

4 Reasons More U.S. Churches Should Sanction Same-Sex Relationships

Written by Ginny Grimsley
Friday, 24 August 2012 08:49

Exclusionary Policies Run Counter to Christ's Example, Author Says

An evergreen tender spot on the religious-political landscape is homosexuality and gay marriage. When a politician, pundit or gadfly wants to gin up his or her base, an easy tactic is to make a statement about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, says media analyst Paul Hartman.

"It's one of those issues where everyone has an opinion, one way or another," says Hartman, a retired PBS/NPR station executive and author of "The Kairos," (www.CarpeKairos.com) a five-star-rated suspense novel that imagines Jesus Christ as gay.

"One of the many roles that Jesus modeled for us was that of social reformer. He championed the equality of outcasts – prostitutes, beggars, widows, orphans, lepers. He ignored their 'pre-existing conditions' and just loved 'em. You don't have to be a well-educated liberal today to be on the right side of history, you just have to follow Christ's example."

Currently, there are three American Christian denominations that officially accept homosexuality in their clergy: Episcopalians, Lutherans and Presbyterians. In July, the Episcopalian Church became the largest U.S. denomination to officially sanction same-sex unions by authorizing a "blessings" ceremony.

Hartman cites four reasons why American churches should accept homosexuality and gay marriage:

- **In support of family and monogamy:** The current estimate of U.S. citizens who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) is 12 million. Due to lingering stigmas, that self-reported number is likely only a fraction of the actual. Even 12 million is a significant portion of the population who have been forced to live on the sidelines and denied the rights and responsibilities that other Americans enjoy, including marriage, and the adoption of needy children. Such denial of freedoms for sexual minorities runs counter to the Christian belief in family values. Indeed, there are many theologians who argue homosexuality is one of God's diverse gifts in His creation of families.

4 Reasons More U.S. Churches Should Sanction Same-Sex Relationships

Written by Ginny Grimsley
Friday, 24 August 2012 08:49

• **Avoiding hypocrisy and elitism:** Like so many topics in the Bible, its few brief references to same-sex relations beg for intelligent interpretation. The original Bible writings, Hartman argues, never used the word “homosexual.” Translators introduced that term. In context, biblical “clobber passages” condemn “unnatural relations,” meaning God finds it an abomination when straight persons ignore their nature and have sex with partners of their own sex. Logically, people whose natural orientation is toward their own gender would have “unnatural relations” if they’re intimate with opposite sex partners. Another example is when people parrot what they’ve heard about the sin of Sodom being same-sex relations. They don’t realize that the Bible itself repeatedly and clearly defines that city’s wicked sins as inhospitality and unloving acts toward others. That’s a charge some make against churches which discriminate against members of the GLBT community. “When will we learn?” Hartman asks. “Christ’s message is inclusive, not exclusive.”

• **Already accepted in three denominations:** Episcopalians, Lutherans and Presbyterians – none of them wildly radical sects of Christians – now ordain openly gay as well as openly straight clergy. While it’s nothing new for denominations to disagree, it should be noteworthy that three mainstream Christian churches have accepted and embraced gay people.

• **Most importantly, “Jesus told us to love our neighbors as ourselves.”** Modern-day Pharisees love to emulate God’s role as judge more than Christ’s model of loving caregiver to the littlest, the lowest, the last and the least.

About Paul Hartman

Paul Hartman is a retired PBS/NPR station executive with a passion for biblical history. He is a Presbyterian elder, a lay preacher and a Dead Sea Scrolls aficionado. A father and grandfather, Hartman says he wrote “The Kairos” after serious Bible study revealed two repeatedly-quoted words from God as the answer to his lifelong battle with fear.