

It's Time to Stand Up and Be Counted

By now everyone has heard the bad news: The U.S. Supreme court in a 5-4 decision has legalized same-sex marriage in all 50 states. The good news is that finally Christians must stand up and be counted. Not only that, but we must resist this spiritual attack with the power of the Holy Spirit and believe that somehow something good will come out of this terrible decision.

Marriage has been under attack for decades. Divorce. Couples living together. A growing acceptance of homosexuality. And an acceptance by many of every sort of sexual behavior.

But this is different in that the Supreme Court has, as the Family Research Council said, "put our government on a collision course with America's cherished religious freedoms, explicitly guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution."

As Christian journalists, we will vigorously cover this story over the upcoming months and years. We will report on who is standing strong and who is caving in. We will not compromise what God's Word says and will do everything in our power to galvanize the church to uphold biblical principles regarding marriage and holy living.

The danger is that many Christians will be silent as they were when prayer was taken out of the schools, or even when *Roe v. Wade* was handed down in 1973. Back then it was mostly Roman Catholics who were publically opposed to abortion. Evangelicals only began to oppose abortion later.

This time many are saying that if necessary we will resort to civil disobedience—deciding to follow God's law rather than man's.

Within minutes of the Supreme Court announcement, leaders were issuing statements. For example, 100 evangelical leaders issued this, "Here We Stand: An Evangelical Declaration on Marriage," saying "As evangelical Christians, we dissent from the court's ruling that redefines marriage. The state did not create the family and should not try to recreate the family in its own image."

Samuel Rodriguez, the head of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, said the "decision redefining marriage serves as a de facto and legal catalyst of the marginalization of Americans who embrace a biblical worldview."

Bishop Joseph Mattera issued a statement on five things churches should immediately do to protect themselves from the Supreme Court "same-sex" marriage law, concluding that "if all else fails and the courts eventually override church bylaws, then the only alternative left will be for biblically based clergy to engage in civil disobedience and refuse to comply with the law—irrespective of the penalties, consequences and cultural stigma they will receive."

Even as I'm writing this, I'm getting statements from presidential candidates like Rick Santorum, who said: "This court ruling is the *Roe v. Wade* of the 21st century. It's an attack on religious freedom, an affront to the religious liberty of millions of Americans and a threat to the stability of our families. As president, I will do all within my power to overturn it."

Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee pledged to "pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman."

We must also work with the many politicians who are outraged by this decision and who agree with the four Supreme Court Justices who dissented. We must have laws passed that protect our ability to "opt out." With some of the other wrong Supreme

Court decisions, we as believers could opt out. For example, there is nothing demanding that a Christian woman get an abortion or that a Christian doctor perform abortion.

But as we've already seen, Christian business people who make wedding cakes or arrange flowers for weddings have been fined for not doing business with same-sex couples. Will churches be forced to perform same-sex weddings, even for non-members?

I believe, like Mattera said, this will remove the wheat from the chaff. It will make Christians decide what they will or won't go along with. Like the pastors who defied the IRS for taking away their tax-exempt status for preaching about politics on a certain Sunday, I believe the government will back down if we stand strong. If not, we must stand strong anyway.

At the same time, we must have a Christlike spirit. To quote Rodriguez, we must reject and repudiate all vestiges of homophobia, intolerance and bigotry (toward the LGBT community) while simultaneously building a firewall against intolerance and bigotry toward followers of Christ who preach truth with love."

Most of those who have issued statements have been from the conservative branch of the evangelical community. I call on every Pentecostal denomination, every charismatic parachurch ministry and virtually every church to issue statements stating their positions. We invite leaders, pastors and ordinary Christians to write commentaries on what must be done. Send them, and we will publish as many as we feel should be published.

It's time to stand up and be counted.

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