a walk into maturity alongside my Savior that changed me from the inside out.

For the last 20 years, I have had the privilege of ministering to women and their loved ones who have been affected by homosexuality. I must say that the circumstances today make it much more difficult to leave the homosexual life.

The truth, that change is possible for those who want to follow Christ Jesus (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11), is often upstaged by gay propaganda—“once gay, always gay” and “people are born gay.” Yet women and men are still leaving homosexuality and finding freedom in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In order to fully understand the individuals, we need to look at the goals of the gay political movement, the response of the Christian church and why it is vitally important to shine forth the love of the Lord if we wish to see others find freedom in Him. My hope is to equip you to better understand and reflect our Lord to these individuals.

The Gay Agenda Today, when we hear about homosexuality, we often hear the following words or phrases: tolerance vs. intolerance, homophobia vs. acceptance, bigotry and hatred, unchangeable vs. changeable, and our "American" right to sexual gratification. It was not always this way.

About 20 years ago, homosexual activists set out to mold what Americans thought about homosexuality. Specifically, they desired to silence the moral voice of the church by minimalizing those who spoke against homosexuality.

Activists wanted to display those who spoke against homosexuality on television as ignorant or foolish. Attacking traditional views, the activists played the victim while acting seriously intolerant themselves.

I will never forget asking a TV producer of a national news show about giving the Christian viewpoint a fair share of broadcast time. He told me that the program dare not give us the last word. "The station will have bomb threats if we do," he said.

At the same time, gay researchers were attempting to prove a genetic component for homosexuality that would influence the minds of average Americans. Though those in the homosexual lifestyle have argued about the desirability and validity of the research, outwardly all supported the idea of being "born gay."

This idea was heralded in the popular press in 1993 and has been promoted by gay activists for so long that it has become

fact to many. In my book *Restoring Sexual Identity* (Harvest House), I've devoted a chapter to examining this theory.

Based on the born gay theory, activists lobbied for civil rights status and hate crimes legislation. They also fought for acceptance of homosexual civil unions and gained support for church commitment ceremonies and finally, gay marriage—a goal of endorsement of homosexual relationships by the government. All of this is based on very faulty ground—that individuals are born gay and cannot change their orientation.

The Church's Response In general, the American Christian church has tried to avoid talking about difficult things. Homosexuality, abortion, divorce, eating disorders and sexual abuse are just a few of the uncomfortable topics regarding women that we have shied away from.

Avoidance was one tactic, and condemning those dealing with the effects of same-sex attraction was another response. In the 1970s, the church had an incredible opportunity to show love through service and through “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15, NIV) to those who were dying of AIDS.

We were the bearers of the good news of lasting hope through Jesus. Instead of offering hope, some Christians responded by gleefully pointing out the fault of those dying. “AIDS is God's judgment of homosexuals!” they said. Thankfully, not all Christians responded in this way.

After this time, gay theology and reinterpretation of the Scriptures referring to homosexuality abounded in liberal churches. Wild assertions about Jonathan and David having been in a gay relationship were made by “homosexual Christians.” My husband's and my response was, “Then David must have been the first ex-gay—just look at how many wives he had!”

Although Jesus was not recorded to have said anything about homosexuality, He certainly did speak about God's design for human sexuality. “‘Haven't you read,'” He replied, “‘that at

the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'" (Matt. 19:4-6).

Gay theology comes down to revising Scripture to fit one's lifestyle instead of submitting one's life to God's authority. But the Bible endorses no sexual relationship other than that which exists between a man and a woman in marriage.

Although we do not gain salvation by our own perfection, we demonstrate our love for Christ through obedience (see John 14:15-21). Clearly we have been instructed to "flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18), and that includes sexual immorality in the form of homosexuality.

It would be easy to become discouraged about the church's failings, but in recent years, many Christian organizations have come alongside Exodus International, a 28-year-old Christian ministry that assists individuals in overcoming same-sex attractions. Groups such as Focus on the Family, the Southern Baptist Convention, Campus Crusade for Christ and the Assemblies of God have begun "speaking the truth in love" in the area of homosexuality.

One Soul At a Time There are women and men all around us who are unknowingly slaves to sin and in dire need of salvation, just as we once were (see Rom. 6:13). These are simply pawns in a greater spiritual storm threatening to destroy the souls of men and women.

I can recall an interaction I had a few years ago with about 20 "Lesbian Avengers" in the Northwest. In the previous month, my story had been published in a Portland, Oregon, newspaper called The Oregonian.

My husband and I were speaking at a conference about hope for

those who struggle with unwanted homosexual feelings. When I saw the protest line forming on the sidewalk, I had a strong desire to go out and speak with the protesters. After praying, I walked out to meet the protesters.

"Hi," I said, "it's a nice day to be outside today. How are you doing?"

Then one of the women approached with a sign that read, "Anne, come back to us!"

"Well, I'm not coming back to you, but I did come out to you," I said. The play on words caused some laughter and enabled us all to relax a bit.

Finally, one of the lesbian women asked, "Do you think anyone can change?" A wonderful conversation began about God's redeeming love for all people.

I shared with them the hope that I had received from 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Although the first few verses seemed discouraging, I found hope in verse 11: "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

"If homosexuality is truly an issue of sin," I shared, "I knew God could help me!" In the end, they all signed the poster they had made and took a picture with me.

I couldn't help but say: "I thought you were the 'Lesbian Avengers.' The name sounds really tough!"

"Well, we're not really that tough," one responded. A young woman also seriously inquired, "You are not going to find our homes and set them on fire, are you?"

I couldn't believe my ears at first. "No, absolutely not!" I said. "We host these conferences because we want to offer the hope that we searched for so desperately years ago."

Amazingly, last year I was reintroduced to one of the women who had protested at the church event. She was attending Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference and telling me about how she had surrendered her life to Jesus! It was a thrill to meet her again—this time as a sister in Christ.

Another example concerns a friend who reached out to her lesbian neighbors. Following a windstorm, Julie and her husband, Brian, noticed that the debris in the yard next door had not been cleared. They gathered the felled branches and began cleaning up the neighbors' trash.

Later, the women approached Julie to thank her. Tears welled up in the neighbors' eyes as Julie demonstrated Christ's love and then told them, "We love you." Little do they know that one of Julie's best friends left lesbianism.

Another friend engaged a lesbian couple in a discussion about Christianity and began meeting with them to discuss "things of faith." I encouraged her to avoid talking about homosexuality with them until they brought it up.

As she continued going through the Bible with the women, they realized who Jesus was and how much He loved them. They longed to give their hearts to Him.

My friend gently talked about the costs of discipleship, repentance and letting go of homosexuality in order to fully obey God. She also kindly explained that letting go of anything was a process, and homosexuality was no different.

She told them, "You will have good days and bad days, but surrendering yourself to your Savior and Lord is bottom line." After living as lesbians for more than 22 years, these women ultimately left the lifestyle to follow Christ.

We are called to share the gospel with gentleness and respect (see 1 Pet. 3:15). From our vantage point, we can reflect His

love and truth with confidence to women who are craving “perfect peace” (Phil. 4:7).

I encourage you to pray fervently for our nation. We are now on the verge of a profound moral loss—the honorable institution of marriage.

Without prayer, we will lose this battle, and our nation, indeed the world, will never be the same. I implore you to contact your Congressional representatives in Washington about supporting a constitutional marriage amendment.

The sleeping giant of the church needs to wake up before the battle is over. Your heart and voice matter!

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