

What Testimony Are We Showing?

By: Daniel Orona

Proverbs 18:19 says that a brother offended is harder to win than a strong city. Yet that's exactly what we do when we tell people that are in the LGBTQ community that we don't want them in our churches or to be around them. I know what the Scripture says in Leviticus and in Romans that this is a result of people being given over to their own flesh and lustful desires. But my question is simple, were any of us any different before we came to Christ? Colossians 1:19-22 says, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight." Paul here explains that yes, we were alienated and away from God in our wicked thoughts and works, but Christ has now reconciled us through His blood. Shouldn't those in the LGBTQ community be offered the same exact access to Christ as others?

We are told repeatedly in the New Testament to love everyone. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." John in 1 John 4:7-11 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. We should not put down others or judge what they do. It is between them and God. Did any of us need anyone to tell us you are wrong for doing whatever it was we were doing? The answer is no. It is the Holy Spirit that deals with the heart of man.

When you tell a person of the LGBTQ community that what they are doing is wrong and then cut them off from being friends or from interacting with them unless they, "stop being gay" what type of testimony are you showing them? How will they see the light of Christ in you? The answer is they won't, and they will associate Christ with your actions. Do we really want to bring that type of shame upon our Lord? Did you have to stop being whatever you were before Christ came to you? Of course not. So why do we want members of the LGBTQ community to conform to what we believe is "right" before they know Christ? It is not our responsibility to clean them up. That is the Holy Spirit's. If they continue to follow God, the Holy Spirit and Christ will clean them up. It is our responsibility to teach and show them Christ.

I want to share with you a story. I was a department manager that managed ticket sales. I had an associate who was a department supervisor that worked for me. I really liked her. She cared about people. She was funny and good to be around. I knew from the time that I hired her that she was a lesbian. I didn't care. She earned the promotion and was the best person for the job. She didn't know that I knew she was a lesbian and was talking to others on her level about how to tell me. She told them she didn't feel like she was being honest about who she was without telling me. But she knew I am a Christian and that I was pastoring a church at the time, so she was scared. We both were working one day, and we went to lunch together which I often did with the supervisors that worked for me. It really is the best way to get to know people. She was really quiet and nervous while we were eating, which is not like her, and I asked her if everything was ok. She looked at me and I could tell she was scared. She said, there's something I need to tell you, but I'm not sure how you will react. I said, you know you can tell

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me anything, what's up? She said, "I just need to be honest with you. I'm gay." I responded and said, "Ok, do you want some ice cream?" I often bought my supervisors ice cream to show them my gratitude. I'll never forget her look of confusion on her face. She said, "That's it?" I said, "Yeah, do you want some ice cream?" I went and got us ice cream and I came back and told her, "Look I already knew you were gay. No one told me I just knew. But it's not my place to judge you for your life. It's wrong for me, but you have to live your life the way you see fit. I've given my life to Christ, and I follow Him. For me it's wrong, but that's my relationship with Him. I'm not going to hold you to the same standard that I live my life. That's not fair because you don't know Christ." The rest of lunch she kept telling me how scared she was to tell me and that she was afraid it would be "weird" between us, but that it's part of who she is as a person. We went on and worked together for a few years and she did a phenomenal job for me.

I tell you that story because I had lost contact with her and hadn't talked to her in a long time until I suddenly got a call out of the blue. She was crying. A good friend of hers had just died in a car crash and she realized that she couldn't live her life without God. We talked about Christ and how important He is to have in your life, and she wanted to be saved. A good seed was planted that night. I lost contact with her again and don't know what ultimately happened to her, but I do know that she believed that night. If I had cast her aside when she came out to me, she never would have come back and asked for me to show her Christ that night. We cannot cast people aside with where they are in life. I know a ton of Christians that still struggle with several things in their own life. Some that people know about and others that people don't. If we say that we don't have sin, we are liars. Christ told us to get the beam out of our own eye before we get the mote out of our brothers.

I say all that to say this. What type of testimony are we showing to others? Are we showing them the religious and self-righteous side of Christianity that sits in the seat of the scornful and stands in the way of sinners coming to the cross? Or are we showing them the love of God and the love of Christ understanding that the long suffering of God brings people to repentance? You may see their actions as sin. Ok, but we have more compassion on the drunk that comes into church than on the LGBTQ person. You may not see it as sin. Ok, then treat them as everyone else. It was when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge that they learned right from wrong and were as God. God cast them out and instituted death in us because of sin consciousness, the knowledge of right and wrong, because man is not in a place to be able to judge these things. There is only one. The righteous judge that is Jesus Christ.

Let's continue to show the love of God to everyone, even those in the LGBTQ community. You never know when that love will circle back to a phone call asking for salvation. Remember, we can't judge someone's relationship with Christ. That's between them and God. There are a lot of people struggling with things that believe in Christ where His grace and mercy are sufficient. I'll leave you with this last example. My grandmother was a gossip and a back biter. She also loved the Lord with all she had. She died having never gotten the victory over gossiping and backbiting. But she loved the Lord and I know for a fact that she is with Him in heaven as I'm writing this. God's grace was sufficient for her because of her relationship even though the book of Proverbs says that God hates what she was doing. When we get there, you may be surprised that people who were gay here found the grace of Christ and loved the Lord, but never got the victory. Never forget what type of testimony we are showing people. You may be the only life of a Christian that they see. I hope for all of us that they see a Christ that loves them and will welcome them into His body through their belief.