



The unfolding of your words gives light.

Rice Lake Baptist Position Paper

A response to mainline Protestant standards on sexuality

Recent decisions in mainline Protestant denominations regarding ordination of leaders who are openly gay once again stirred up the debate about sexuality and the Church. To some this debate has made one side look like progressives seeking to maintain cultural relevance in the church and the other seeking to hold on to time-honored traditions.

If the debate is merely about being conservative or liberal it will never end. We will always debate means and methods. But this is not about means and methods. It is about right and wrong.

It likely comes as no surprise to most readers that we at Rice Lake Baptist Church seek to anchor our opinions in the Bible rather than the drifting culture we find ourselves in. We really think there is a “normal” standard that transcends culture and politics. “Normal” is not a white Republican but a Hebrew carpenter.

If you ever find yourself at odds with the Bible’s standard of morality (as if anyone ever escaped that verdict) the problem is not the standard. My pride (one of those things God hates) makes me think my enemy is the person who points out something wrong with me. For instance, it is possible that in some cultures tooth decay has become normal. Picture a dentist stepping into that setting and offering to do the work necessary to fix rotting teeth. Imagine the people becoming angry that someone would dare criticize their teeth. The dentist might be labeled judgmental, but he is merely using the standards of dental health to make a diagnosis. He is using those same standards to fix the problem. That is loving even though it hurts.

That is what Christianity is. It is the story of a world of people who have failed to meet the standards and are suffering because of it. It is the story of redemption and surrender, not consensus and adaptation. The task of the church, then, is not to adapt itself to the cultural decay but to call people out of it. We are not the judges. We are merely the practitioners of the standards of diagnosis and cure.

Both sides of the debate over church leadership must acknowledge that we are talking about more than sexuality. Take a look at just one portion of the Standard:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, 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 Corinthians 6:9-11, NASB

It is not loving for a bunch of sick people to fight over who is sickest. It is loving for sick people to help each other get to the only place they can go to get better. You cannot do that if you deny the sickness or attack the doctor.

This means the church should call people out of the homosexual lifestyle and not elevate into leadership those who deny the diagnosis and refuse to be rescued. But we should not stop there. It also means that the church should seek to rescue those who rationalize their pornography, materialism, gambling, substance abuse, fits of rage and dishonesty.

Our congregation wants to use the changeless Standard to help people who fall into any of the above categories. Some of us have lived very much in bondage to those sins, but God has changed us and is changing us. We take God’s standard seriously. It is our task to love people enough to tell them the truth. It is our task to show people that Jesus died to rescue sinners from those destructive sins. It is our task to go about the messy business of helping other people who need a Savior just like we do.

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