The two sides of the GLBTQ/Christian struggle

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Sexual preference and gender identity were once straightforward church concerns. Now, Christians struggle with one another over how acceptable this practice really is.

Published on
Booksie

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This article was originally posted to Examiner.com on March 9, 2011. View the original here.

On March 2, 2011, the tide for homosexual Christians changed. Harding University has long been one of the more conservative, large Christian college, a trait that perhaps played its own part in the creation of the HU Queer Press, albeit against the schoolâ s wishes. The online zine by Harding students and alumni details the constant struggles of homosexual Christians in their own words.

Highlands Church in Denver knows this struggle too well. Only 18-months ago, the church opened their doors with a mission of GLBTQ inclusion, which came at the cost of separating from their home congregation, who took the stance many Christians do: homosexuality is a sin and so cannot be tolerated. Although several other issues have long divided churches, the topic of homosexuality seems to bring out a nasty side of Christians. (Highlands Church *does* report, however, that their split happened amicably.)

While the GLBTQ cause has typically been tied to feminism (because gender equality scraps traditional gender roles, including within relationship pairings), many churches now accept women leadership, but kept homosexuality a taboo topic.

Why does this issue divides and disturb Christians so terribly? To those against homosexualityâ especially those with no desire for â repentantâ changeâ accepting them means ignoring scripture.

Admittedly, it is barely mentioned in scripture, but when it is, homosexual intercourse is *always* forbidden and never given parameters that would make it acceptable. To Paul in Romans 1, it is a perversion of nature by men who simply have too much sexual energy to limit themselves to women. Homosexuality is a choice, at least according to the Bible, as the Church has infamously taught. Although many pro-GLBTQ Christians have suggested alternate interpretations of scripture, the only way to make homosexuality truly acceptable in biblical terms is to limit the scriptural message within its historical social context and modernize a Message that many believe to be timeless. Fighting homosexuality unsurprisingly seems much more appealing to conservative Christians than fighting scripture.

On the other side of the fence (no pun intended) are Christians equally justified in their stance with the GLBTQ community. Not only do they hold that homosexuals should be welcomed into fellowship, but that homosexuality is permissible in the spirit of the Law. They see the validity of the Christ-like love and devotion within monogamous homosexual relationships; accept scienceâ s prognosis that homosexuality is not a choice but heavily based on genetic and/or environmental factors; and point to Godâ s presence in nature (also a Romans 1 reference), which shows many animal species have a small percentage of their population that prefer homosexual relationships.

In other words, both sides of the Gay Christianity debate are right. Conservatives desire to follow God and the â **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arthâ given to humanity, whereas liberals want only to follow God and Jesusâ exemplar inclusion of everyone at his table, in whatever role they were born into. Letter of the Law versus spirit of the Law. Both are right, so justifiably, neither wants to back down.

Christianity, like practically all belief systems, feels humanity has a higher calling than it is living out. But is this a calling to align with some universal code of ethics against the deviance of homosexuality or to overcome the biases exhibited universally and treat the â deviantsâ as people?

Thatâ s the struggle churches face. Whatever the choice, accepting gays as guiltless or not, homosexuality is not the black-and-white issue many desire it to be, thereby demanding open-mindedness and love when dealing with those on the other side of the line.

Would Jesus love gays (whether or not he approved of homosexuality)? Of course. So, why isnâ t his Church as a whole more welcoming like Highlands Church? The Greatest Commandment, much to conservativesâ dismay, is not â Keep everybody on the straight and narrow.â Jesus said â Love God. Go love people.â The rest, he said, will fall into place if you do this.

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