

Is it OK to be Gay and Christian?

Charismatic pastor Jim Swilley's announcement that he is gay opened the door wider for a subtle delusion. Don't believe it.

Many people were shell-shocked last week when Atlanta pastor Jim Swilley stood in front of his congregation, Church in the Now in Conyers, Ga., and announced that he is gay. The 52-year-old minister was abruptly removed from his position in the International Communion of Charismatic Churches—a network in which he served as an overseer. Some of Swilley's members left his church, others stayed, and countless others are now scratching their heads.

We Americans are lost in a moral fog. Two major Protestant denominations (the Episcopal Church USA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) have voted to ordain gay clergy. Meanwhile, gayness is celebrated in our media, and anyone who refuses to bow to this idol is painted as intolerant and homophobic.

"The sins we avoid addressing from the pulpit are the sins that will thrive unchallenged in our culture. We must develop some backbone and speak the truth in love."

Christians who still believe homosexuality is incompatible with biblical faith feel painted into a corner. If we defend Christian morality, and even if we speak with

compassion to those
who may struggle with same-sex attraction, we are accused of
hate speech or
branded as judgmental. So we tiptoe through the minefield of
political
correctness—and keep our mouths shut.

Sorry, but timidity on this issue
is not acceptable. The sins we avoid addressing from the
pulpit are the sins
that will thrive unchallenged in our culture. We must develop
some backbone and
speak the truth in love. Here are four truths that should
factor into any
discussion on this topic:

1. Everyone is born with
issues. King David wrote: “Behold, I
was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived
me” (Psalm 51:5, NASB). David acknowledged that he had an
inborn sin nature. This is true for all of us!

Many “gay Christian” advocates insist that some people are
born homosexuals and therefore they have no hope of altering
their orientation.
But this is a lame argument since we all are born with a
propensity toward
certain sins. This is the human condition: “For all have
sinned and fall short
of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Just because you are
born with an inclination toward adultery, alcoholism,
shoplifting or pride
doesn’t mean you have to stay that way.

2.
Christ offers forgiveness and sexual healing. The more
strident voices in the gay
community hate when Christians speak about homosexuals being

healed or reformed. They insist that if you are gay, you must stay that way. They choose to ignore the fact that thousands of people have left homosexuality after coming to faith in Christ.

My friend Alan Chambers, president of Exodus International, came out of the gay lifestyle many years ago and now has a great marriage with his wife, Leslie, plus two beautiful children. The ministry he leads has helped countless people—including many Christian “strugglers”—find emotional freedom. Some of them experienced same-sex feelings from childhood; others developed these feelings because they were sexually molested or because of dysfunction in their families.

Whatever the cause of sexual brokenness, the gospel has always provided the solution. It was true for people in the Corinthian church, to whom Paul wrote: “Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals ... will inherit the kingdom of God. *Such were some of you;* but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11, emphasis added).

3.
Discipleship requires self-denial. In his announcement to his church last week, Jim Swilley said he decided to come out as gay because he was tired of pretending.

I've talked with others who told me they felt they were being "dishonest" by ignoring their gay feelings. They said they felt free when they accepted "who they really are" and got involved in gay relationships.

For a Christian, that's a cop out. The essence of our walk with Christ involves denial. Jesus said: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Jesus was not asking us to pretend we don't have problems—He calls us to bring all of those problems into His light through repentance. But the Holy Spirit gives us the power to deny sinful desires. That quality of self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23).

4.
Homosexuality is not a protected category of sin. Many "gay Christian" advocates insist that if you are gay, then it's fine to go out and have all the sex you want. They ignore biblical commandments against homosexuality (usually by saying that Old Testament law doesn't apply today); meanwhile they advocate gay marriage even though most gay men are rarely monogamous. The message is clear: If you have same-sex desires, just go ahead and indulge because that's how you were created.

This is what the Bible calls *licentiousness*—which means "lacking

legal or moral restraints, especially sexual restraints; disregarding rules.” Actually, the Bible lumps homosexuality in with every other form of sexual sin—and says God will punish those who engage in it. After Paul warns about every form of immorality, he says: “So, he who rejects [these rules] is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you” (1 Thess. 4:8).

Regardless of how loudly the world trumpets its hedonistic agenda—and no matter how many backslidden preachers dance to the tune—God has the final say on this matter.

J.
Lee Grady is contributing editor of *Charisma*. You can follow him on Twitter at *leegrady* His most recent book is *The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale* (Chosen). For more information about Exodus International, go to .