October 14, 2011

This Week at Adventist Today Online

News

President Obama’s Adventist Connection

A new book explores the African ancestry of Barack Obama and proves that Adventism has deeply influenced his family for many, many years. Whether or not you admire Mr. Obama as a political leader, the story is a must-read narrative for collectors of Adventist mission lore.

End of the Road for Atlantic Union College

Washington Adventist University has canceled plans to offer classes this fall on the former campus of Atlantic Union College. Financial issues stand in the way of accreditation.....
Salina Adventist Pastor Arrested

The pastor of the Salina, Kansas, Adventist Church has been arrested and is being held on charges of engaging in sexual activity with a minor.

Review, Blog, Column & Previous

Millennials: Ready or Not, Here They Are - Lawrence Downing

Clifford Goldstein: The Light and Fallen Humans - Ervin Taylor

God Loves Gays (and so should we) - Kendra Perry

Of Life, Love, Death and Hate (Crimes) - Stephen Foster

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President Obama's Adventist Connection

Submitted Oct 9, 2011
By Monte Sahlin

No president of the United States since Warren G. Harding has a closer family connection to the Seventh-day Adventist Church than Barack Obama. A recent book by BBC journalist Peter Firstbrook documents these connections. It is entitled *The Obamas: The Untold Story of an African Family* and the story is illustrative of the increasingly multicultural reality of America and the Adventist movement.

A key player in the story is President Obama’s grandfather, Onyango Obama. The family is still centered in Kendu Bay on eastern shore of Lake Victoria, today part of the nation of Kenya. They are part of the Luo people.

In 1906, Onyango was nine when Adventist missionaries arrived in the area. The missionaries were led by Arthur Carscallen, a Canadian. The first thing the missionaries did was start a school where literacy in English was taught as well as Bible.

“An accomplished linguist, Arthur Carscallen soon mastered the Dholuo language [and] went on to create the first written language and dictionary for the Luo people. He even imported a small printing press, which he used to produce a Luo grammar textbook, and spent several years translating parts of the New Testament into Dholuo.” [p 126]

The missionaries also began medical work and public health promotion. “Adventists... stress the importance of good diet and health” and started “a free clinic where they treated malaria, cholera, and other diseases. They even made house calls.” [p 126]

Firstbrook describes how the arrival of the Adventist missionaries brought change to the Luo community. It was not without conflict, but it also resulted in economic development. “Carscallen was joined by his fiancee Helen...an accomplished seamstress [who was] troubled by the lack of any clothing worn by the locals. Determined to change the situation, she began to grow cotton, and made her own fabric.” He quotes a memoir of an aging resident of the area who says that the missionaries “tried very hard to get people to wear [European clothes] by giving us sweets and sugar. But people refused.” [p 126]

The Adventist missionaries’ “focus on corporeal as well as spiritual matters brought them into conflict with some of the local traders,” writes Firstbrook. He quotes Richard Gethin, the first British businessman to settle permanently in the area, who complained that the Adventist mission got involved in trading buffalo hides and provided competition to Gethin’s commercial enterprise.

For Onyango “the arrival of the white missionaries provided an exciting diversion from the monotony of village life.” He was later described by relatives as a serious child whose curiosity drew him to the new religion. Many of the residents of this area were baptized as church members, and Onyango was among the first wave. He went off to an Adventist boarding school and “after several months’ absence... returned...dressed like a white man [in] long trousers and a white shirt.” Onyango’s father was convinced that he had broken a strict taboo against circumcision and told the family to ostracize him. [p 127-28]

Onyango adopted the ways of the missionary more fully than did most of the Luo people at the time.
This resulted in the family ostracism and eventually further change. He traveled to another town in the region and during World War I, Onyango converted to Islam. This “was anathema to his family back home, who were adopting Christianity under the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventists.” [p 142]

“Like many Africans at the time” he found it difficult to reconcile “the Christian message of love and compassion toward all men...with the white man’s apparent willingness to go to war.” That is one reason Islam appealed to him. He also “appreciated the structure and discipline it brought to his life.” [p 142]

Members of the family also say “he had a liking of the Muslim ladies... he knew how to treat them...The Christians...believed that polygamy was wrong. But Muslims...gave you the assurance that you can have even five wives.” [p 142]

Today the Obama family in Kenya is split between Adventists and Muslims. Firstbrook reports he spent the inauguration celebration with the Adventist side of the family while most of the international press was with the Muslim side. He was in the town of K’obama. The K in front of the family name means that the literal translation of this town is “home of Obama.”

He tells of the feast celebrating the new president. They slaughtered “a cow and several goats, and they welcomed my offer to bring a dozen crates of soft drinks, but definitely no beer, as they were all Seventh-day Adventists.” A small generator was brought out and television sets were rented so they could watch the official ceremony half way around the world. [p 8]

Firstbrook enjoyed his time with the “wonderfully diverse mix of people, from six-year-old schoolchildren to great-grandmothers in their eighties,” noting that the young are becoming more and more educated and the quality of life is improving even in this rural area of a developing nation. He also reports that he suspected “that some of the revelers were not conforming to the strict lifestyle expected of Seventh-day Adventists.” It appeared to him that some had local beer secreted on them. He was unsure of which individuals were actual relatives and which were neighbors attracted by the party.

Connections that span the globe; inter-religious relationships; ethnic diversity; education, new technology, and change. The world in which the Obama family and other Adventists live today is so different from the world a century ago in which the Harding family celebrated one of their own becoming president of the United States.

Note: The page references are all cited from The Obamas by Peter Firstbrook published 2011 in the U.S. by Crown Publishers, a division of Random House in New York City. It is distributed by the major bookstores and online booksellers. You will save money if you get your copy from a used book store.
by these admirable men and women will always be noted as they testify of God’s providence, grace and mercy for all mankind. To the many unsung missionary heroes who left North America and Europe and those who gave willingly to fund such ministry to carry the Third Angels Message across the globe, I salute you all for giving to the Lord.

By the way, God is sending the fruits of this labor back to America and the First World in the form of Seventh-day Adventist immigrants and workers who bring back the message of truth hope and salvation to a secular society which has lost its way.

I was elated to hear that Obama won the US presidency and even bought Ford motor vehicles for my wife and me ☺ … Viva Obama viva! ♥

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago
Reminding us of Warren Harding's affiliation with Adventism also reminds us that he was probably one of the worst presidents this nation has known.

Horace Butler 3 weeks ago
Leave it to you, Elaine, to be the fly in the ointment. I will admit, however, that I'm not comfortable with the penchant for "name dropping" and horn tooting in the SDA Church. When I pick up the Review, I'd rather read about missionaries and their adventures; or about how the truth is being distorted in many of our churches, and how we can guard against it; rather than about a famous person visiting one of our institutions, or about how much aid ADRA gave to victims of the latest disaster.

By the way, I thought Dubya was the worst president we've ever had. That's what my customers keep telling me.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago
There were many "Harding" physicians: one, a classmate of my husband, another was president of LLU at one time. Most never discussed their president relative, and for good reasons.

I agree that Dubya was at least one of the worst presidents. Isn't it interesting to see all the complaints laid at Obama's feet that he initiated? How soon people forget. I regularly receive (and delete) emails telling of his getting us into the two wars, and most other ills in the American society for the last 50 years!

George Tichy 2 weeks ago
In the last debate, Rick Perry (aka DybyaII) had the nerve to say that it's Obama's fault that in the past 30 (or was it 50?) years the salaries of the middle class stayed basically stagnant, while the rich's salaries increased over 350%.

Apparently Obama started his plot at a very young age....
And many will certainly still vote for the Texan cowboy...

Trevor Hammond 3 weeks ago

Well here's a Warren Harding quote I came across: "It is my conviction that the fundamental trouble with the people of the United States is that they have gotten too far away from Almighty God."

Maybe that's why some didn't like him, huh! (...and probably because he was a republican too, limited govshop and all)

♥T

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

I was born only a year after he died, but I just finished reading about 7 pages about him, and he was probably the most corrupt president ever. Ever hear of the Teapot Dome? A number of his appointees were indicted and imprisoned for graft, and he was also involved in bootlegging. As for Adventist ties, it was entirely unmentioned in the lengthy biography.

Claiming God is still done today as it guarantees vote with all the other Christians. Notice the problem that some are beginning to have in the Deep South about Romney. If the Repubs can't carry the South, they know they will never win.

Trevor Hammond 3 weeks ago

"A number of his appointees were indicted and imprisoned for graft, and he was also involved in bootlegging.

See what happens when you leave the Church!

♥T

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

Some of those involved individuals (Folkenberg) were re-invented, redeemed, and reinstated in SDA positions, while others continued working in the church.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

Evidently you are unaware of the many similar incidents in SDA history: The Folkenberg affair; the children's video program initiated in the Columbia Union where the SDA church lost several million; the Davenport Affair in which the SDA conferences were heavily involved; the "secret funds" donating money to several G.C. officers wives, and more. Those are just the tip of the iceberg. Of course these were all active in the SDA church!
George Tichy

Elaine,
The "people upstairs" must love your memory!!! kkkkk

Trevor Hammond

One doesn't necessarily have to be out of the church to leave the church. There are many non-believers and unconverted souls right within the church, who are one in spirit and song with those embracing worldly sinful living. These too have left the church but just don't know it. Just take a look at many 'atoday' commentors and see how many have left Adventism and embraced Badventism and the level to which they have stooped.
♥T

Elaine Nelson

It must be very assuring to be in a church where all the sinners are either outside or should be. Who is left in the church that has no sin?

Seminary Student

Wow, that is a nice history. Elaine, you also know your history. Are you a history teacher?

Elaine Nelson

Simply a student of history.

Trevor Hammond

Seminary Student - Sir,
There is a huge difference between history and malicious gossip.
♥T

George Tichy

That's true and correct, they are hugely different. Isn't it so sad, though, that what some people try to lable as "gossip" is just mere history?

Elaine Nelson

It is not malicious gossip when it is true. Have you not read of these events? How long have you been an SDA member? These were widely known when they occurred and only the non-member of...
those who could not read, nor did not personally lose lots of money would not know about these. Do a little research and report back.

Folkenberg was forced out for conduct unbecoming a church officer. He received preferential treatment for selling his house in Georgia and he was involved in a scheme to get Adventists to switch to MCI long distance so he could get a commission.

Pastor Folkenberg was involved in a situation where it was unclear whether or not he had inappropriately used his position as GC president in order to influence people in a way that financially benefited him. Pastor Folkenberg chose to resign as GC president rather than allow the church to be dragged further into a scandal and/or into a lawsuit.

Read more: http://wiki.answers.com /Q/Why_did_Robert_Folkenberg_quit_as_president_of_the_General_Conference_of_the_Seventh-day_Adventist_Church_in_1999#ixzz1abs2IVAh

[PDF]

Davenport affair
www.adventistarchives.org/docs/.../CUV19820915-V87-18__C.pdf

Check the Harris Pine Mill Bankruptcy to see how the church, given a 5,000,000 business was able to run it into bankruptcy in a very short time.

Trevor Hammond 3 weeks ago

Many INDIVIDUALS within Adventism too have erred in judgment or have inadvertently made choices that have not been acceptable especially as representatives of Christ. Many of us (sinners) have been guilty of dishonoring Christ at one time or another. So to use isolated incidents, even if some of the facts are true, is still malicious gossip when these misdemeanors are used to discredit Adventism (or used for a secondary purpose to discredit or cause hurt or shame). The Lukewarm Laodicea 'condition' spoken of in Rev 3:16 makes no claim that the Christian Church and in particular the Seventh-day Adventist Church are full of 'perfectionists' ready for heaven. As I have mentioned above, the church has many a sinner from all walks of life who come to the 'hospital of Christ' for salvation. Trying to make the Folkenberg incident look like a Jimmy Swaggart saga only shows (in my opinion) an attempt to engage malicious gossip against Adventism. While one may seek put allegations and gossip column news on the front pages of Adventist History one can very well also put them in the pages of the History of Sinners Book to. Truth can be used very well to rub salt in wounds and also like I have said be used as malicious gossip when trying to discredit Adventism or the individuals concerned. A mountain out of a molehill is malicious gossip in my opinion...

I can mention another malicious gossip attempt which someone alluded on another blog regarding the Rwandan Pastor and Son convicted of been participants in the terrible Genocide atrocities committed in Rwanda by trying to associate their actions as been part of the Adventist Church. Here again truth used as malicious gossip. In keeping with topic I would suggest that most people would have some sort of ‘dirt’ in their family history but yet still their story remains a remarkable
one like the Obama’s. The Adventist Church membership is no exception…

♥

Horace Butler
3 weeks ago

So Elaine has proved . . . what? That mankind has a fallen nature and people do stupid things. Big deal. Peter denied Jesus, Judas betrayed Him. It is all irrelevant as it relates to one important fact: truth is still truth. The fact that professed Christians do foolish, and sometimes evil, things does not change the truth as it is revealed in Scripture. I'm not a Christian because the church is composed of perfect people; I'm a Christian because of Jesus, who was and is perfect. He is my standard of morality, not any pastor, leader, or other church member. Until we can look beyond the failings of our fellow church members to the Source of truth, we will continue to be disappointed and cynical, and maybe even lose our way.

Elaine Nelson
3 weeks ago

It's your money, pay it for whatever you choose; but one should have a little interest in how his money is used; otherwise, simply give it and trust it will be used as you wished.'

Edwin A. Schwisow
2 weeks ago

Monte: I was fortunate to grow up in a missionary Adventist family, and our circle of friends continues to include many fellow missionaries, including several who have served in Kenya and taught members of the Obama family. One of the most virulent criticisms leveled against the current American president is his apparent tolerance for the coexistence of Muslim and Christian, Muslim and Jew—that somehow he surely must be a Marxist Liberal Reactionary Muslim—a subversive several times over. Conversely, perhaps America is fortunate to have a president, at this time, who understands that followers of Islam and followers of Jesus need not view religicide as the natural will of God during times of crisis.

George Tichy
2 weeks ago

Adventist roots??? WOW... and I thought he was a Muslim... (just kidding, of course!)
Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

It's amazing how some Adventists will strain credulity to find a public figure who "may" have some Adventist ties. The article fails to demonstrate anything worth reporting.

Horace Butler
2 weeks ago

It is so rare that you and I agree on anything, Elaine, that I could not refrain from saying that I do agree with your first sentence above. I find it embarrassing (not that we agree, but that some go to great lengths to find a SDA connection to the rich and famous).

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

Horace, there are more that we likely agree on, we just haven't explored all the possibilities yet!

George Tichy
2 weeks ago

You guys remind me of the ongoing "negotiations" we see happening in Washington.... kkkk

Trevor Hammond
2 weeks ago

RE: Adventist roots?? WOW... and I thought he was a Muslim... (just kidding, of course!)
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“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free”
E.G.W. (Prophets and Kings, cp. 31, pg. 369)
-----
Such a profound EGW statement which I think would include those from the Muslim community as well.
♥T

John Mark
2 weeks ago

I found the story quite interesting and those of you embarrassed by Adventists pointing out connections to famous people seriously just need to chill. Nobody's saying this is the most important story in the world... it's just interesting trivia and history, that's it. Such negativity... Spectrum or Adventist Today could post a YouTube clip of kittens or rainbows and it wouldn't be long before some of you drew a connection to Adventist corruption and how you’re embarrassed to have ever been an Adventist.
Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

This is like "six degrees of connection" which shows that anyone in the world could be connected to another by only six individuals. Anyone here could do the same and be connected to Obama, or any movie star.

John Mark 2 weeks ago

Not really. Half the story is talking about his grandfather, which is two degrees of connection. I imagine the Obama's in Kenya celebrating his election would beg to differ that their connection is irrelevant. Also the story wasn't written by an Adventist but by a BBC reporter. Are you suggesting that he got paid by the church to put this in his book. Of course it's not like it matters it's just an interesting piece of trivia, but some of you think everything written must be ever so important...

Ella M. 2 weeks ago

John Mark,
A mature response--I agree with you. It's an interesting bit of trivia and kind of nice to know. What I get from the story--written by a reporter--is that Christians and Muslims can live together and be found in the same family. I think that is hopeful and I like hearing about it. It is also interesting to know the influence Christians could have had on the family.
Elaine, I can't really believe you are this disagreeable, but a very smart, well-read lady who likes to debate.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

If disagreeing with someone makes them disagreeable, then that's me. I am not someone who always agrees simply to be agreeable. Debate? Isn't that what blogs are for?

John Mark 2 weeks ago

But do you always disagree simply to be contrarian? That's the question. I just don't know why you would be offended by an innocent piece talking about Obama's Grandfather and Adventist missionaries. I found it interesting and if someone else doesn't then they don't have to read it. But whatever...

Richard Worley 2 weeks ago

Elaine, as an 87 ("born a year after Harding died") year old iconclast, I admire you. However, you need more balance on Harding. He has been significantly rehabilitated. True, it will be a long time before he gets off the bottom rung of presidential rankings, however, he pardoned E. V. Debs--when Wilson let him rot in prison, he got an 8 hour day for steel workers, showed strong leadership in disarmament (contrary to the isolationist image tacked on him), established the
Comparison to later presidents was not a factor when Harding was evaluated.

Yes, the series on Prohibition was a very informative historical documentary, Ken Burns is always excellent.

Harding's tenure pales in comparison with some later renegades, notably Nixon. All had a great facade and hidden secrets usually stayed in the walls of the White House. No longer is that the case where every move is scrutinized, something impossible a few years ago. Harding was probably blessed to die BEFORE the scandal broke.

No, I never knew of a Review article on Harding, only what I learned from history, and all history is biased, although there are some excellent historical scholars who have written on presidents.

I knew several of the Harding generations, and he was one seldom mentioned. The Harding family name was known both before and after the president. One was president of LLMC for a time, his wife, Florence was also a physician, and several generations have always had a physician, also.

The apparent urgency of the Review or other Adventists to associate a prominent person with the church is because they want to appear very respectable? This might have been the reason years ago, but the article seemed to be going to extremes to find a small bit of information that tied Obama's family to Adventists.

Maybe we should return to all the many missionary stories about the all-Adventist island: Pitcairn. Seldom mentioned today.

"Leave it to you, Elaine, to be the fly in the ointment. I will admit, however, that I'm not comfortable with the penchant for "name dropping" and horn tooting in the SDA Church. When I pick up the Review, I'd rather read about missionaries and their adventures; or about how the truth is being distorted in many of our churches, and how we can guard against it; rather than about a famous person visiting one of our institutions, or about how much aid ADRA gave to victims of the latest disaster."

Emphasis supplied by me! Good points, my friend.
Thought this an interesting page of the book also, page 127...

The New Imperialism
Richard Gethin, the first British trader to settle permanently in Kisii, in south Nyanza, complained that Carscallen and his other missionaries were "more interested in trading in buffalo hides" than in saving souls. He also claimed that their mission houses, far from being havens of spiritual devotion and learning, were used mainly to store skins and other trade goods for export:
Preaching of the Gospel was conspicuous by its absence. Carscallen would see an old Jaluo [Luo] native asleep in the shade of a tree. He would approach him, put his hands on his head and if he still slept, give him a kick on the backside saying, "Son you are saved and you can thank the Lord it is me who has saved you; if it were one of the others you would be condemned to terrible torture when you died." With this, the convert would be roped into carrying a load on the next safari.36

For the young Onyango Obama, the arrival of the white missionaries provided an exciting diversion from the monotony of village life. Onyango was only eleven when Carscallen established his first mission in Gendia, but according to Onyango's last wife, Sarah, he was fascinated by these white strangers from the beginning.37 Sarah says that Onyango was always different from the others, even as a young boy. As a child he would wander off by himself for days on end and nobody would know where he had been nor would he tell them anything when he got back. He was always very serious as a child; he never laughed or joked around, or even played games with the other children. He was, and would always remain, an outsider.
A statement from Washington Adventist University yesterday (October 10) announced that WAU is no longer involved in plans to operate a campus in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, on the former campus of Atlantic Union College because the AUC board has voted to break off these arrangements. The agreement had been developed last year and finalized early this year with approval by the decision-making bodies of both institutions. It was the result of a decision by the New England regional accrediting body to end the accreditation of AUC due to the lack of financial sustainability.

The plan was for WAU's South Lancaster campus to begin operation this fall and take on all or most of the AUC faculty and staff, providing continued classes for all of the students enrolled there. Authorities postponed the approval of this arrangement forcing the opening to be delayed and a number of the students ended up transferring to WAU's campus in Takoma Park, Maryland. WAU had early on provided a method by which the academic credit for class taken in South Lancaster last school year was assured under WAU's accreditation in Maryland.

There is no indication at this point as to the reasons for this latest decision. It does appear that it will be difficult if not impossible for AUC to regain accreditation and continue to operate in any form. The faculty and staff were all let go on July 1 and several have already accepted jobs at other institutions, including some who are now employed at WAU.

The full statement as published by the Columbia Union Conference magazine The Visitor is republished below.

Statement: Update on WAU Branch Campus at Atlantic Union College
Published 10/10/2011

After several months of talks with Washington Adventist University (WAU) in Takoma Park, Md., to operate a branch campus at Atlantic Union College (AUC) in South Lancaster, Mass., the Board of Trustees for AUC in a meeting on Wednesday, October 5 voted to suspend any further negotiations at this time after the institutions were unable to reach an operating agreement.

The talks with WAU began when AUC was informed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges that its accreditation would be discontinued for financial reasons.

AUC and its constituents will now look at other ways to maintain the mission of Seventh-day Adventist Christian higher education in the Atlantic Union Conference territory, which includes the New England states, New York and the island of Bermuda.

Washington Adventist University will continue to honor the arrangements in place that have facilitated the smooth transition of the former AUC students enrolled at the university. Both institutions remain committed to providing Adventist Christian higher education to their students.

WAU wishes AUC well in its efforts to continue to provide an Adventist Christian higher education in the Atlantic Union Conference.
The end for Atlantic Union College was really written when Dr Lawrence Gerrity left 20 plus years ago. With the forced elimination of Dr. Virginia Jean Rittenhouse, a woman known for her “Pursuit of Excellence” and higher standards, the words were written ever so succinctly on the walls of every building on campus: Mene, mene, Teakal Upharson!!!

Gerrity heard the message loud and clear and left to save, or infect, a more financially salvageable university. Despite mighty efforts, and in some cases no effort at all, no administration was really able to stem the tide.

The institution has been paralyzed by the Adventist Apartheid for nearly three decades and despite the best efforts of a number of administrations, and the worst efforts of other administrations, for those of us who have observed and reported on this process, it has not been a question of whether it would fail, but rather WHEN IT WOULD FAIL, as in run out of money and students.

It is an institution that somehow thought it could survive the lowering of moral standards that lead to the alienation of a constituency that once built the institution in “The Holy City” of South Lancaster, Mass. Founded by Haskell, academically improved by Ivy educated Prescott and managed to prosperity by so many others, it is not the destiny anyone deliberately chose but slowly slipped into cross-purposes with Atlantic Union conservatives who really have Faith in Adventism, the literal Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

To add insult to injury, with the demise of the musical Icon, Dr Virginia Jean, by the Gerrity administration, the alumni simultaneously turned their back and with parental endorsement, more than 150 students left AUC... many of them to WAU, the new home away from home for Dr Rittenhouse. It has NEVER recovered from that blow and loss of support, despite the efforts of all the King’s Horses and all the King’s Men (and even all the King’s purported financial support).

I doubt it will EVER re-open as the debt is formidable and the deferred maintenance unsustainable. Just the power plant would require a million dollar plus overhaul and upgrade and there is very little, if any support, from AU constituents or AUC alumni. The sum of the parts FAR exceeds the value of the whole!!!

I could itemize a host of issues that compounded into failure and we could argue the cause and effect for another decade, but never have so many known, for so very long, despite the desires of so few, known that “It was dead, just not buried”.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

Gailon, would you please share why Dr. Virginia Jean Rittenhouse and then Dr. James Bingham were forced out of AUC?
Horace Butler  
2 weeks ago

Having grown up in another area of the country I had not followed the history and fortunes of AUC until I relocated to their "backyard." But my eyebrows were raised a number of years ago when I found out that they were offering sports scholarships. It was clear to me at that time that they had lost their way. For an institution that was originally dedicated to educating young people to "finish the work," to descend into the trivia of the sporting scene was a symptom of poor leadership. It was only one part of the equation, of course, but it was an ominous sign of things to come.

Trevor Hammond  
2 weeks ago

I'm so glad that Traditional Adventism as a whole did not succumb (so far) to the 'influences' from within and without which are perpetrated by certain elements...
♥

Truth Seeker  
1 week ago

"But my eyebrows were raised a number of years ago when I found out that they were offering sports scholarships. It was clear to me at that time that they had lost their way."

Today's culture, unfortunately, is obsessed with sports including many in Adventism. Money could be saved both in SDA and public schools if the addiction to sports were cured.

Kevin Riley  
1 week ago

Considering the obesity 'epidemic', perhaps we should not give up entirely on sport. I agree that focusing entirely on competitive sport - and winning - is not healthy, but a good program of physical activity can be a valuable part of a school program.

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
Salina Pastor Arrested on Sex Charges

Submitted Oct 7, 2011
By Atoday News Team

Salina pastor arrested on sex charges

By Chris Durden KWCH 12 Eyewitness News
4:46 p.m. CDT, October 7, 2011
SALINA, Kansas

Police in Salina arrest a pastor on several sex crimes charges. Investigators say the 54-year-old is the pastor of Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The pastor was arrested Thursday night. He was booked into the Saline County Jail on charges of rape, aggravated indecent liberties with a minor and aggravated criminal sodomy.

Eyewitness News is not naming the pastor until he is formally charged. That is expected to happen early next week.

Story published here:

Salina, Kansas Seventh-day Adventist Church website

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago
This probably is indicative of much wider reporting being accepted. In past years, the victims were hesitant to accuse a pastor for fear of not being believed. This is a change in respecting the story of victims.

PleaForJustice 3 weeks ago
As with all of these scenarios involving these types of allegations, the Pastor's trial by media coupled with his leadership status in the Christian Community will send him down in flames prior to his ever stepping foot into a court room. And then, the Judicial system, often far more concerned with high conviction percentages than with justice will finish him off. I set as a juror in one of these "rape, aggravated criminal sodomy, and aggravated indecent liberties with a child kangeroo courts" and, as a man, the manipulation of DNA evidence and testimony towards a conviction scared me to death. Men every where (Seventh Day Adventists, Catholic Clergy and even atheists, alike) should be ever vigilant and genuinely frightened as, in this paranoid, "hang 'em high" society, just the slightest whisper of an accusation from a child who possesses no awareness of or even any concern for consequences may indiscriminately send any innocent one of us to the "big house" for a very long and horrific time. And, even if by some bizarre turn events a man is not convicted for these dreadful charges, the accusation and media attention would still destroy his life forever.
William Noel 2 weeks ago

Situations such as this present us with the challenge of truly representing God by working for the redemption of the individual charged. This is far more than demanding repentance and letting him become spiritual roadkill when we see no obvious or lasting change. It is a test of those who know the person charged and if they understand the process of redemption enough to keep ministering God's transforming power over time.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

Any man who teaches K-12, pastor, or health specialist is especially apt to face such an accusation once in his life. It is a tragedy for the accused and possible victim. Once accused, his profession has essentially been destroyed.

OTOH, many victims previously were ignored and feared to reveal the truth. There are no winners. But the older individual is responsible when dealing with younger individuals as they are often in a position to take advantage of an immature person who looks to an older person with trust.

Alle 3 weeks ago

But wait...there's more...not posted in any other known SDA websites: Dateline Arkansas or Georgia?

Pastor arrested on sex charges! FRIDAY AUGUST 5 2011 Archive (13107)
Friday, August 5, 2011

Chapman

#A pastor at a Jonesboro church was arrested this week on child sex charges, and is being held without bond in the Clayton County Jail.
#Samuel Walsham Chapman, 58, of Decatur, was arrested Thursday and charged with child molestation, solicitation of sodomy and enticing a child for indecent purposes.
#According to Clayton County Magistrate Court records and the church's web site, Chapman is a pastor at Riverdale Seventh-Day Adventist Church, in Jonesboro.
#Church officials could not be reached for comment, Friday.
#Warrants allege that Chapman took a 15-year-old boy to the parking lot of Tara Stadium in March, and performed a sexual act in front of him. Chapman allegedly asked the boy to perform oral sex on him, but the boy refused, according to an arrest warrant in the case.
#The boy told his mother and grandmother about the alleged incident, May 4. Officials conducted a forensic interview with the boy, which included a matching description of Chapman's genitals, according to arrest warrants. Charges were filed Aug. 1.
#Chapman made his first appearance, Thursday, in Clayton County Magistrate Court. He was given a bond of $5,000 on the solicitation charge. Bond was considered, but denied on the other two charges.
#His next court appearance is an Aug. 18 preliminary hearing.
Kathy Jefcoats

Elaine, you are right, there are NO winners. The innocent accused become guilty, the guilty are guilty. The victims are ruined. Sad.

Alle

3 weeks ago

Sorry the picture didn't come thru. He's black FWIW if anything. Looks a bit like Pipim... do all black SDA pastors cut their hair the same way??? Is there a standard pastor look these days per culture? There used to pretty much be when I was growing up SDA. How would I know now? I wouldn't. That's why I asked. The ones on tv pretty much do.

Gailon Arthur Joy

2 weeks ago

I can say that in New England, pastors have always met their match and have been reported and dealt with. In many cases, the pastor has also been redeemed and moved on to make significant contributions to society.

I would propose it is a question of acceptable church standards by the constituency. Zero tolerance leads to exposure and zero career, and even some jail time. Unfortunately, similar cases from our "more tolerant" western constituencies have frequently resulted in payment of claims and transfer of the problem, unresolved.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AURreporter

Vernon P. Wagner

2 weeks ago

If this allegation is true, Pastor Chapman needs psychiatric care. Performing a solo sex act in front of a 15 year old boy in a parking lot is more bizarre than a Congressman in an airport restroom.

Trevor Hammond

2 weeks ago

What if he is gay? Then perhaps he could say that he was 'born that way'?
♥!

Elaine Nelson

2 weeks ago

Careful, it may begin to sound like self-hatred.
Ellen White warned about the dangers of 'self abuse': the habit of which Cultural Adventists have been very touchy and fond about. Now just see where it can get you! What a sicko thing to do to! ♥\'\n
Kevin Riley

Trevor

Is there anything in the church you can't link to the 'evil' of not being a traditional SDA? Just what positive contribution to the church do you hope to make by constantly pointing out that the non-traditional SDAs are wrong about everything? Ellen White also warned about criticising fellow church members. That seems to be a cause few in the church from any side are willing to take up.

Elaine Nelson

People who eschew anything sexual have been called "Adventist nuns" or Adventist monks--who took vows of celibacy. At least they are safe from sexual accusations, or are they?

justew

Salinas Pastor Charged and named:

Birger Draget, 54, was charged with 21 different counts which include indecent liberties with a child, rape and sodomy.


Trevor Hammond

Hey Mr Riley

RE: "Is there anything in the church you can't link to the 'evil' of not being a traditional SDA?"

Mate, I didn't mention the word 'evil' Sir. It is a known fact that, even right here on this website, many cultural Adventists have expressed dismay with regard to EGW's counsel on 'self abuse' which they in turn entirely dismiss her as a messenger of the Lord, just based on this alone! Traditionalists do not. The church faces a number of dangers as a direct result of First World cultural Adventism which is regressive in my view in terms of spiritual growth as a Church and as individuals for that matter. Those who reject the 'self abuse counsel' will generally reject IJ etc. Anyway, it is Traditional Adventism which is insulted most of the time here on these blogs. I'm just saying that cultural Adventism has major issues...
Tom 2 weeks ago

Trevor, are you ever taking a far reach when you state that those who "reject the self abuse (masturbation) counsel will generally reject the IJ (Investigative Judgement)." I added the words in parentheses so everyone will know what we are talking about.

For starters, claiming that, to use EGW terminology, "self abuse" was what caused this pastor to do the outrageous thing he did is ridiculous. I'll do more than express dismay at what EGW said about it back then. She was a contemporary of her time, and held views on the subject not out of step with religious beliefs of that day. Kellogg was obsessed over the subject and even wrote a book on how to tell if a boy is doing it. While EGW and Kellogg were close on issues of health until their fallout later, she never endorsed that book even though she expressed a similar position.

On this one she has been proven wrong. But of course there are those who, constantly looking backwards into the wrong end of the telescope, will use such antiquated counsel, and jump to all kinds of conclusions. Falls right in line with equating anyone gay with pedophiles, adulterers, murderers, and the like.

Vernon P. Wagner 2 weeks ago

Maybe we need more of those chastity devices designed by Dr. Kellogg. I hear iron spikes worked well to inhibit a 'stirring of the loins.'

Alle 2 weeks ago

http://www.news-daily.com/news/2011/aug/13 /church-responds-to-pastors-arrest/ #The governing authority over a local church congregation has publicly decried the Aug. 4 arrest of one of its members on child sex charges. #Samuel Walsham Chapman, 58, of Decatur, is being held without bond in the Clayton County Jail on child molestation and enticing a child for indecent purposes charges. He has a $5,000 bond for solicitation of sodomy in the same case. #Chapman told police he worked at Riverdale Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Jonesboro. At the time of his arrest, Chapman was identified as one of the pastors on the church's web site. #However, church officials said, Thursday, that Chapman was a volunteer and has been removed from that position. Elder William L. Winston, executive secretary for the South Atlantic Conference, said the church's governing authority is cooperating with the police investigation. #"The South Atlantic Conference does not condone child abuse in any form," said Winston. "At the time of his arrest, Mr. Chapman was not an employee of, or selected for his volunteer position by the South Atlantic Conference. Mr. Chapman has been suspended from volunteering any further with the church."
Warrants allege that Chapman took a 15-year-old boy to the parking lot of Tara Stadium in March and performed a sexual act in front of him. Chapman asked the boy to perform oral sex on him, but the boy refused, according to the warrant.

The boy told his mother and grandmother, May 4, about the alleged incident. Officials conducted a forensic interview with the boy, which led to the filing of charges Aug. 1.

Winston said families should continue to feel comfortable reaching out to their church for support and guidance.

"The conference wholeheartedly encourages families to talk about child abuse, and to rely on the church for support, love and spiritual guidance in dealing with these very serious issues," he said. "As such, the South Atlantic Conference provides counseling services through our children's and families' ministries to encourage healing through faith in Jesus Christ."

According to court records, Chapman is being represented by Atlanta attorney J. Kevin Franks. Franks did not immediately return a call Friday seeking comment.

Not real sure why this turned into a discussion of masturbation when its a pedophile issue but, as hopefully 90% of men know, and what is the latest figure? 60% of women know, it's not. No matter what an anally eccentric 19th century doctor (whose medical education was about one year) and a 19th century woman with a third grade education and a legendary head injury thought. Oh I forgot, there's a pedestal involved.

And the recommendation for females caught in this "terrible sin" the physician recommended carbolic acid! Genital mutilation here in the U.S.!

I read with interest - as I am dealing a lot with the topic professionally - until I read the name.... I know Birger and are in dismay, no matter whether he is guilty or has been framed. And - he will remain on my contact list, whether he is guilty or has been framed, either way he needs support and help.

A couple of general points though:

- To mix the issue with the topic of masturbation and/or homosexuality is quite obscene in my view, these topics have nothing in common. Neither are masturbating man (read Archibald Hart's statistics on the practice among Christian married men!) prone to acts of sexual violence, nor are acts of sexual violence of males against boys ("sodomy") usually due to homosexual inclination.
- Whatever happened, the victims need to be believed and helped.
- Having said that, an accused person needs to be presumed innocent unless otherwise proven (oh, by the way - see the blog on death penalty in this context)
- Last but not least.... at least in my home country the percentage of perpetrators among Adventist ministers I am aware of (when it comes to child sexual abuse), is higher than the known percentage of Catholic priests guilty of that crime. The celibacy myth sometimes put forward is just that! However, our preoccupation with sexual sin may be a clue to some explanation, why these things tragically do happen - even among the saints.

Thanks.
Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago

The most effective and usual method for ridding the SDA denomination of its trusted employees is to accuse them of "sexual immorality." Regardless of the undisclosed reason, this accusation has been used almost since Adventism began. Many powerful men have been sent to the Siberia of Adventism by this accusation. Once accused, there is no amount of evidence that removes the stigma. See David Dennis, Jiggs Gallagher, even back to the 30's a union president was summarily dismissed because of this accusation, often on the flimsiest reasoning.

There can be misuse of funds, "insider trading" and collusions with the highest SDA officials for profit, but sexual immorality seems to be the worst of all sins.

Andreas Bochmann  
2 weeks ago

Elaine, I agree that is tragic (I am aware of some details of the Gallagher case). Yet, this talks about our difficulty to deal with sexuality... It is at least equally tragic that many female victims (they are the majority) are not believed, ostracized, disfellowshipped if they go public, while pastors, elders, pathfinder directors (all perpetrators I have personal knowledge of are/were in some kind of leadership position - except one) remain in their office. It is a complex issue, and complex issues usually suffer in simplifying public debate.

Robert Hieb  
2 weeks ago

I am saddened by the news about pastor draget, I have heard him speak on several occasions he seems to be a decent committed christian pastor, if this true about him I can only imagine the years of struggle he has gone thru, we still know so little about what makes this happen, obviously we need to protect our children but it would really be wonderful if there could be diagnosis and treatment before overt acts occur.

Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago

We do not have all the facts, but it is very troubling, considering the many Catholic priests and their bishops keeping "mum" for years. Adventists have had this trouble for decades, but there seems no easy method to prevent, except all adults working with children should have other adults present at all time which may be a deterrent.

Maybe if there were more female pastors this would be far less likely? It would certainly be much more rare.

Jan Schuleman  
1 week ago

We need to keep this pastor and his family in prayer. I have known him and his family for years and remember his very first sermon just fresh out of seminary. The devil is working overtime, as he knows his time is short and he will do whatever it takes to take God's people down. We need keep
all of our pastors-lay workers in prayer as they go into homes to study with people. Maybe it would be safer to them never to go alone, but with someone. God is still trying to get us ready to go to heaven and we need to pray more diligently. This incident is unfortunate and only God knows all the details and is always there to hear the cries of our hearts and to forgive us. We all sin and fall short of the Glory of God and I am grateful his love and forgiveness is unconditional.
Millennials: Ready or Not, Here They Are

Submitted Oct 4, 2011
By Lawrence Downing

Millennials: Ready or Not, Here They Are!!!

Millennials: Those born between 1982 and 2003
Number of: 95 million plus
Methods: Networking
Effect: Disrupt existing orgs and institutions

The book, *Millennial Momentum how a new Generation is Remaking America*, by Morley Wineograd and Michael D. Hais (Rutgers University Press, 2011) serves as an informative guide to organizations and individuals that wish to better understand and navigate the ever-changing American cultural landscape. The Seventh-day Adventist church, its members, pastors and administrators might learn from the authors’ research and findings.

In the first chapter, the authors compare two speeches by two United States presidents, Lynden Johnson and Barack Obama. Each was delivered to an audience that gathered in the University of Michigan football stadium. President Johnson gave his speech in May, 1964. President Obama was the graduation speaker 46 years later. Both presidents challenged their hearers to be part of rebuilding a new America and urged them to participate in revitalizing our country. The hearers were implored by each president to restore a sense of community and restore American’s values.

When President Johnson spoke, he addressed the last of the GI Generation, who in 1964 were at the height of their generation’s political influence. These people lived at the end of the Great Depression. They had witnessed the threat of fascism. The president couched his remarks in military language, vocabulary his audience well understood. He asked whether his audience was willing to join him to create the Great Society; to join him in the battle to enable every citizen to escape debilitating poverty; to join the battle to enable all people to experience an enduring peace so that all will experience a richer life of mind and spirit.

The authors observe that President Johnson’s audience did not rise to the challenge. The Baby Boom Generation arrived on campuses the next semester, not to climb on the president’s band wagon, but to join the parade to protest the president’s war in Vietnam and the beliefs of the GI generation. The debate over abortion and other civil rights would divide the nation for the next forty years.

President Obama’s speech, in contrast, was delivered at the beginning of a new era of economic upheaval and political debate. He, as the president elected through the efforts of the Millennials reflected the attitudes and beliefs of this new generation whose numbers were greater even than the Boomers. He assured his hearers that government would help Americans respond to change. He identified what he termed “two strands of DNA.” One segment of society believes in a limited government; another affirms that government, though limited in its power, can help us respond to change. He said there are some things that can be done only when we work together, and government must keep pace with the times.

In addition to calling for togetherness of purpose, the president called for people to engage in discourse that did not question the motivation or patriotism of those on either side of the debate. This, he said, is what makes us Americans. We can, at the end of the day, look past all our
differences; all our disagreements and still create a common future.

For his third point, the president called people to engage in public life. He invited them to take up the call of President John Kennedy who announced the creation of the Peace Corps on the very campus where President Obama addressed the students. In this call, President Obama stuck the resonating chord: the members of the graduating class, the millennials, wanted to serve. They wanted to be engaged and they expected to make a difference.

Prior to the president’s speech, Alex Marston, a member of the senior class, addressed his classmates. He pointed out that while they want change, they are afraid of it. He noted that he and his classmates grow uneasy as the world around changes. This statement provides opportunity for the book’s authors to ask a defining question: “was the country ready to embrace the changes the president advocated or would it continue to adhere to the beliefs and practices of its past?” This is the point where the challenge of the millennials intersects with the life and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist church, or any other organization. How will we respond when millennials interact with Adventism?

Wineograd and Hais, in their study of the millennials, inform us that this, the largest of any other previous American generation, will influence every aspect of society: how we learn, vote, entertain ourselves and how we worship. Millennials value community. As a diverse group, they are unified in beliefs that will change America and all its institutions. They are oriented toward one another, as evidenced by YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Yammer, LinkedIn, and numerous other social networks.

In the workplace, millennials open up corporate life. They consult with their friends from other companies. They are not driven by individual values, although they have values. They are highly pragmatic. They solve personal and societal problems by working at the local level. Their methods are to bring change from the bottom up. They do not respect a top down management style. The millennials will manifest the same disruption in American society that we saw in the Arab spring and in the music industry. They will shake up every institution that thinks things can be controlled or directed from those at the top. It is not that they reject government. No, they look to government and other institutions to provide guidance and assist to implement policy.

Wineograd and Hais are emphatic: Millennials cannot be ignored! If America is to have a clear sense of where it is headed in the future it is essential to have a clear understanding of the behaviors and attitudes that drives this generation. Is it any less important for the Adventist church and its leaders on every level to be less concerned? Less aware? And if we continue on our present course what then?

If Wineograd and Hais are correct in their conclusions, the Adventist church is in for a major institutional shock as millennials mature and make their presence known in the local parish. We have not prepared our congregations to incorporate the thinking that millennials hold. Our hierarchical management style is incompatible with how millennials think and function. How our local congregations (remember — millennials work from the bottom up!) respond to the opportunities that the millennials provide may well determine whether we thrive as a Christian organization or whether we become the equivalent of the Shakers or Christian Scientists, as one more obsolete or irrelevant organization on the religious bone pile.
Major institutional shock? Maybe not. If we keep driving millennials out of the church at the same rate we have been in recent years, by the time they take control there may not be much church left for them to take over. The Shakers, Quakers and other religious movements faded quickly into insignificance and oblivion because they became spiritually irrelevant to their youth. This should be an alarm call to finding ways the church can become attractive to them, a requirement many congregations will not be able to achieve.

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago

The current "Occupy Wall Street" message that is being duplicated all across this nation is representative of the young and willing, but largely unemployed and untapped potential for changes that will be made in the coming years. Refusing to listen to their needs and concerns could mean the death of the institutions that will not listen; top-down management is dead in the water; corruption in the highest echelons of government, business and even the church does not go unnoticed. They are demanding a voice in the boardroom and a place at the table.

Ella M. 3 weeks ago

Elaine,

But those in the baby boomer generations (myself included) thought they would change the world too and held protests. But most of them ended up being more materialistic than the "greatest generation" before them who went through the war. The BB spoiled their kids and gave them everything (generalizing here) and that has influenced the current generations in society. I don't think it is BB so much in the church that has held on to traditions but those before them who write a lot of letters. But on the other hand, SDAs are always behind the general society, so maybe they, too, were out of touch.

Horace Butler 4 weeks ago

I'm not convinced that pigeonholing groups according to when they were born (Baby Boomers, Gen Xer's, etc.) is all that helpful. "People is people and folks is folks." Teenagers are teenagers, and always have been. Some get into trouble and some don't. Those who grew up in different eras have had different experiences, but they've all had to learn to cope with the challenges of that era. Human nature remains the same. Some fit the descriptions attached to their "group," and some don't. Reading the Bible and the stories of the various characters, most of us can see ourselves somewhere in there, whether it be the boastful Peter, the Pharisaical Saul, or the scheming Judas.

Are we really "driving millenials out of the church," or is it that we have failed to properly ground them in the truth? I suspect the latter. The generation previous to mine was good at spelling out the rules, but not so good at articulating the principles underlying those rules. I studied them out on my own, as we all should be doing, anyway. My kids are in this group of so-called millenials. They haven't been driven out; they participate and have relevant contributions. Adult hypocrisy and parental abdication of responsibility in training children to discern truth from error might be a bigger factor than irrelevance. The true gospel commends itself to those who are searching for truth. It doesn't need bells and whistles to make it attractive. The attempts to make it user friendly have not impressed my "millenial" kids. They abandoned the youth tent at campmeeting a number of years ago because it seemed more like a rock concert than a religious service. Young people in every era want honesty, integrity, and a relevant message. It they want entertainment they can get
that anywhere, but expect something better at church.

William Noel  

Horace,

Good observations, but I view their combination and impacts very differently. The Adventist Church in general has a big problem with confusing tradition and rules for gospel truth. Where this is the predominant view the youth are leaving in droves with some estimates being in the area of 50% and higher. I am aware of a number of churches that used to have a considerable number of youth, but today the youngest member is retired.

I agree with you that those who understand the Gospel are less likely to leave the church. But where the church is dominated by those more devoted to tradition and rules than truth it can be very difficult for real belief to survive. I have lost count of those who were believers but whose faith could not live in such a church. I doubt I would be in the church today without the opportunity to be part of establishing a new congregation of true believers.

Horace Butler  

I think that "those more devoted to tradition and rules than the truth" is a good description of a large number of church members, and they will not be able to teach their children the basics of the gospel. And it is kids without a firm foundation who are most likely to drift away. This not too different from how things were in the time of Christ. Only we are more at fault because of our easy access to the Scriptures, something the average Jew of 30 AD didn't have. And since parents have failed so miserably in this area of spiritual education, we need church leaders who can take up the slack, at least as far as possible. There's a limit to what they can do, of course.

William Noel  

Horace,

You are absolutely correct about our need to both have a personal relationship with God and to teach our children to have such a connection. Even so, I am hesitant to accuse the parents of millennials with failure to do this because many of those parents were raised in churches and families where devotion to doctrine and tradition substituted for a connection with God. So the problem has been growing for generations.

Elaine Nelson  

How does one, even a parent, teach their children to have a relationship? It's like telling them they must be a friend to the neighbor boy or girl, regardless of their personal feeling. One may love someone they have never seen, only what they've been told, but better that children not read too much of the Bible as they will find a God that orders killing and worse. Carefully select what they read even in the Bible. But, sooner or later they may discover what was left out. First, there must be trust and how can that be built with a figure only known on paper, the Bible pages?
Most children were taught about Adventism via the home, school and church. Realizing they were far from uniform, it is no wonder that more children leave the church when they become adults. They must find their own way, and no amount of urging changes their impressions learned early in life: behavior was the representation of Adventism.

**Floyd Petersen**

Change is frightening to people. After serving on a city council for 20 years - 10 of them as mayor, the most important thing I learned is that people fear change the most. Change is the unknown. Fear that we are not in control. We get comfortable with things as they are. Change requires energy. We would rather "suffer ills while ills are sufferable" than face the unknowns. Yet - a survey asked the question of a sample of seniors "If you could do one thing over - what would it be?" the most frequent answer was "take more risk".

**Gailon Arthur Joy**

“Our hierarchical management style is incompatible with how millennials think and function. How our local congregations (remember — millennials work from the bottom up!) respond to the opportunities that the millennials provide may well determine whether we thrive as a Christian organization or whether we become the equivalent of the Shakers or Christian Scientists, as one more obsolete or irrelevant organization on the religious bone pile.”

Our Hierarchal Management Style has never been compatible with the needs of a church endowed with the Three Angels Messages and will eventually not stand in the way as the foundation for the Loud Cry message so essential for a dying world.

A Heirarchy is specifically designed to maintain the status quo and to funnel the resources of the church through the hierarchal channels so frequently defined as “the regular channels”.

The irony is that as the hierarchal order solidified at the turn of the other century, the counsel spoke against it and repeatedly found ways around it to get the work done…and it continues to be the way so many projects are initiated and implemented, That will become the very future of Adventism as we transition from Laodicea to the Remnant. And Millenials are uniquely educated and armed with technology to move this concept forward, but must first find it’s “First Love” commitment.

Rest assured, it will come, with or without the Millenials and will be transgenerational. And rest assured that Adventism will not become obsolete nor irrelevant from now through to the end of the Biblical Millenium and the beginning of eternity safe from the blight of sin. Believe it, live it and share it.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter
The current "Occupy Wall Street" message that is being duplicated all across this nation is representative of the young and willing, but largely unemployed and untapped potential for changes that will be made in the coming years. Refusing to listen to their needs and concerns could mean the death of the institutions that will not listen; top-down management is dead in the water; corruption in the highest echelons of government, business and even the church does not go unnoticed. They are demanding a voice in the boardroom and a place at the table.

Having just recently visited with and spoken with several dozen “Occupy Wall Street” spokespersons at their encampments, the one thing that is clear is they have no clear message and have as many issues as there are people.

There does seem to be one very definitely rare element missing in this group of purported reformers and that is they have no real singular purpose and are close to anarchistic in many ways.

Some are best described as “libertarians” with no intention to conform with social norms or accountability in any respect;
Others have a varied but clearly “entitled” socialistic agendas that does seek to require the transfer of wealth from the haves to the have-nots, of which they feel they are a part of;
There are others that I met best described as “independently wealthy” who sparingly share their resources with this movement but unsparingly share their left of center views, usually in a leadership role and most certainly as a speaker role;
There are a few with a clear and concise message that sincerely wants the government to hold the real “wall street robber barrons” accountable for their sins against American society during the making of the mortgage crisis turned worldwide financial crisis;
And a growing number are simply utilizing the growing crowd as a foundation for their own agendas, such as unions and non-profit organizations;
But, the majority are just there for the big party and complain against anything that crosses their mind just to justify their presence and document that they “were there” much as so many memorialize “Woodstock” as an important moment in their past lives.

What is clear is that none seem to have real answers and do not appear to be grounded in any form of Christianity. In fact, each camp seems to have consistently a “medical services tent”, a “legal services tent” and a “meditation tent” with heavy emphasis on a variety of eastern meditation and native American meditation seeded with the fairly indiscriminate use of marijuana as the sedative of choice. Alcohol does not seem to be in vogue but is present in various forms usually disguised as water bottles or flasks.

As with any movement there is a mixture of the sincere and the profligates but there seems to be a unanimous disgust with traditional American Institutions, especially financial and governmental.

One thing is clear: there demands are not taken seriously and before this un-organized mass of humanity is given a “voice in the boardroom and a place at the table” the institutions they abhor will crush this rebellion to sustain the “status quo”. Count on it, just as asuredly as the Vietnam War movement and the "hippies" that became its mantra were obfuscated and largely ignored .

And this is not the natural extention of the Islamic “Arab Spring” as it is clearly is not rooted in any religious purpose nor does it have a clear moral compass. Nor is it the “moral equivalent” of the Taxed Enough Already quasi organized movement a/k/a Tea Party. The tea partiers work and find solutions but the “Occupy” crowd preferably does neither!!! They view themselves as social reformers by profession.
Does it raise the social conscience and move us toward accountability and lay a foundation for the false reformation that seeks a moral solution, laying the foundations for the rise of the Remnant and the Loud Cry? One really never knows how events play out, but this crowd will definitely not get a “voice in the boardroom and a place at the table”. Believe me, these victims of various issues “need not apply”, but will be exploited by some then isolated and ignored!!!

They will be crushed and left to find their own way in life, frustrated and insatiable but many will likely find their way into a message of hope that we very definitely should share with them. I believe they will find Heaven a much better place than Shangri La!!!

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

Ella M. 3 weeks ago

Interesting report. Are you an AU student or employee? How did you get your information?

Ella M. 3 weeks ago

Response to original post: I am not so sure that the M generation stands out in wanting to make a difference. Most of those on this post probably dislike the top-down authoritarian style where a few people make decisions for the church.

Recent generations can attest that youth were even more ignored than they are now; and, of course, women were part of the wallpaper. Any suggestions by both groups were ignored until we just stopped trying. Maybe more of us stayed in the church than now but became inactive. I attended my senior year at an SDA school after being baptized. At a recent reunion not many came, and I suspect that perhaps half the class or more no longer attended church. It was the same with college as we heard the reports of others. This drop-out is nothing new, it’s just that the church didn’t seem to care so much in the past.

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.

Clifford Goldstein: The Light and Fallen Humans

Submitted Oct 3, 2011
By Ervin Taylor

From his bully pulpit in the Adventist Review, my good friend Cliff Goldstein has again waxed philosophical in an article entitled, “The Room and the Light.”

Cliff says he visited the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC which stimulated him to recall the distinction the late 18th Century Enlightenment German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, made between phenomenon (the world as it appears to us) and the noumenon (the world as it actually is).

Cliff then proceeds to do a quick analysis of, and commentary on, the implications of the distinction between these two concepts. To quote Cliff, “the exhibit at the Hirshhorn showed how much of what’s out there comes to us interpreted by our mind, a fact that leads to the conundrum of trying to cross the divide between reality as it is filtered, distilled, modified, and maybe even polluted by our minds, and reality as it truly is, apart from our minds — what Kant call the Ding an Sich, the thing-in-itself (a concept that I’ve come to doubt is even feasible).”

At that point, Cliff introduces a favorite concept of Adventist conservatives and fundamentalists; ‘fallen humans.’ To quote Cliff: “As fallen humans seeking to understand reality, we have three strikes against us getting it right: 1) the limits that our minds place on how the world appears to us, 2) the subjectivity of how we interpret what does appear, and 3) the tiny slice of reality ever within our view” He earlier suggested, “Because we’re so limited in what we perceive, it’s silly to make grand assumptions about all that we don’t which is mostly everything, based on the little that we do.”

What is Cliff’s solution to this fundamental problem? We must, “live by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7), because sight is not only subjective, limited, and contingent — it’s temporal as well.”

What always amazes me about this approach is that those who use it never seem to apply the implications of the category of ‘fallen humans’ to themselves. I assume the reason for this is that unlike other ‘fallen humans,’ they (the ‘nonfallen humans’ or ‘exempted fallen humans’?) have acquired some special source of over-information and over-understanding not available to the rest of us ordinary fallen humans, which exempts them from the consequences of being fallen. They have what they call ‘special revelation’ that allows them to by-pass the limitations of the rest of us. What this point of view seems to ignore is they also are ‘fallen humans’ and their purported understanding of how the purported ‘special revelation’ works is also subjective and highly limited. Cliff says it’s, “silly to make grand assumptions,” and then proceeds to do that very thing in most of his writings which, among other things, sometimes turn into jihads against current mainstream science.

Next time I talk to Cliff, I think that I will suggest he should go back to major research university and get a Ph D., degree in philosophy. He would have no problem in such a program since he is a smart man. In a good graduate program, he might just learn something that will help him realize what the differences between his current theological phenomenon (classical Adventist theology) and a larger theological noumenon (theology informed by the real world). As a concluding aside, Cliff is always identified as the ‘Editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.’ I’ve always thought that truth in advertising would suggest that his title should be ‘Editor of the Institutionally-Sanctioned Official Adventist Theology Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.’
Ella M.  1 month ago

I am quite in agreement with what Cliff states about the subjectivity of fallen human beings—all of them. I really don't see that he has made any exception for himself (did I miss something??) And I don't see any admitting of the writer's own "falleness" or subjectivity. So it is sort of Irv's word against his. What he seems to be saying is that he has chosen faith. He hasn't claimed any "special revelation."

I would suggest that if one wants to discuss "special revelation," certainly atheistic science claims to have its own "special revelation" far and above what they think any believer has. To use the writer's own words it "allows them to by-pass the limitations of the rest of us." May I suggest Irv go back to school at some seminary and get a Th.D. to help him understand and perhaps be more sympathetic to the other side and enjoy a larger view of contemporary Adventist teaching. I would suggest Andrews University. But he may want to be more ecumenical and chose Liberty College instead. I also understand that Amazing Facts offers some sort of degree or certificate as well.

Ervin Taylor  1 month ago

I didn't realize that Ella M. had such an excellent sense of humor. What an interesting experience that would be: first Andrews, then Liberty College, and then Amazing Facts. Down, down, the rabbit hole.

Kevin Seidel  1 month ago

The problem of perception goes even deeper than Cliff realized. I'm interested in what living by faith means, especially when the perception flaws are in the mind. Wouldn't that affect our understanding of faith? How do we deal with a flawed faith?

Joe Erwin  1 month ago

I must confess that "fallen" humans, and the concept of "sin" no longer make any sense to me. My wife says I am an atheist, but I am not so sure. I certainly am not an "evangelical" atheist, in the sense that I feel called to convert all the people of the earth to my view. I just don't find myself able to honestly believe that God is as described by most believers. Of course, some people do harmful and inconsiderate things to others. They shouldn't. Treating others as you wish to be treated, in fact, giving all animate and inanimate beings due consideration seems to me to be an adequate ethic. I cannot believe that I entered my time on earth as a guilty party headed for eternal damnation and fiery hell and reliant on a confession of faith in something pretty incredible to avoid eternal torment and reap the joys of paradise. All I can advise is that people who are able to believe in something like the SDA message just believe it and celebrate the joy of faith and what they regard as salvation. Science as a method of gaining knowledge and understanding can be applied by anyone to any problem. But things that are "spiritual" or in some other imaginary non-physical dimension cannot really be addressed by anything other than suspending one's rationality. So, just do that, if that is what works for you. But if you commit to science as a method, you have to recognize that observations, and measurements, and research designs are often flawed in some
sense. Only with much research and many repetitions do general principles survive. Interpretations based on physical realities (fossils, morphology, genomic sequences, etc.) must change in the light of other evidence. Evidence builds. Approximations of truth emerge. Understanding is refined. It seems to me that attempts to live up to some ethereal spiritual standard just leaves one frustrated and confused. I can sort of understand how someone might thrive on the joys of faith without over thinking it, while living in an objective physical world.

Ella M. 3 weeks ago

Joe,

What you describe is a distorted picture of Christianity, yet it is one that most secular nonChristians hold (and some Christians). Actually I have yet to meet anyone who was not self-centered to some degree, and that basically is what "fallen" means. It is a state of being that makes us unsuitable for life in a new earth. Yet through Christ all (not just those who have heard about Him), have access to salvation through the Spirit. Only if they reject that Spirit of love will they be blotted out. For the saved it is "pleasures for evermore." Of course, you know that Adventists do not believe in eternal torment.

I am glad that you choose to not usually demean the beliefs of others. For me, I would have to "suspend my rationality" to believe that my computer evolved or created itself and much more human life.

If one is not confused at some time in life, they aren't living.

Seminary Student 1 month ago

That would be good, Ervin amazing facts four month training costs $4,200, they teach you on how to give bible studies and they have a class called "ask the Pastor" where students ask questions to Pastor Doug. Here at Andrews is a little bit more expensive and I don't think you would like the cold weather. If you have a good GPA you would only need to pay about 60k.

William Noel 4 weeks ago

Seminary Student,

Why would anyone want to go to one of those schools when they can get all the training (and power!) they need from the Holy Spirit?

I want to suggest that you read the book "Unchristian." It's a real eye-opener about how the cultures of North America relate to Christians. One of the big lessons is that traditional evangelistic outreaches drive more people away from the church than they attract. So we need to use other methods to win souls. When I asked God that question and to show me the ministry He wanted me to have, the answer He gave me was a surprise. I lead a team at my church that does home repairs and other things for people. That ministry is bringing people into the church without preaching or giving a Bible study. That ministry with others has our church growing faster than all other churches in the conference except Spanish-speaking churches.

I'm going to make you a prediction: when you seek the Holy Spirit and accept the ministry He gives you, there's a greater than 90% chance that ministry will have nothing to do with preaching, teaching, giving Bible studies or any other traditional outreach method.
Elaine Nelson  
1 month ago

Those graduates of Amazing Facts are like the old army's "90-day Wonders" one wonders how they got such quick promotions!

Having Doug answer all the questions would surely avoid the influence of several teachers and guarantee duplicates of Doug. At only $1,000 a month, it's still not cheap, but then what should one expect--unless such graduates become their next pastor. Pity the congregation that is much better educated than such a pastor.

Joe, your suggestion of the world's best ethical standard--"Do unto others--" has never yet been improved upon. No matter one's religious belief, this can be applied to any and all situations. Of course, it has not, and there's the problem. It is much older than the Bible and is found in more than a dozen cultures throughout the world, testifying to its longevity as the most practical of all rules for living.

William Noel  
1 month ago

Erv,

I like your suggested alternate title for the Sabbath School quarterly.

Ron Corson  
1 month ago

To quote Cliff: “As fallen humans seeking to understand reality, we have three strikes against us getting it right: 1) the limits that our minds place on how the world appears to us, 2) the subjectivity of how we interpret what does appear, and 3) the tiny slice of reality ever within our view”

I have always thought that those three things are the greatest reason to accept the idea of universal salvation. Interesting to see them coming from Cliff!

Elaine Nelson  
1 month ago

Bingo! If we accepted those premises, it ultimately leads to universal salvation. Is there another possible conclusion?

Seminary Student  
1 month ago

I found one more school for our friend Ervin. It is Hartland College the president is Colin Standish. Pastor Doug in amazing facts has a class called "ask the pastor" and Colin Standish at harland has a class called "ask sister white". They even have "buggy rides". It is a 19th century village not Amish community, it is Adventist.
Ervin Taylor  1 month ago

Colin Standish has a class called "Ask Sister White." You must be joking. I didn't think conservatives had a sense of humor. But I am wrong.

Ella M.  3 weeks ago

Maybe it is through a seance!

Anonymous  4 weeks ago

mmm. "...the Institutionally-Sanctioned Official Adventist Theology Sabbath School Bible Study Guide."

I thought it was "GC's Best Money Spinner"!

Doctorf  3 weeks ago

When people like Cliff talk about "fallen" people I ask fallen from what? Some perfect state? Please provide me with one bit of evidence that life including people were in some "perfect state." The concept of sin to me is a feeble theological attempt to describe why humans who can act with such grace, compassion and love can also act horribly. The interjection of this mysterious "sin" factor hardly explains the dichotomy in human behavior.

Seminary Student  3 weeks ago

Doctorf, so you don't believe in what people say "the devil made me do it"? Interesting comments. What would be your explanation for human behavior then? Do think that human beings are perfect? Do you see humanity reaching to a higher esphere I guess you disagree with what we believe about wickedness is increasing. Do you consider yourself a Seventh day Adventist Christian? according to the bible and to experience there is something really bad in our world and that is sin. Today, as I was walking I saw a man who could barely walk, he had some big tumors in his legs. I felt so bad seeing that person suffering, I told my wife, we live in a world of sin. You can not look around you and say that everything is normal.

Elaine Nelson  3 weeks ago

Seminary Student,

What would people do without the devil to blame for everything that is unpleasant? Do you believe that every action of humans is either caused by God or the Devil? That's an interesting categorization to be able to simply divide everything in two classes.

When you eat your breakfast, did the Devil or God make you do it? When you study, who is behind it? Driving your car; talking with a friend; scanning the internet; watching the news? Can each of these be put as either the action caused by God or the Devil? If rain falls on
the raisin farmer and destroys his grapes; but it falls on the orange grove which is beneficial to their growth, who is behind that event? Very simplistic ideas.

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<th><strong>Doctorf</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Seminary Student,</td>
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<td>Good questions.</td>
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<td>I think some neurological explanations for human behavior are adequate and are being illuminated via neuroscience. Schizophrenia can be explained in part by protein mutations in the post synaptic density of glutamate neurons same with autism. With regards to very evil behaviors I suspect they are genetic as I do not think people necessarily choose to be evil. For example Aspergers syndrome where a person may be an intellectual genius but have no &quot;social intelligence.&quot;</td>
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<td>Getting more evil? No, it has always been around but we have much more effective 24 hr/7 ways of communicating poor human behavior. Thus, I suspect the the number of bad deeds remains as a constant % of the human population.</td>
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<td>When you say &quot;everything is not normal&quot; what is your reference comparison? If its the garden of eden perspective that is hard to digest as that story to me is a myth.</td>
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<td>When you saw a man walking with tumors, I would remind you we are living longer and healthier than any time in our past due to advancements in medical, nutritional and exercise sciences.</td>
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<th><strong>John Mark</strong></th>
<th>3 weeks ago</th>
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<td>Taylor,</td>
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<td>Conservative Christians certainly do not claim to be un-fallen, we claim to be fallen humans who have encountered God's grace. Also those of us from an Arminian perspective would not claim that this is a special gift unavailable to the rest. The Holy Spirit is working throughout the entire world desiring to lead all to truth. God is not willing that any should perish. You may disagree with this perspective of God and truth, but it is disingenuous of you to claim that we deny our human fall, or that we view others as also being unable to encounter the same grace we have. You know full well that Goldstein does not hold to either of those positions. It should be possible to argue with Goldstein's theology without mischaracterizing it.</td>
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<th><strong>Seminary Student</strong></th>
<th>3 weeks ago</th>
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<td>Elaine , I was kind of joking with the idea of &quot; the devil made do it &quot; many of us like to blame</td>
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someone for the bad choices we often make. We all have "freewill" and according to what we put in our brains is how we make those decisions. But my main issue is looking around us, we can see children dying of cancer, etc. The bible says that death is the result of sin, that God does not enjoy seeing us suffer, that he suffers with us. But the hope that as a Christian I have is that death will be destroyed and Paradise will be restored. That is biblical, and I have chosen to live by those principles.

Ervin Taylor

To John Mark: You address a serious point. I'd like to respond to his statement but I'm not sure I understand it. I can't locate where I said anything about Cliff not accepting "our human fall, or that we view others as also being unable to encounter the same grace we have." Would John Mark please rephrase his concern so I can respond.

To SS: You say that "The bible says that death is the result of sin." Being a Seminary Student I trust you know that it is Paul who said that. Might I ask you "What kind of death" is Paul talking about? Being a Seminary Student, surely you have the correct answer to that question.

John Mark

Ervin Taylor, perhaps I misunderstand this statement:

"I assume the reason for this is that unlike other ‘fallen humans,’ they (the ‘nonfallen humans’ or ‘exempted fallen humans’?) have acquired some special source of over-information and over-understanding not available to the rest of us ordinary fallen humans, which exempts them from the consequences of being fallen"

In the parenthesis you offhandedly suggest that "they" (who I assumed to be Goldstein and his ilk) view themselves as "nonfallen humans." Next, you portray them as believing in a truth source "not available to the rest." You know full well that no Conservative Christian views himself as a "nonfallen human." I think you should also know that from Goldstein's perspective the "over-information" and "over-understanding," (IOW special revelation given to us by grace) is certainly "available to the rest of us ordinary fallen humans." To put it another way: no conservative Christian views themselves "unfallen humans" and only Calvinists view themselves as having something unavailable to the rest.

Ervin Taylor

Thank you for the clarification. You are quite correct that one would think that non-Calvinists would not view themselves as having some special source of truth. My comment indeed suggested that, in my view, my good friend Cliff and others who share his views behave as if they have some special source of truth direct from God, i.e., they think that their interpretations of Biblical texts provides “special revelation” to them which is superior to that of some other human understanding of that text. Now that is not surprising—we all have a tendency to think that our interpretation of some passage of the Bible is the correct one. However, the rational ones among us know that humans are very error prone and have a difficult time getting anything right about the kinds of topics usually subsumed under what we call “religion.” In my view, my good friend Cliff says that he is very limited in his understanding and then proceeds to give a lie to his own statement by saying that he has a
source of “special revelation” by which he gets around that problem. Might I ask John Mark where my interpretation of this line of argument has gone wrong? (May I make sure that it is clear that I am not questioning Cliff or anyone else’s sincerity or intelligence, just their world view.)

John Mark 2 weeks ago

You are right that Goldstein and other conservative Christians believe in a connection to Divine truth that is superior to human understanding. Your only mistake was in claiming that we view this connection as something "not available to the rest." You are also correct that we believe there is a right way to interpret Scripture and a wrong way to interpret it. While, we would not claim that there will be complete agreement between those who interpret the Bible correctly we would argue that it will show beliefs to be false and others to be true. You seem to hold the modern view that any theological claim to be right and others wrong is hubris.

On a different but related note, I wonder if you have ever read, "The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology" by Fernando Canale. In this book, he attempts to construct a distinctly Sola - Scriptura (which he believes will also be a distinctively Adventist) hermeneutics approach. I haven't read much of the book yet, but I'm taking the class from him, so I have a pretty good idea of the approach. I don't know that I agree with all of it, but he's definitely quite thought provoking. The debate between progressive Adventists (and I don't mean in the standards sense, I mean in the broad theological sense) boils down to a debate about hermeneutics. If we don't understand each other on that then we're just talking past each other because we have different foundational principles.

Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago

I have been remiss in not having immediately noted the excellent observation that Mr. Mark made that the "debate between progressive Adventists . . .boils down to a debate about hermeneutics." I would very much agree. He continued "If we don't understand each other on that [point] then we're just talking past each other because we have different foundational principles." Well put. This is why I share Mr. Mark's interest in Dr. Canale's views and why I published a review of one of his books. One question that this observation generates is what happens in a faith community when you have members who make different assumptions about these foundational principles. If these differences can not be reconciled, what should happen? I would very much like to known Mr. Mark's view of this.

John Mark 1 week ago

Dr. Taylor,

I read your review of Canale's book which is part of why I brought him up. I look forward to his response. He attacks liberal theology and classical theology on its timeless ontology, which is a realm conservative Adventist theology, to my knowledge, has not ventured into before. I would be interested to see the liberals and conservative dialog on this deeper level.

Your final question leads to a question of identity. That is, what makes a person a Seventh-day Adventist. The question as I see it, is: why is there a Seventh-day
Adventist denomination. If one's beliefs go against that reason for existence, then it makes more sense to leave and fight against the organization than stay and try to change it. So I would say one's hermeneutic needs to at least fit within the purpose of the church. I don't yet have a full answer to what that purpose is, but it certainly seems like it would include central doctrines of Protestant Christianity plus the Seventh day Sabbath, soon Second Coming, and Sanctuary doctrine.

I should make it clear that I don't favor purging the church of those who don't agree with our identifying doctrines. I think that is mostly a straw man. People like Goldstein, I think, are mostly just puzzled as to why these people choose to stay. I do think the Church should make these core beliefs a requirement for ministers, as it would not be honest to spend the money of faithful Adventists to support a non-Adventist message. It also makes sense to require belief in our identifying beliefs in order to become an Adventist. However, I don't know if that is a terribly important issue, since there really is very little reason one would want to join the church if they didn't believe the message - and that is one reason why I don't see liberal theology succeeding in the church.

---

Gregory & Sharon Matthews 3 weeks ago

Joe: It is good to welcome to this web site my High School friend, former college roomate and one who is a distinguished scientist in his field. Was this your first post? This one is my second.

As to "eternal torment:" I would not want to accept a god who preserved people's lives so that they could be tortured. Well, enough of that. I hope to read more of your comments.

---

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

Seminary Student:

The belief that each of us has "free will" is a complete fallacy. We are all subject to our parents and training, education, national origin, and much more. Are you contending that the slave "boy soldiers" in the horn of Africa have free will to choose or reject their being conscripted into the army? Does a underage girl in Afghanistan have free will to choose NOT to marry the man her family has chosen? There are hundreds of like situations were free will is a hollow concept devoid of practicality.

---

Doctorf 3 weeks ago

Elaine,

Well said and I might add there is a genetic component to behavior that we are just starting to understand. When further illumiated the "free will" discussion will get to be very controversial.
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<tr>
<th>Gailon Arthur Joy</th>
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<td>What is clear is that the Blog Author applies the same arrogance he seems to embrace and embue upon Clifford Goldstein. I found no &quot;evidence&quot; that Goldstein found himself &quot;unfallen&quot; or otherwise exempt. This entire premise is the paranoid asssumption of the &quot;learned author&quot; who is commonly declaring himself of superior intellect and to &quot;have acquired some special source of over-information and over-understanding not available to the rest of us ordinary...humans,&quot; and even exalting himself above the Most High as it relates to Creation and the Biblical record. In fact seems to deny the very existence of the Most High. The author can consider himself worthy of being ignored!!!</td>
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<th>Doctorf</th>
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<td>Well Gailon preachy comments as usual. I re-read Dr Taylors summary. It is intended to evoke a serious discussion and is not an attempt to declare himself of &quot;superior&quot; intellect. Just because Dr Taylor does not reinforce your faith position he denies the existence of the Most High? Where do you get that from?</td>
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<th>Doctorf</th>
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<td>Trevor, Indeed, but I don't need Dr Taylor to discredit Dr. Goldstein. Goldstein does that all by himself. I read his SS quarterlies for yrs until I finally just threw them into the fire. Actually they are good for something.</td>
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<th>Trevor Hammond</th>
<th>3 weeks ago</th>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorf Sir, You address me yet as you can see I have no other posts on this blog 'sides this one... Howbeit? ♥T</td>
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<th>Doctorf</th>
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<td>Trevor, I see your point. I was responding to a comment that said Mr Joy has a right to his opinions. Yes he does. My point was after reading the OpEd offered by Erv and reading most of his OpEd's I do not get the impression that he uses the forum to impress anyone with his intellect.</td>
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Ah yes, Doctorf - I have forgotten again, that the pen is mightier than the sword: but the
censure is even mightier...☺. By the way, phobia of the Sabbath School Lesson by many
cultural Adventists isn't really warranted. Just take a look at this quarter's study on
Galations. I would humbly suggest that it may not be necessary to throw the baby out
with the bath water.
♥T

Trevor Hammond
3 weeks ago

Trevor Hammond
3 weeks ago

Oops typo - throw the baby out...

Doctorf
3 weeks ago

Trevor,

I suspect that these lesson quarterlies are useful to some but I have outgrown them. I
know what Adventists believe and my journey has become more of a quest to understand
why people of particular faiths believe the way they do. Getting back to the point of the
OpEd posted by Dr. Taylor, Cliff says we are not to trust sight as its subjective and
temporal, we are to have faith. I do not understand for the life of me why if one is
skeptical of the senses why they would not apply the same skepticism to faith as it too is
subjective and temporal.

Trevor Hammond
3 weeks ago

Hey Doctorf - Sir,
So would it be too much to ask for maybe just 3 good reasons for thrashing the SS
Lesson.

Here are some good reasons why I enjoy the SS lessons:
1] It has drawn me into a closer walk with God in Christ Jesus.
2] It encourages personal daily bible study and searching of the scriptures
3] Keeps me out of mischief and provides a daily systematic structured study which we
can share and thereby edify one another during the weekly discussion, especially when
a humble, teachable and pleasant atmosphere prevails during classes.

On the other hand, what then would you suggest? That we publish a cultural Adventist
study guide customised for the average culturalist guru? It could contain but not
limited to issues like:

- evolution, theistic evolution, death before sin, homosexual activity ain't sin,
  humanism is the way, liquor is slicker for the believer, adornment enthusiasts,
  affluenza positive persons, once saved always saved cheap grace supporters, tithe
  is for non-thinkers approach, turf the IJ-Sabbath-SOP-1844-Sanctuary-faith-
  based-biblical-historical-approach to Adventism and go for a free for all atoday
  approach (albeit with censureship for Tradventists). Not forgetting the Cliff
  Goldstein is public enemy no. 1 for culturalists study guide...☺
William Noel

Trevor,
You illustrate the contrasts in how differently people view the quarterly. I am glad you find it useful. Personally, I find it too boring to give more than a glance. I get a far greater blessing from sitting down with my e-concordance and doing topical searches to see how things are described or used through the Bible. I've discovered some real gems that way.

Ervin Taylor

The reasonable ones among us will be able to consider the source of the denigrating comments and understand the mind set of the person saying it. Perhaps we really should feel sorry for them. "Doctorf" is smart and very able to evaluate the views of my good friend Cliff Goldstein without any help from anyone and especially from me. However, I must say that I am a little surprised that "Doctorf" still reads the SS quarterlies. Everyone I know has quit reading them a long time ago. Using them to start a fire on a cold winter morning has possibilities. I still skim them quickly to keep up on what the church establishment thinks the average "Adventist in the pew" is supposed to think and believe. (PS Cliff does not hold a doctorate as yet. But as I said he is smart enough and he would have no trouble getting one from a good institution. Perhaps back at Johns Hopkins where he got his MA.)

Doctorf

Erv,

You are correct, they are not on the top of my reading list. I get them sent to my home and not quite sure why I am on the mailing list. Maybe my dad put me on the mailing list in 2007 before he died as kind of humorous reprieve. I also get the PUC recorder always on time and never requested it but receiving the A-Today hard copies is a little more capricious. Sometimes I get them and sometimes I do not :). But, I will get that worked out.

From reading Cliff's comments on this blog and other things he has written he is no doubt an intelligent word smith and I can understand why the SDA review utilizes his talents. Cliff has very concrete views with regards to who is and who is not an SDA and I appreciate his honesty. With Cliff you always know where he stands. I suspect I would have a great time with him discussing theology and religion over the dinner table. I wish I could have the opportunity to meet him.

With regards to the concept of "fallen humans" I do not understand the theology because there is no clear frame of reference as to what the original state of human existence was in the "beginning." I certainly subscribe to the notion that we are "flawed" as biology is not perfect. In addition, if God is offering grace for our flawed condition I am in no position to reject such grace. When General Patton was paralyzed and in a hospital a catholic priest came to minister to him and the generals aide reminded him he was "not catholic." The General responded with "hell, look at me, I will take all the help I can get, please come in father." Thus, like Patton, if Gods grace extends to my flawed condition, I will take all the help I can get.
songbird 2 weeks ago

I think many on here might find the magazine "Proclamation" very interesting. The last issue had an article called "The Great Controversy Worldview" that I found not only interesting, but riveting. Of course the writer of the article and the publication formed the original charter, Former Adventist Fellowship. The website talks a lot about what I see on here. Colleen Tinker was the author's name of that amazing article.

Seminary Student 2 weeks ago

Interesting comments, I would like to know if our friend Ervin is so against almost everything that the church teaches. What would you like to see in our church? Should we get rid of the name? I know in your view six literal creation has to go, Sabbath? IJ. What would you like to keep if anything.

Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago

"Official" Adventism can proclaim anything that the church's political system can decide defines "official" Adventism. But don't expect many of us to accept the "official" party line. In practice, each local SDA church determines what "Adventism" means for the group of people associated with that church. In some Adventist churches, individuals must hide their theological objections. In other Adventist churches, such as one I attend, there is no need to hide your views as everyone is free to accept or not accept "official" Adventist theology, i.e., there is freedom of expression and belief. No one worries about what others believe. Would not everyone wish to belong to such an Adventist Church?

Ella M. 2 weeks ago

Doctorf, I think most of you realize on an intellectual level that the SS lessons are written for the world field and for people so varied in education, understanding, age, and mindset, that it would be impossible to meet all their needs. I think they do a great job considering the diverse readership. One doesn't have to use them, but they give the feeling of a global family.

You mentioned something important: "I think some neurological explanations for human behavior are adequate .... With regards to evil behaviors I suspect they are genetic as I do not think people necessarily choose to be evil. For example Aspergers syndrome where a person may be an intellectual genius but have no "social intelligence."

I agree with the roots of "bad behavior" in those who are mentally ill--it is like having a physical illness which may be inherited. For example those with ADD have a difficult time being organized or disciplining themselves. It can be a life-long struggle like Paul's dilemma. But God's grace is sufficient for one to live with it and still be a success in their sphere of influence. That is why we can't always judge one's Christianity by their behavior.

I once corresponded with a serial killer in prison. Voices told him to kill, and he felt he had no choice. In prison he became a Christian, and took medication. He said that the voices were still there, but they no longer bothered him--he ignored them and became a Christ
follower. He repented and was forgiven. He no longer had evil desires triggered by the voices. What I am saying is that God will save anyone who turns to Him and does not reject His spirit. (I tend to believe in universal objective justification.) Being "good" doesn't mean we are not "fallen" (theological term--find another one if you don't like it--try "selfish"). Whether one believes the Adam and Eve story to be myth or not--it is truth in a story. It means that God will find a way to save us in spite of our wrong choices. I believe He did that through His Son, Jesus, and they planned it before the foundation of the world so that all might be saved.

**Doctorf**

Ella,

Sorry to respond so late. I have been so consumed with grant writing, teaching, papers to write etc. So I don't know if you will see this. With regards to your pen pal, serial killers are not common and is linked to paranoid schizophrenia. Although this man was "converted" he also took the medication which is very effective in putting the "voices" aside. So I am not sure if it was the "conversion" or the "medication" which amelorated the desire to do such misdeeds.

I really enjoyed reading your view on A&E story. Your description is much like Marcus Borg's view in Reading the Bible Again for the First Time. The "truth" and counsel is within the story. That is God did not intend for such a state of affairs that we have today to be the norm. I whole heartedly agree.

**Elaine Nelson**

"I once corresponded with a serial killer in prison. Voices told him to kill, and he felt he had no choice. In prison he became a Christian, and took medication."

It was a combination of becoming Christian and taking medication, wasn't it? Having some reason to change his life and the medication made all the difference. Prayer works best when used with good medical advice.

**Philip Law**

At the base of this dialog lies the question of how imperfect beings get to know Truth. Does the notion that there is such a thing as Truth in itself a flawed cognitive exercise of futility?

Physics deals with relatively idealized simple objective realities perceived by imperfect minds including Newton, Maxwell, and Einstein, etc, its relative simplicity offers an interesting platform as a model to get at Truth.

Commonality of perception of physical phenomena irrespective of any single observer constitutes objective states of the physical world. Theories governing such phenomena are attempts to formulate the underlying working principles or Truth of the physical World.
A great assumption is the physical universe is comprehensible. The logic circuitry of imperfect human mind is capable of fathoming the working of that Universe. Hence the first step a physicist takes in studying physics is his assumptive faith that he can get at albeit in increasing degree of proximity to how the universe operates or the Truth of the Universe.

Conflicting theories are put to the test by experiments. The falsification of a theory gets at crucial deciding tests of competing theories. The outcomes of those tests are the ultimate deciding evidence of reality. The theory that best predict the state of our world at one space-time point from another point wins. It is Truth up to that moment.

Thus physics evolves from a gross descriptive of ancient time to the absolute rigid space and time Universe of Newton. Einstein extended Newton’s Universe to a relativistic space-time continuum framework of our Cosmos.

The Quantum phenomena resulted from one of Einstein’s postulates had the Grand Master perplexed for ‘God does not play dies.’ Nevertheless the quest for Truth in Physics marches on. On this point I argued that our God does not need an infallible Scripture to reveal His Truth. Only lesser gods require infallible scriptures to affirm their ‘truthfulness.’ As an extension to that assertion is there is hope that fallible human being can know the Truth just as Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle had brought human observation threshold to unprecedented precision.

Now the Truth of God includes but transcends the physical realm into the Spiritual realm. I like to open up that discussion to the Spiritual quest for Truth. Any taker?

Ervin Taylor

Mr. Law suggested that " . . . God does not need an infallible Scripture to reveal His Truth. Only lesser gods require infallible scriptures to affirm their ‘truthfulness." This is a very interesting point. I wonder if he would consider expanding on it. I think I agree but would like to make sure I understand the context..

Philip Law

Ervin,

I should have used the more conventional 'inerrant' rather than 'infallible'. Some obvious discrepancies of Scripture had caused some ex-belivers to throw out the baby with the bath water and turned atheistic or agnostic.

My thinking of our God not needing an inerrant Scripture arised from a dilema of teaching a Sabbath School class to a group of junior high students by using parallel gospel accounts of an event and ran into the problem of how to explain to them about obvious descrepancies among the Gospel accounts. Unlike adults, junior youth tend to see things more black and white.

While contemplating the dilema I thought of the apparent inprecision of a fuzzy ball picture of the
electron cloud surrounding a proton as the quantum mechanical picture model of the hydrogen atom being a more accurate portrait of the atom than the exact orbit of an electron around the nucleus. The wave equation of the s-orbital is exact but the location of the electron at any moment is probabilistic.

In stead of resorting to explaining away discrepancies due to translation or other 'alabis' I told the students that God is so great that He does not need inerrant accounts to affirm His Truth. Eye witnesses account of an accident scence is a sufficient paradigm to establish His Truth since He used fallible human agents to write down Spirit inspired Words of God in contrary to other religion or insecure Christians claiming inerrancy of 'scripture' in its original tounge. I did allure to the probabilistic model of the electron orbital. They were very receptive to the idea.

It seems profound but it is just that simple.

Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago

Anyone who seeks to explain theological topics that the most learned minds of Christian history have had trouble explaining to other learned minds and do a reasonable explanation of these topics to a group of contemporary junior high and high school students in an Adventist Sabbath School should be lauded and given some type of award. My hat is off to anyone trying to be intellectually honest while explaining traditional Adventist theology with a straight face before any teen age audience. (Now I know that those heading up GYC do this, but there are serious questions about their actual success rate in convincing their audiences of the logic of their arguments. They base their arguments on authority. But that is another topic)

I would think that there are many who would appreciate the approach that says that God does not need an inerrant Scripture. One might mention to these students (and adults who may not be aware of the fact) that the idea that the Bible is inerrant or infallible is not a Biblical concept at all but was an idea invented by apologists in post-Biblical times and mostly in the 19th century). Instead of explaining away discrepancies, accept them as the natural result of human fallibility.

I’m going to have to think a little more about the analogy between the concept of probabilistic model of an electron orbital and statements in scriptural narratives about certain events and concepts. My gut reaction is that this analogy has real possibilities. What do others think?

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

Whether inerrant or infallible, how does that relate to the common definition of the Bible as "The Word of God," something that cannot be found in scripture? For those who confidently believe that every word is the "Word of God" it poses a dilemma, yet is so commonly used as to be considered a doctrine.

David 2 weeks ago
Some in AT admitted openly their reservation to the Bible, to the level that is “another book”. Well this is not the first time that heard that (the secular atheism systematically attacked the Bible for centuries) what surprised me is the ones in AT, at one point of their lives were or are SDA, that is SAD. Honestly I ask my self what happened? It’s possible that they never experimented the saving power or the Bible? “The word of God is **alive and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”. My prays go for you that you can experiment the transforming power of the word of God.

Joe Erwin  
2 weeks ago

I suspect that my personal experience with God was as direct, profound, and valid as that of anyone else. As I've mentioned before, I eventually could not honestly sustain that experience. Subjective experience, regardless of how profound it may seem, is not a reliable substitute for authentic evidence.

For those whose subjective experience is sustaining, fine, far be it from me to discount your beliefs. But, for me, it just is unconvincing as a basis for accepting all that accompanies it. It somehow seems just immaginary.

Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago

Subjective experience is just that: it cannot be transferred or taught to someone else.

The Mormons get a "burning in the bosom" which is their subjective experience; Pentecostals also experience a highly demonstrative expression of the Spirit of speaking in tongues.

Many Protestants have such an experience with the Bible. Catholics get it in their adoration of the Cross or the Virgin Mary. Whatever floats your boat.

Joe Erwin  
2 weeks ago

Yes, and some people have overwhelming emotional reactions to rock and roll....

Joe Erwin  
2 weeks ago

But surely there must be something more reliable than the subjective experience. I am not a denier of subjective experience, I've had wonderful subjective experiences, whether attributable to something spiritual, visual beauty, ecstatic sex, the warmth of human kindness, or whatever. I think it has to be more than "whatever floats your boat." There is an element of self-deception and wishful thinking that creeps in if we rely too heavily on subjective experience. On the other hand, I can accept subjective experience as private and personal--and fascinating and unreliable, especially if asserted as EVIDENCE. The "I believe it because I feel like it is true" phenomenon.
Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

Joe, are we not in agreement that subjective experience is all that there is? You have described them. It is when such experiences are considered to be "taught" or the normative where most of the problems arise. Can one "order" such an experience?

Joe Erwin 2 weeks ago

Elaine, of course, "experience" implies private awareness that is exclusive to the person having the experience. As with any other kind of knowledge, there are big gaps between the actual phenomenon and the interpretation that is made of it.

Private knowledge differs from that which can be sensed by more than one person. Of course, one's interpretation of private experience can be reported, and the reports of private experience can be the data which are studied scientifically.

More on this later....

David 2 weeks ago

Being trained with rigor in research and medicine I can go any night to my bed and smile knowing that my pioneer work is saving at least 400,000 lives of newborn per year around the world. Two other original innovations already are also showing great results. So I know first hand what “evidence base is”. Being an adult and after tried almost every single think, I was privileged to experience (if you wanted to call subjective experience that is fine with me) the saving power of God. Nothing compares to that, the internal peace and serenity, the joy of sharing, and many other positive experiences. You are right the subjective experience is very personal is only between you and the Creator. Is like pain or love no matter how well is described it will never be understood until is tried. No wonder the blind man in John 9 stated "I Was Blind, But Now I See”

Joe Erwin 2 weeks ago

David, I'm pleased to know of your good work, and I am not in the least inclined to argue with your personal experience. It is possible that I would not understand or explain the experience in the same way as you do, but, it is also possible that I would--if I had the same experience.

Could it be that my countless earnest hours of what I thought were sincere prayer, along with years of scriptural study, spiritual surrender, deeply felt belief, were just not enough? I never really
believed in predestination, but perhaps what I had to offer was just a Cain's offering—not what God wanted. Could it be that many are called, but only a few are chosen? Regardless of what they say or do or believe? Perhaps my belief and surrender were too naive, or maybe, not naive enough....

Joe

David 2 weeks ago

Joe

Probably as you I tried almost all and I meet all kind of people (intelligent, brilliant, beautiful, millionaires, celebrities, presidents, poor, sick, comedians, etc) and I never wanted to change places with them. The only time I desire that, it was when I meet with a person several years ago. By the standards of this world she was not much, but she had a life full of joy, action and serenity. She introduced me to the Bible and to the Lord. When I decide to pray and ask for forgiveness, an overwhelming joy and peace came to me. Is difficult to describe but that was best experience I had. I learned the essence of Christianity (summarized by Paul. Faith Hope and Love) is practical. Maybe for some people this is an illusion but for me is a reality. This reality is contagious, some of friends even my wife also experimented the same. Don’t give up.

Joe Erwin 2 weeks ago

David and others, please do not be offended by what I am about to say. I do not intend to influence you to alter your faith experience in any way. If you are happy, good for you. Celebrate that, be joyful, and share love with everyone. Do, please, reject hateful and bigotry and live up to the teachings of your faith.

The experiences I had 45-55 years ago included great joy and peace, along with agonizing and soul searching over how to maintain that within the context of the church and its restrictive teachings that seemed to me to be somewhat at odds with the good news of salvation. Fortunately, I gave up on what I came to believe was a deceptive illusion. Even while my faith experience was strongest, I found the threat of everlasting torment versus the reward of eternal paradise to be disingenuous. I felt that the Christian life itself was terrifically rewarding, and I did not see how rewards or punishments had any place in the order of things. I found the endless hand-ringing over minutiae that is so common among adventists very unseemly and trivial. I feel so fortunate to have escaped all this guilt and sin and trivia. Instead, I have lived a full and rich and mostly joyful life with very few regrets. I'm so glad I did not spend my life avoiding wine and cheese and milk and various delicious foods. I'm so glad I did not spend my life trying to figure out how to avoid understanding the abundant evidence that amplifies understanding of our origins and environments.

I guess I check in here from time to time to see if I missed anything. My impression is that I did not miss much. The same discussions are going on here as at PUC 50 years ago. The world is a wonderful place, with all its beauty and diversity. How sad to judge people who have different orientations or perspectives, rather than loving and valuing them for who they really are.

Kendra, thank you for writing an important essay. Some in the church will agree with you. Others, especially those whose expressions of holiness are strongest, will claim you are being a tool of the devil. Don't let their hateful and bigotry discourage you. Your message is far closer to the message of Christ that is that of the homophobes.
Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago

What Mr. Erwin has said is totally on target, especially the last paragraph. We should all look forward to his continued enlightened comments. I also hope that Kendra will continue to write these types of essays. As long as we have holiness-oriented individuals evoking God as their authority, there will be a need to provide a balance that points to a larger perspective.

David 2 weeks ago

Joe because your post was referring also to me here is my reply.

My faith is founded in a solid conviction. My acceptance of Jesus as the Christ somehow was done with extraordinary events comparable to the ones of the apostle Paul. Already passed several years and I do not regret my new life of faith hope and love. I don’t have time to duel in restrictions because my focus is doing positive things. My life has been blessed in every single aspect and I was able to accomplish more that I could imagine. Still I have 25-30 years more of productive professional life and I plan to make count every single minute. I prefer to engage in positive projects trying to alleviate to the much suffering that exist in this planet full of diseases. I’m glad the days of thinking that we are product of random event are long gone. Also I don’t miss my past habits including the vine that once almost literally kill me with pancreatitis. Again joyful I can say, “I was blind but now I see”

Joe Erwin 1 week ago

David, I am pleased for you, and am especially glad that you are committed to doing positive things, motivated by faith, hope, and love. You have already accomplished much, and over the next 30 or more years will surely do much more. The time will pass quickly. Take it from me, at age 70 I look back and wonder where the time has gone. Thanks to great collaborations and partnerships, much more has been accomplished than I could have dreamed possible. It seems quite wonderful to me that you and I can converse in a positive way, each with differing points of view, and that we can both be joyful and celebrate our lives, and each feeling that our own epiphany provided life changing insight. We share the experience of feeling that we once were blind, but now we see--that we have found new freedom in amplified knowledge. That we can simultaneously experience joy and tranquility with very different world views speaks well of the wonderful diversity of life experience. Live and be well.

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God Loves Gays (and so should we)

Submitted Sep 29, 2011
By Kendra Perry

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” ~John 9:1-3

Here’s a thought experiment for you: replace the word “blind” in this passage with the word “gay.” Or “bisexual.” Or “transgender.”

Yes, God’s ideal is that marriage should be sacred between one man and one woman (reference). God’s ideal is also that we should be born perfectly healthy and happy, and that we should live forever.

Jesus healed this man born blind, but there are still blind people in the world. When you see a blind person, do you tell him that he is an abomination of sin? That God hates him?

Is it possible to live a life that honors God AND be outside his original plan for marriage? Let’s ask Abraham, Jacob, or David. Ask your friend in church who had to get a divorce because her husband beat her. Or the friend whose wife left him for someone else. Ask how many respected leaders in your church have struggled with pornography. Or had premarital sex (talk about the Adventist sin that dare not speak its name!).

We all die.

Would you dare to say to the child born with a disability that he will burn in hell simply because of who he is?

Should my grandfather be disfellowshipped because he has a genetic neurological disorder that requires him to use a wheelchair everywhere he goes? Should he be required to choose between walking on his own, even though he physically cannot, or always lying in bed because using the wheelchair would stain the ideal of health that God established in Eden?

All of us, in some way, fall short of God’s original ideal. We all bear the marks of sin in our bodies, our minds, our hearts. I was born tongue-tied and had to have surgery to remove my frenulum (the small piece of skin below my tongue). I have a bad temper. I like to eat.

Think of the moment you face your besetting sin, maybe the secret one. The one that so easily ensnares you. Think of the moment BEFORE you act: the overwhelming craving to eat a whole box of Little Debbies. The wave of desire that sweeps over you when you see or think about that person. The hot anger rising in your throat when that stupid person says yet another stupid thing. The knowledge that you should, really should, put down the game controller because there are other things much more worth your time. The critical comment or piece of juicy gossip you find poised on the tip of your tongue even before you think about it.

Now, imagine that everyone and everything you know tells you that HAVING THAT IMPULSE (not even doing the act, just having the impulse) means that you will burn in hell. You are afraid to talk to anyone about it because acknowledging that you have that desire, that struggle, will condemn you. It
will put you irrevocably outside your circle of family and friends and church and love.

From what I understand of my LGBT friends’ lives, they are not choosing to be the way they are to spite their families or church or God. In fact, most of them spend a lot of time trying NOT to be the way they are, often falling into deep depression before coming to the conclusion that they can either be honest about who they are or kill themselves. Too many choose the latter.

How can we condemn those who choose to be honest about who they are and the struggles they face? Our condemnation helps drive our brothers and sisters into the arms of the flamboyantly out, often promiscuous LGBT community, where they can find people who acknowledge and affirm their existence.

Their VERY EXISTENCE. While the church too often tries to tell them they do NOT EXIST. Or should not.

Too often, we conflate BEING lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender with outrageous promiscuity. But there are celibate gay people and promiscuous straight people. When a man says he finds women attractive, do we automatically assume that he lives like Hugh Hefner? He is not representative of every straight man any more than highly promiscuous gay men are representative of every gay man.

The attraction is not the sin. Not any more than the thought, “Chocolate is yummy” or that moment you stand before your besetting sin. Yes, leading a promiscuous lifestyle is clearly outside God’s will. But knowing who someone is attracted to tells us NOTHING about the decisions they will make about how to act on that attraction.

Some LGBT Christians (it IS possible to be both at once) believe that God is leading them to a life of celibacy. Should we not honor that heartwrenching decision? Some LGBT Christians believe that God is leading them to a life of committed monogamy with someone of the same sex. Did not Paul say in 1 Corinthians 7:9 that it was better to marry than to burn with desire?

I happen not to be attracted to the same sex, so I haven’t had to wrestle with my conscience before God about this particular issue. I have the privilege of knowing without question that it is POSSIBLE for me to have a romantic partnership according to his will. But I DO have those things in my life that I have to wrestle with him about. We all do.

Like Jacob (the polygamist), sometimes I must hold on for dear life and say, “I will not let go until you bless me!” And in those dark moments, often it is the fellowship, acceptance, and caring of other Christians that encourages me not to give up, to keep holding on, to believe that all have sinned and that the blood of Jesus covers all sins. Yes, even THAT one. Or THAT one.

Would it not be better to embrace our brothers and sisters with the arms of Christ and stand beside them as they wrestle to find a way to be themselves that honors God? How can we presume that our conscience, shaped by our own culture and natural inclinations, can speak for them?

At the very least, can we not compassionately acknowledge that in this world shaped by sin, we all find ourselves in less than ideal situations from time to time, and that it is sometimes difficult to discern God’s will in two less than ideal choices? We do our best to choose rightly, and sometimes we do. But sometimes we don’t. All of us.

But thank God, he still loves us. Still draws us to him. Still forgives and cherishes and leads us.
Someday (soon, I hope), it will get better once and for all when we meet that God face to face. In the meantime, compassionate acceptance and encouragement of our fellow LGBT pilgrims is one important way of letting his unconditional, transforming love shine in this broken world.

Rosalie Alderman

Thank you so much for this article. It is very well written & nice to see our church publicly comment about this issue. Thankfully for me this is not my "besetting sin", but my sister struggled with these feelings. It tore her apart for years. I was blessed to have been by her hospital bed as she lay dying of acute myeloid leukemia at the tender age of 26. She was in a coma and fighting hard just to breath. I leaned down and asked her if I could pray with and for her. She made gutteral noises that let me know she had heard me. I asked the Lord to draw close to her and forgive her sins. I then told her to please let go & the next face she would see would be Jesus on the resurrection morning. Within the hour her blood pressure fell and within five hours she was gone. She had only been diagnosed 4 months earlier. While this was extremely hard on my father & I since my mother had also died only 5 months before, we were both comforted in the knowledge that she is only sleeping, waiting for the Lords call on that wonderful day so soon to come. My father passed away just last year and I wait alone now to be reunited with my family. I can hardly wait to see him again! As I struggle with temptations and trials I take courage & hope in the knowledge that soon, if I am faithful, I will not only see my family again, but my Lord & Savior who willingly laid His life down for me. Oh how undeserving I am! I have many times cried out to Him that I would not let go until He forgave me. While I have let Him down over & over again, He has never & will never let me down, neither will He let any of us go without a fight!! I speak His name & ten thousand angels start singing and at His name every knee shall bow. His name is "Wonderful", "Counselor", "The Mighty God", "The Prince of Peace". At His presence the earth shakes, the sea parts open & yet all this wonderous power and majesty steps aside to honor the dignity of our individual choices. "Oh, how He Loves You and Me." But how do we approach such a magnificent Being? Shall we give Him our first born or "Ten thousand rivers of oil"? What does the Lord require of us but to do justly and to love mercy & to walk humbly with our God!!!" This is an excerpt of what my sweet Daddy wrote several years ago in the beginning pages of Steps to Christ. I am forever grateful to have been raised by such a Godly man who showed me Christs character in his daily life!! Rosalie Nicholas Alderman

pagophilus

I see the gay lobby is back! They don't stay quiet for very long. As soon as it's quiet on the Creation/Evolution front, they come back to fill in the void.

So tell me, why is it that gay people who try not to be gay get depressed, but promiscuous straight people who try not to be promiscuous do not get depressed?

Or why should it be considered OK for someone to be homosexual and monogamous, but not to be heterosexual and promiscuous? Both are a mixture of a good trait with a bad one?

Better just to be obedient to God. To obey is better than sacrifice.

In 1 Peter 4:8 we read "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins", and in James 5:20 we read "remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their
way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins." Therefore we also see that if we truly love someone deeply we will help them turn from the error of their ways. This applies to both gays and straight people (promiscuous or otherwise.)

**William Noel**

Pagophilus,

There is far more to redemption and overcoming sin than merely choosing to obey. Only those who do not know the true natures of the sin that is in them or redemption are so quick to offer such a simple solution to sin.

There is far more to overcoming than choice alone. It begins with the power of God enabling us to see the nature of the sin that is in us and give us a desire to change. Then God gives us the power to choose to accept His power to overcome. Once in a while you hear of a person being delivered in dramatic fashion where they are no longer bound by a particular sin. Most of us have a long struggle where we learn day-by-day to trust God and depend on Him for power for that minute, hour or day. I take hope from the experience of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 where he talks about the "thorn in my flesh" that God gave him to keep him from becoming proud. I praise God for the "thorn in my flesh" that God uses to remind me of my need for him each day and that my salvation is secure regardless of if I overcome that weakness prior to the Second Coming.

**pagophilus**

I accept what you're saying William. We cannot overcome by our own strength, only through the power of God. However the first step to overcoming is to admit we have a problem. And this is where the gay lobby falls apart because they don't believe they have a problem. They believe some people are born gay and are going to stay that way.

It is possible that people are born with a tendency to be attracted to the same sex, just as it is possible to be born with a tendency to steal or a tendency to be attracted to alcohol. That does not make it OK to continue to steal or drink alcohol, and likewise it does not make it OK to continue to practice homosexuality.

To struggle with sin is a good thing, because it means you acknowledge you have a problem. It's when you stop struggling that you are in serious danger.

**Kendra Perry**

As a matter of fact, many straight people who are promiscuous and try not to be DO become depressed. Hence the existence of support groups such as Sexaholics Anonymous. The difference is that straight people in this situation are trying to stop a problem BEHAVIOR, not change the fundamental makeup of their being.

It is possible that God's will for his LGBT children is to live a life of celibacy (I do believe that the Bible leaves this somewhat open to question, but we will go with your assumption for now). If celibacy is the only option, shouldn't this make us shower MORE love and compassion on them? What a difficult cross to bear! God also said in Eden that it is not good for people to be
alone, so our brothers and sisters who struggle with this need MORE support and encouragement from their church family, not less, if celibacy is the only road open to them.

Ella M.

Kendra,

I agree with what you have said. There are many "straight" people who are single for one reason or another, and we expect them to be celebate. They may also face a life alone. It doesn't seem unreasonable to expect the same from the homosexual who strives to be a Christian. Happiness and success in life doesn't depend on someone else.

However, I would not be against legal partnerships outside the religion, because our religion should not decide what others should do (as in banning same-sex marriages).

I don't know--this is a tough issue for Christians.

Patti Grant

Pagophilis: When did you choose to be straight? Your prejudice and judgmentalism is revealed in your use of the phrase "gay lobby." Oops!

Horace Butler

This is the same drivel we hear from the mainstream supporters of this aberrant lifestyle. We're all born with a "disability." It's called a sinful nature. I've never heard anyone say that someone will go to hell for "having the impulse." But the impulse must be overcome. You can hardly put a disorder that confines someone to a wheelchair in the same category as homosexuality. There is no clear consensus on whether or not it is genetic. Some have hateful, violent impulses. Jesus called that murder. He would put homosexual impulses in the category of lust, which he called adultery.

The issue is not whether or not we love homosexuals. God loves everyone and so should we. But we do not affirm the lifestyle. The purpose of the church is to help lead sinners out of their sinful lifestyles, not aid and abet them like Kinship and some other "Christian" organizations are doing. The argument that "they are born that way" is a very weak argument; one that comes form a defeatist mentality. We are all born with sinful natures. One could claim that they were born a kleptomaniac. So what? We've been promised power to overcome all inherited and cultivated sinful traits—that would include homosexuality, selfishness, pride, etc. So, whether or not that is "who they are," is irrelevant.

We each have our own areas of weakness. Some are attracted to one evil, some to another. But some are worse in the eyes of God than others. I have a hard time believing it is harder to overcome homosexual tendencies than it is to kick the alcohol or nicotine habit. We are not told to merely refrain from acting out our evil desires; we are told to overcome them.

While this evil should not be treated different than any other evil, at least in the sense that it must be overcome in the same way as any other evil, it does get treated differently in practice, because of its very nature. And we see in the Bible, God treated very differently, as well. To most people it is more repugnant than many other evils. The fact that it is not repugnant to some is an indicator of how low humanity have fallen.
William Noel

Horace,

How badly you misunderstand and distort the natures of both sin and redemption! You raised the homosexual lifestyle as an issue making that sin repugnant. WRONG! That lifestyle is a product of the sin that is in a person, the identical sinful nature that is also in you from head to toe and fingertip to fingertip. I am thankful God doesn't get hung-up on our lifestyles and let that prevent Him from redeeming us. Only when you learn to look beyond the lifestyles and behaviors will begin to understand what it truly means to be a partner with God in His work of redeeming sinners, including both you and me.

Horace Butler

That's the best you could do? Fixate on the last paragraph, ignoring the rest. I stated a commonly known fact: most people find that lifestyle repugnant. I didn't say that it prevents redemption. In that respect we are all in the same boat. The "white" lie will bar us from the kingdom just the same as being homosexual will (or being hateful, jealous, selfish, etc.). But God doesn't regard all sins as of equal magnitude, or He would not have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. My objection is directed toward those who try to excuse it because "that's part of who they are." That doesn't cut it for any other sin, and it doesn't for homosexuality, either.

William Noel

Horace,

You wrote "But God doesn't regard all sins as of equal magnitude, or He would not have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah." On what scriptural basis do you make that claim? If one sin is of different magnitude than another, how do you know that Jesus' death at Calvary was sufficient to redeem you?

Horace Butler

"All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men . . . ." Mark 3:29. That tells me that Jesus' death was sufficient to redeem anyone.

According to Paul, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, there are some sins that it is "a shame even to speak of . . . ." And yet there are sins that he speaks about a lot, and without shame. Clearly, then, some are much worse than others, and, apparently, will receive greater punishment in the judgment. Jesus said that there are degrees of guilt in his parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants. Luke 12:46-48.

William Noel

Horace,

The wages of sin is death. Period. Absolute. No exceptions. The difference you
illustrate is merely that some sins bear greater shame, or are considered more "acceptable" by people. But they are equally repulsive to God and all bear the same penalty: Death.

If all sins can be forgiven, why are you having such a difficult time with redemption for someone whose particular sin is repulsive to you? How is their sin any less sinful or deadly than your pride or selfishness?

By the way, I learned the Gospel from a homosexual who knew the redeeming power of God and wouldn't let the opinions people had about him keep him away from God.

Trevor Hammond

Pastor Noel, It seems that it may not have been the FULL gospel you have learnt. Question is, do you believe that homosexual practices are acceptable biblical principles of righteousness and godliness? Or does such behaviour fall within the context of sin?

♥T

William Noel

Trevor,

First, I'm not a pastor. Just a redeemed sinner.

Second, what I learned was a major expansion of my prior, traditional SDA concept of the Gospel being powerful enough to redeem most while people with some sins were questionable because their sin was more repugnant. I learned that all sin is equally repugnant to God and equally deadly to us, but the grace of God is able to look past the sin and touch the heart of the sinner who seeks redemption. My friend helped me learn to look past specific behaviors and love sinners the same way Jesus loves sinners.

In the time of Jesus lepers were the social outcasts with a stigma attached to them that is equivalent to how Christians view homosexuals today. Just touching a leper made a person unclean where they could not enter the temple. Still, Jesus was willing to look past that stigma and the threat of uncleanness to touch them. More than that, he healed them. Jesus offers to do the same for each of us today regardless of our besetting sin or the social stigma that may surround it.

Our biggest challenge as modern Christians is will illustrated in the book "Unchristian" where is it documented that the majority of Christians in America are viewed very negatively because we are perceived first as being anti-gay and anti-abortion. Our task is to understand redemption the same as Jesus so we can see sinners the same way He does. So I encourage you and others to look past the issue of homosexuality and learn God's power to redeem so that you can minister that redemption to sinners, whatever their besetting sin may be.
Trevor Hammond

Brother Noel,

Sir, I have no grouse regarding you views above but just want say that God can use all sorts of people and avenues to speak to us (He even used a donkey once). I know of a dynamic preacher who told us that he learnt about Jesus love and the salvation freely offered to believers from the preacher's 'drunkard dad' (just as he told us). His drunken dad would call his family for worship and sing, preach and pray with them. The preacher became a believer as a direct result of this. (I can just picture all the 'christian' tipple revellers going yippee hallelujah!) ... but does this excuse the drunkeness? I respectfully say no to both drunkeness and homosexual behaviour no matter how virtuous they may be perceived.

♥

William Noel

Trevor,

As you reminded us, if God can use a donkey...

Horace Butler

Have you read the rest of what I've said? I have no problem with redemption for those whose sins I find more repulsive than others. My beef is only with those who would give them a pass because they were "born that way." Would we give the pedophile a pass because he was "born that way?" Right now the world embraces homosexuality and abhors pedophilia. Is one worse than the other? By your standards, apparently not. The term "scum of the earth" comes to mind when I think of pedophiles--but Jesus died for them, too. But they have to repent, as do all of us, including homosexuals (along with the proud, the selfish, the hateful, etc.)--whether they claim to have been born that way or not.

I'm still trying to figure out why those of us who refuse to affirm this lifestyle and find it repugnant are somehow Pharisees. I'm repulsed by the proud and arrogant, too, but no once calls me a Pharisee because of it.

Elaine Nelson

Perhaps scientific information can be furnished showing pedophiles are "born that way" or that "alcoholics are born that way" or even lovers of pornography were "born that way." Surely, with such a statement, it should be accompanied by indisputable scientific evidence. Otherwise it only reflect one's personal bias--no better than saying "sugar causes diabetes and Alzheimer's."

Kendra Perry

Point #1) You seem to regard the "gay lifestyle" as a monolithic entity. It is not. LGBT individuals and their lifestyles vary widely, as do heterosexuals. Some
practice complete celibacy, some enter into committed relationships akin to marriage, and some are wantonly promiscuous. We certainly can find straight people who fall into all of these categories as well.

Point #2) Ezekiel 16:49 makes it clear that sexual perversion was not the only reason for Sodom's destruction: "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy." I do not know one single solitary lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person who has tried to beat down their neighbor's door in order to ravage hapless visitors as the Sodomites did to Lot's guests.

Can we not acknowledge a continuum of behavior for everyone -- gay, straight, and in between -- rather than posing the false dichotomy of GAY (EVIL) vs. STRAIGHT (PURE)?

Sodom can't be used as an example of homosexuality unless all the men in the town were homosexuals, and that would not be possible. They were no doubt family men who just wanted to let the visitors know they were unwelcome by humiliating them in the violent custom of the day. I believe this is what most theologians would say about this text. They were a wicked people.

Horace,

I agree with you in rejecting the "god made me this way" claim. That claim blames God as the cause of sin instead of Satan while seeking to avoid personal responsibility for behavior.

Thanks, Kendra, for your excellent article. Some seem to have missed the part about God's love being unconditional for all of us as sinners. I believe that is the center of the everlasting gospel that we are to share with the world. And, it is easy to grasp onto an "impluse" instead of realizing that sexual orientation is not a choice any more than being blue-eyed or left handed. But, since the Holy Spirit is the only one who can change a person's thinking on this, I don't expect to. I will just pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work to lead us all to a deeper relationship with Jesus and His love.

Kendra,

Thank you for such a thoughtul and realistic exploration of what it means to be less than perfect and still loved by God. I truly wish more people could understand that it isn't the particular sin we
I don't like in someone else that is the problem, but the sin that is in us making weak and imperfect and that no sin is worse than another because they are all sin and we all are in equal need of a savior, whatever our besetting sin may be.

Trevor Hammond

1 month ago

I agree: God loves SINNERS (and so should we)...

But for us to imply: God loves SIN (and so should we)... isn't what the Bible teaches no matter how politically, CULTurally and socially correct we want to portray ourselves to be. The bottom line? Condoning sin isn't the same as loving a sinner. To 'baptise' sin whether it is homosexual perversion or heterosexual perversion for that matter, as many cultural liberals (progressives) do, is an abomination to God and an open insult to the price that Jesus paid on the cross for our sin.

Ps 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Having a goodwill gesture towards those who are disobedient to God may have it's place; but to stand in their way, preventing or obstructing them from coming to Christ for salvation tends to display a kind of self righteous love which is offered without the cross. There is only one remedy for sin. Homosexuals can also come to the cross like everyone else and experience the joy of salvation. John 3:16 offers this to us and it comes as a result of God's love for the sinner.

♥

Pagophilus

1 month ago

Trevor Hammond wrote: The bottom line? Condoning sin isn't the same as loving a sinner".

This is exactly the point. And, as I posted in my comment above, the Bible states that by loving one another deeply we will cover a multitude of sins, and whoever turns a sinner from their evil ways will cover a multitude of sins, therefore loving one another is equivalent to turning a sinner from their evil ways, not supporting them in their sin.

Kendra Perry

1 month ago

You make the automatic assumption that a LGBT person is disobedient to God's will. In fact, the statement, "I am gay" makes a person neither more nor less a sinner than someone who says, "I am straight." It is the choices one makes about how to live out their attractions that determines obedience or disobedience. I trust that my LGBT brothers and sisters have spent time with God seeking his will for their lives and are doing their best to follow it, just as I am. I will continue to encourage them to do so, but the lifestyle they feel God is leading them to is between them and God, not me and them.

I have also observed that compassionate encouragement is often a more effective method of dissuading people from negative behaviors than self-righteous condemnation. See also John 8:1-11.
Horace Butler

Maybe that assumption results from the way the subject is usually presented. Sympathy is expressed for people in these lifestyle, but little is said about helping them leave these lifestyles. These people need help, not affirmation. Much as I disagree with Focus on the Family on many issues, I do admire them for their work among homosexuals. Homosexuals who have been converted and left that lifestyle conduct a ministry to help rescue others from it. And it is not done in a spirit of condemnation. This put to shame Kinship, which claims to be a ministry to SDA homosexuals, but which, in reality, only affirms them in their lifestyles.

Ervin Taylor

Does Mr. Butler have any problem with affirming the lifestyle of heterosexuals?

Ben A

I find it telling that an increasing number of "ex-gay" ministries such as Exodus International and Evergreen International now warn those seeking change therapy that they cannot definitely eliminate all attractions to your same gender, nor can you definitely acquire heteroerotic attractions. Virtually all major mental health organizations have adopted policy statements cautioning the profession and the public against treatments that purport to change sexual orientation.

Those pieces of information in mind, I think it is all the more imperative that we show love to those in the GLTBQI community rather than concern ourselves with letting them know they need to turn from their sin as it is something most are likely to struggle with all their lives.

And while we're at it, the Bible demonstrates a pretty clear stance on divorce. If we spent even half the energy we spend condemning homosexuality helping married couples avoid divorce, or alcoholics recover, or workaholics find balance between work and family, I think society would be the better for it. Quite frankly, I've seen far more families severely impacted by divorce, alcohol, and workaholism than I have homosexual relationships.

And the ones that have been affected by homosexual relationships have been married couples where one partner entered into a heterosexual marriage in an effort to "cure" themselves.

Ervin Taylor

I also wish to thank Kendra for her excellent article. As we might have expected, Trevor and one or two others reacted in their usual I-know-whats-best-for-everyone and lets-call-sin-by-its-right-name manner. On one hand, it is so sad to realize that we have fellow church members with such views. On the other hand, I'm glad that Adventist Today has a free and open access policy for comments so we can all read in their own words how modern Pharisees express their opinions, e.g., "I thank God I am not as one of these . . ."
Show me the quote where one of has said, "I thank God I am not as one of these . . . " I'm just as hard on the right wing wackos who march with signs that say "God hates fags," as I am on those who would try excuse the lifestyle on the basis that "that's who they are." Do we give that same pass to thieves, liars, or murderers?

Horace Butler

1 month ago

Show me the quote where one of has said, "I thank God I am not as one of these . . . " I'm just as hard on the right wing wackos who march with signs that say "God hates fags," as I am on those who would try excuse the lifestyle on the basis that "that's who they are." Do we give that same pass to thieves, liars, or murderers?

William Noel

1 month ago

Horace,

Or, do we learn to love them as God does so we can look past their behaviors and attitudes and touch their hearts with His love?

Horace Butler

1 month ago

Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity . . . ." Love says, I don't condemn you, but, "go and sin no more." Loving someone is not the same as affirming them in their sinful lifestyle, whether be the current topic or some other destructive behaviour. And love cannot look beyond behaviour that is destructive to the individual. It seeks to rescue the person.

But those who appear to condone this lifestyle and behavior are quick to demonize those of us who wish to call it what it is. Funny that we are never demonized for speaking out against drug abuse, murder, adultery, or other destructive behaviours.

Kendra Perry

1 month ago

Let's look at the whole passage you're quoting:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ... For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 12.

One of the most important expressions of love (short of sacrificing one's life for another) is to see, listen to, acknowledge, and affirm a person's existence and experience. This can only be done on an individual basis. Any blanket statement that lumps an individual in with a group and makes a determination about their character is inherently unloving.

Just as we as Adventists wish to be known and understood for our individual (and widely varying) experiences and beliefs rather than lumped in with "those Adventists" or "those conservatives" or "those liberals," so LGBT individuals wish to be known and understood for their unique experiences, beliefs, and values.

Whether or not we agree with ANY person's beliefs, philosophy, or lifestyle choices, we can certainly be patient, kind, humble, and protective in our interactions with them. We can take the time and effort to see each person as a unique individual, loved by God, and
treat them with the same respect we desire.

William Noel 1 month ago

Horace,

Ah, the inconsistency with which we view sins! That is how some sins have become more socially acceptable than others.

Let's not forget that God first forgives and accepts a person before empowering them to follow Him and learn His ways. The first response I so often see to particular sins is to demand complete obedience without first forgiving. Learning to forgive first, to look past their sins and behaviors to touch their hearts has transformed my ministry from theoretical to effective.

Trevor Hammond 1 month ago

The honourable Dr. Taylor informs us of the ‘free and open access policy for comments’. I wish to point out that it is not as free as he would like us to think. Take for example the deletion of some of my comments and I think I did also notice the removal too of some others who come out in support of traditional Adventist views. The Pharisees were more inclined to this type of behaviour...

On the other hand, I would definitely give credit that such a position as pro gay support would gain immense popularity within such a CULTure but will always only reflect a form of godliness which denies the power thereof. The power of God unto salvation: that is.

♥T

Kendra Perry 1 month ago

I believe this comment may be off topic.

Ervin Taylor 1 month ago

Mr. Hammond's comment is certainly off topic. But he probably can't distinguish what is on and off topic very well because he usually has some cliche he wishes to share with us as is the example above.

Trevor Hammond 1 month ago

Are we saying in all of this, that homosexual (GBLT) practice is an acceptable part of a Bible based Christian Lifestyle and that cultural/political liberals, or humanists, within the church want to force this position on the SDA church as a whole? Secular society is allowed to do as they please even though they often encroach on the Church via the secularization within the church in the form of liberals. Ok. Secular society remains separate from the church for various reasons so now they have opted to legalize GBLT practice. I don't think that under these circumstances that the church
can do much except accept society's decision to do so - the church, with regret though, will have to accept such trend but is not obligated to condone it. This however, shouldn't be imposed on the church. Anyway, while the church and state may be separated from an earthly perspective, one CANNOT separate God from all of this. He identifies what sin is and HIMSELF makes adequate provision to remedy it - by (in Christ) dying on the cruel cross of Calvary in order to reconcile us to Him. The death of Jesus also shows the wrath of God for what sin which is a direct result of disobedience. Whilst love and mercy abounds in God, sin has to be dealt with by Him and what a price Jesus paid for all of us: including those with a disposition towards homosexuality. God's call is for ALL sinners to repent: including GLBT.

Take for instance 'repentance' - which is an intricate component of Righteousness by Faith. We all go our own separate ways as sinners, in DIFFERENT directions, whatever; together with the many, many sinful habits and practices we are all susceptible to. When we repent (μετανοέω metanoeo) - it signifies a change in our thinking, habits and practices; but in the opposite direction, in obedience to God by Faith in Jesus Christ. Heterosexuality on God's terms is NOT sin: whilst homosexuality (GBLT) is - the Bible is clear regarding this and the church therefore CAN DO NO OTHER. As hard as this may be to accept and come to terms with there can be NO compromise with sin. The spiritual warfare we engage in is NOT against 'flesh and blood' and homosexuals but the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness. Yeah, so the church will AWAYS advocate loving the SINNER but NEVER the SIN. There is no grounds to conflate the two...

♥

Kuni Lutzle 1 month ago

Thanks, Kendra for modeling a compassionate approach to to our LGBT brethern.

I grew-up in Lewiston ID and Clarkston WA. The one bridge crossing the Snake River bore both the cross-town traffic and US Hwy12. On the Lewiston side, for several years, there was a mentally ill man, who would say "repent" to every car as it came by. Fortunately he was usually quite intent on this task and while walking by you could hear a steady, though fairly quiet: repent --- repent --- repent ---repent... (engaging the man in any kind of conversation was risky and unpredictable)

I think general calls for repentance on an open blog like this are equally useful. Such deeply personal issues need to be addressed in a deeply personal way. The blanket condemnations issued in these blogs might convict someone of sin, but they don't really offer salvation. In the beginning of the letter to the Romans Paul asserts that the "unnatural desires" he saw in Roman society were the result of people having abandoned God. If we want to change that we must help them rebuild a relation with God and assure them of His love for them even as homosexuals. Only that relation could ever change them and any effort bring about the change ourselves, however infinitesimal, simply undermines the work of God in their lives.

If you can't in good conscience condone homosexual relations, don't. But condemning them does no good, better to concentrate our efforts at revealing the love of God to those arround us and then let God do the condemning at the end of time.

Kuni (transgendered)
William Noel
1 month ago

Kuni,

Thanks for speaking up! We've got a lot to learn about loving instead of condemning. I pray that you are growing in God's love.

Timo Onjukka
1 month ago

Erv stole my line.
"Thank you God you did not make ME one of THOSE"
(insert favorite excuse to not love someone)

I'm also eternally thankful that the sin of pride and ego has been so thoroughly and perfectly removed from all those who would so readily throw stones at any other behavior.
Isn't it nice we can all just will our prideful egoistic rebellious flesh into perfect submission? Unlike THOSE people, who continue to CHOOSE to SIN?

Perhaps the prayer ought be thus:
"I thank you you God, that you did not make *M E* supercilious and epithetic"

Ervin Taylor
1 month ago

I wish I could write as well as Mr. Onjukka. So focused on the important point (which I assume that Mr. Hammond will never get).

Horace Butler
1 month ago

I'm puzzled by Timo's comments. I must have missed the posts that said anything about not loving sinners (homosexuals or otherwise). And I missed the part about anyone wanting to throw stones at them. There is no excuse for sin. What applies to one sin applies to them all: they must be overcome. What many of us object to is the attempt to aid and abet sinners by making excuses for them. And since it seems that more attempts are made to excuse homosexuals than with many other types of sin, that is the one we often focus on. If SDA's were trying to make excuses for bank robbers we'd be on that one, too.

Timo Onjukka
1 month ago

Perhaps the message, unless spelled out in specific letter of law, is lost on some. I'll not belabor you specific quotes.
Seems Jesus asked "have you the spirit, or the letter" of the law?
The letter of the law killed Him.
"Rather than quoting you a measured little bit of dill or cumin, I'll serve heavens real treasure".
The spirit of the law saves. Sinners.
Even the (non-evolutionist, non-homosexual, non-alcoholic et al) "saints"
-but perhaps only when they seize no "letters"!
Elaine Nelson 1 month ago

Why must we look at people and merely identify them by their gender orientation? Do we look at someone and say "He, or she is gay?" That seems to be the one and only label yet we do not do that with heterosexuals. Is sex the most important part of all humans?

A gay or lesbian person may be a highly-skilled physician, teacher, engineer; in fact in all professions. Do we first admire their professional skills, or do we dismiss them as being a homosexual? There seems to be an inordinate puerlism about people that borders on one's own sexuality. To those who are so concerned about other's private lives, I say "Get a life of your own and stop worrying about other's." It is between them and their God and God has not given anyone the job of judging.

Horace Butler 1 month ago

Good points. But the problem is not that we are concerned with others private lives. If they would keep it private we wouldn't be so vocal about it. But too many of those in this lifestyle are trying to cram it down everyone else's throats. They don't want tolerance or even acceptance; they want affirmation, and if that isn't given, the label "homophobic" is attached to whoever disagrees with them. I don't want to know what they do in their private lives. When someone announces that they are homosexual they've told me more than I wanted or needed to know. I don't run around announcing that I'm heterosexual. It would sound stupid.

William Noel 1 month ago

Horace, 

It is your choice whether or not to respond and speak about what you see, or to keep silent. I suggest holding your tongue and asking God to give you understanding of the person so you can know how to point them to Jesus for redemption.

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago

I know a number of homosexuals, and rather than "cramming it down one's throat" they try to remain very inconspicuous and have not ventured to announce to anyone their orientation. Have you found SDA attendees who are anxious to "cram it down your throat" or are you referring to the gay pride marchers? Surely, they should not be all placed in the same category.

Do engaged or married couples "cram it down one's throat" or is it merely acceptance of their situation? When couples, whether same or opposite sex walk into your church, how can you make an instant determination as to their sexual orientation? How many have come up to you and made an announcement of their sexual life? Why is it anyone's business how other people choose to live? God will decide.
Elaine,

Well said.

One big lesson I take away from my reading of Romans is that we are all equally guilty of sin in God's eyes and in equal need of redemption. There is no basis for me to condemn someone because they steal, are proud, lie, break the Sabbath or are homosexual. I can't say I'm always consistent about doing it, but God has taught me to look at others and not be offended by what they do. Instead, He has taught me to view them as human beings whom God loved enough to die for so they could be saved.

In contrast, condemnation, whether by highlighting a person's particular sin or painting them with a label making it sound like they are defending sin, drives people away from God. How I wish those who condemn could see their true nature and understand how much they are doing the work of Satan and how deluded they are when they claim to be doing God's work! The work of God is redemption that is as simple as 1-2-3: One, I forgive you for what you've done. Two, I offer you the power to depend on me for the strength to overcome. Three: Seek me each day for this power and let me teach you how to live in that empowerment moment-by-moment as you meet temptation.

Ms Perry, Ma'am, are you saying then that a monogamous homosexual relationship is equivalent to a monogamous heterosexual relationship. Do you have Biblical support of such a doctrine? Loving someone of the same gender and the disposition of some who lean towards homosexual behaviour does not give one license for marriage. The secular state may allow this as marriage and err in so doing but nowhere in the Bible is such an abomination taught. The cultural/liberal faction within Adventism has erred in this regard. Wrapping sinful acts up in so-called 'love' is just a weak attempt to provide a man-made salvation by works doctrine. This is not the message of the Bible. Perhaps I will mention some verses should I post again. Traditional Adventism has bent over backwards to love sinners, including those from the homosexual community. Maybe just loving them isn't enough: they need the power of God unto salvation in order to become 'over-comers' just like we do to. Maybe we have dishing out too much of the cultural Adventism glasses which have been much tainted with worldly secular compromise which has even distorted how we view God's love too.

What I see here is a classic case to the challenge to love people and baptise the sin rather than the sinner. I think there in an infinite chasm between the two. May I say here too that no-one is advocating gay-bashing either...

♥T

I believe that gay marriage is clearly outside God's ORIGINAL Edenic plan. But it seems to me that the Bible allows room for God to lead and use people who are outside this original plan as so
many of us are in this sinful world.

God used Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon in powerful ways even though they married multiple women, remained polygamists throughout their lives, and even despite the chaos that their decision to practice polygamy brought to them, their families, and their country (in the case of David).

Again, I see this issue on a continuum instead of as a dichotomy. If heterosexual marriage between two individuals is the ideal, a committed monogamous homosexual relationship is closer to that ideal than a promiscuous lifestyle of either orientation. It may even be closer to the ideal than heterosexual divorce and/or remarriage situations.

William Noel

Trevor,

Some sinful behaviors are more obvious than others. However, making that observation does not authorize you to condemn it.

What many Christians do not understand about the homosexual condition is just how conflicted it can be. They don't need condemnation. They need redemption. Unfortunately the predominant Christian view is that redemption begins with showing someone how sinful they are and to worsen the condemnation. That is not how Jesus treated sinners. Often the first thing He did was relieve people of their guilt so they could begin to see that redemption was more than desirable, that it was possible. Was the transformation immediately complete? No. It began immediately, but they had to learn day-by-day to live in God's love and to depend on Him for the power to overcome temptation.

Deborah Swart

Just a question; how did Messiah overcome His urge to engage in any form of sexual activity? This is my view on the life essentials=> love, air, water and food; without it we will die. A lack of sexual activity is not life-threatening. Neither did Messiah die for a lack of sexual activity, nor did He lay down His life for the purpose of proving a point that without sex a person will surely die. In fact He mentioned that there are ppl who are eunuch by choice. Besides the ones who, for whatever physical reason have to refrain from sex. And there is no such thing as a "homosexual" gene. Sexual behaviour is an adopted behaviour, when one responds to certain feelings; which do not totally depend on hormonal secretion; a person is way more than the sum of his/her hormones.

Shalom and God bless in Jesus’ name

Kendra Perry

But surely we can agree that even if one is able to overcome sexual desire, the desire to be in an intimate emotional partnership is very powerful? Being single and alone is also not in God's original Edenic plan.

So, again, if celibacy is the only option available to LGBT individuals, it seems that the church should acknowledge the very painful losses that entails and provide EXTRA support and encouragement to people facing this difficult dilemma.
**William Noel**

Deborah,

Excellent question! The Bible does not give a specific answer that I can point to. Still, it says that He was "tempted in all points" like we are, yet without sin. Add that everything Jesus did was empowered by the same Holy Spirit who is offered to us today so that we can overcome temptation and become empowered to minister His love to others. So I think it is consistent to assume that the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to be in such control that He could remain completely focused on the purpose for which He came.

**Ervin Taylor**

Any comment about Jesus' lack of sexual activity is probably off-limits because it would bring up such sensitive issues that any rational discourse would be impossible. However, if one believes that Jesus was 100% human (as all of the historic creeds of the church insist), let's not be so sure about something which was never addressed in any of the gospels probably for very good reasons.

**Elaine Nelson**

Is there a heterosexual gene? How can one be so certain that there is a gene for sexuality, as each individual has either xx, or xy, for females and males. This says nothing about the orientation. If someone says he has always been gay, who has the omniscience to question him? Who lives in his skin but that individual? Is it perfectly natural and O.K. to have heterosexual feelings but not homosexual? People will not die without sexual activity, but it enriches their entire life and longevity. Who should be able to deny another person's most intimate choices?

There was no understanding in the time the Bible was written of sexual orientation. The texts spoke of "abominations" and that is seen in both hetero and homosexual promiscuity. Is there no difference between promiscuity and monogamy? Does the Bible ever address homosexual monogamy? If so, why did David love Jonathan "more than the love of women"? Did they have to engage in sexual intimacy or could they truly have experienced love? Or, is it appropriate to love someone of the same sex but only becomes sinful if physical intimacy is involved?

**Kendra Perry**

I agree that it is essential to listen to and respect the experiences of individuals. Every LGBT individual I have spoken to feels that they have been that way, if not from birth, at least from earliest conscious memory.

**William Noel**

Elaine,
The "homosexual gene" is something the gay community has long sought with little result. From ancient times we have inherited the concept of gender as strictly male-female with little or no variance. Still, increased understanding of genetics has shown us incredible variation in the human genome. Why is it that tall parents can have a dwarf child, or vice-versa? That a person with severe learning disabilities can have a child who is a genius? That certain diseases like breast cancer or physical "defects" are linked to genetic predispositions? While the rate of occurrence as a part of the total population is low, there is considerable variation in gender. Growing up the limit of gender variation I learned about in science class was limited to hermaphrodites, who were described as some varied combination of male and female. Over recent decades as I've sought to understand the gender community, I've learned since that medicine recognizes dozens of variations in the human genome that are evident in a range of gender-related behaviors and physiology.

The sum of this is that, to my knowledge, there is no identified "homosexual gene." Still, the frequency of genetic variation means that we are as likely to meet someone with a visible physical deformity as someone who has one of those genetic gender variations. So the sooner we get over being offended and condemning and get focused on redemption, the better we can do God's work of redemption.

Tom 1 month ago

I decided to see the latest on AT. My computer crashed a few months ago and I just got around to getting it rehabilitated so I have not commented on AT for a few months. I needed a breather anyway. Some subjects, especially this one, can get really heated up at times.

First I want to thank Kindra for the thoughtfulness she put into this blog. Myself, I have felt torn between two worlds all my life. My sexual orientation is definately gay, even though I forsook the lifestyle 30 plus years ago, married, fathered 3 children and have no plans to leave my wife of over 28 years.

Someone commented here that it would be easier to overcome homosexuality than alcoholism, smoking and the like. Believe me when I say that is NOT the case. When I came back to the church in 1980 I quit drinking. I was definately an alcoholic, in most part because I couldn't cope with the fact I definately had attractions to my own sex and acted on it for several years. Alcohol numbed the pain and guilt. Were it not for a compassionate pastor and this one family in the church who loved me back to God and didn't reject me because I was gay, I would have killed myself. That was back in 70's when if you were found out to be gay, the rejection was overwhelming.

When I quit drinking, I struggled with a desire for a drink for a time, but my thirst for the booze completely vanished eventually. Alcohol prompts no response in me now, but only repulsion if I see or smell it. For years I thought that my attraction for my own sex would do the same. I even fell in love with a woman and for a time thought I was "cured". But after a time thoughts and desires came back to haunt me.

I have been faithful to my wife all these years, but let me tell you unless you have lived with this inside you you can't begin to understand the full dimensions of it all. I am one of the fortunate ones. The track record for mixed orientation marriages is not good, but in some cases like mine it can be done. I am not sorry for a moment that I married but I would not recommend that someone gay think they can change from gay to straight by getting married. It will give you no end of sexual frustration. It is sort of like trying to write with your left hand when you are right handed. You may be able to write something with some semblence of legability after trying hard enough, but it just doesn't come as natural as using your right hand.
I hope that all made sense. I'm convinced that you can change behavior but changing sexual orientation is quite another thing. Change therapy which claims to make one straight from being gay is a cruel hoax. I tried it twice, the last time just 3 years ago and I had a nervous breakdown over it all. The only ex-gay there can be is in lifestyle changes, but not sexual orientation.

Understanding this is vital to the church responding with compassion to people who struggle with homosexuality. Too often folks see the strident gay pride in-your-face gays and automatically think that represents the rest of us. It doesn't. Please understand why when some of you say that gays are looking for special treatment in the church and liken us to drunks, adulterers and the like it is really offensive.

Having traveled this road and struggled I can only tell you that love will win when censor and rejection will only contribute more conflict in the life of someone who is gay, and drive them away from God.

I don't have all the answers, but I know the One who does and I believe that only a full commitment to Him is the answer. I'll leave it up to Jesus to sort it all out and lead in each one's life, as he sees fit and in His time.

William Noel 1 month ago

Tom,

Thank you for being courageous and speaking out as you have! Your's is a voice of real experience amid the volume of the loudly and strongly opinionated.

Kendra Perry 1 month ago

Tom, thank you so much for your willingness to share your experience in a public and potentially hostile forum. I believe that hearing and trying to understand the experiences of individuals is the only way that those of us who don't face these issues can begin to grasp the struggle.

The commitment of people like you to Christ and the church in the face of prejudice, ignorance, and even outright hate truly amazes and humbles me.

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago

Tom, you speak for many silent gays who are fearful of speaking out. Your pain is palpable and those who so causally dismiss it are ignorant and know not whereof the speak. It's akin to a single person telling a parent who's lost a child "I know how you feel." No, you cannot know unless you've walked in their shoes. It's so easy to condemn OPS (other people's sins) than our own.
Brother Noel,
Sir, I have no grouse regarding your views above but just want say that God can use all sorts of people and avenues to speak to us (He even used a donkey once). I know of a dynamic preacher who told us that he learnt about Jesus love and the salvation freely offered to believers from the preacher's 'drunkard dad' (just as he told us). His drunken dad would call his family for worship and sing, preach and pray with them. The preacher became a believer as a direct result of this. (I can just picture all the 'christian' tipple revellers going yippee hallelujah!) ... but does this excuse the drunkeness? I respectfully say no to both drunkenness and homosexual behaviour no matter how virtuous they may be perceived.
♥T

Love and condone are NOT synonyms. Check your dictionary for the proper use of those words. To love does not mean to condone. You love your children, always (hopefully), but you may not always condone their behavior (that, too, would be unusual). Is it possible to believe that a prostitute could be in heaven (how about the woman taken in adultery?). God's love is so much greater that humans.

Maybe you know someone who is perfect and in no need of being forgiven. When will that time come? God overlooks our sins, not approves.

Thanks Elaine for the affirmation. I still want to meet you in person sometime and swap some good stories over a glass of lemonade, but I haven't been south of Sacramento all year. Trevor, I think I know what you are trying to say, but have you ever considered how it sounds on this end, the way you express it? You just don't get it, like a lot of others, and it is wishful thinking for me to even expect that of some people.

I don't believe that being gay is a choice, who would be dumb enough to want to be something that is the bane of so many fellow christians. Neither do I think it is some God given gift. How absurd to think that God deliberately made someone gay. At the very least it is an aberration of the natural order of God's created intent that should neither be celebrated nor shamed. It is just the way it is with some of us. It matters little to one like me why I am attracted to my own sex. All the studies, arguments, so-called scientific evidence on both sides of the great divide over this issue, only adds to the anxiety and doesn't change what I am, or make me feel more loved.

Those who ask questions like does God love pedophiles, terrorists, prostitution, etc. really don't care about ministering to gays or help lift their burden in a winsome way. I won't go so far as some do and say they hate us, but any lip service about loving every one is superflous at best. With a finger in the face the directive to GO AND SIN NO MORE is given with a trumpet blast, while "neither do I condemn thee" is either skipped over or begrudgingly whispered and unheard as an afterthought.

I believe that Jesus gave the more pronounced emphasis when he said "neither do I condemn
thee" to Mary Magdelene. Obviously he didn't follow that with a "you can go back to work now...". His words, "now go and sin no more" was an invitation to a better life than that of a prostitute. He uplifted this used woman in a desperate moment of need and made her feel like something more than mere filth, and it won her heart to Him.

This brings me back to the questions as they were posed by Trevor. Hey pal, can you see what I am talking about now? Don't automatically assume the worst of a gay person and equate them with filth.

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago

Thanks for the invitation, Tom. I do get to Sacramento a number of times a year as there are more family members there now than in Fresno and Sacramento is such a beautiful city and the northern foothills where some live that it's always a short and pleasant trip--seeing loved ones.

How can one claim to accept God's love but reject it for others? If their expression of God is true, why would anyone want to know Him? It gets more tiresome all the time to hear such expressions of gays, comparing them to pedophiles and prostitutes which exudes such a Pharisaical attitude that repels the average person. Such a representation of Christ is actually a repellant to all but the cultic personality.

Truth Seeker
1 month ago

"God loves everyone and so should we. But we do not affirm the lifestyle. The purpose of the church is to help lead sinners out of their sinful lifestyles, not aid and abet them like Kinship and some other "Christian" organizations are doing."

Right on good brother. Why do the practicing gays seem to be deserving of such excessive attention? It's likely the gay lobby which may have infiltrated this site, the Spectrum site as well the Episcopal church, the Armed Forces ad infinitum. Isn't it possible that much of the concern about AIDS has made many very concerned about the sexual practices of gays? Some sins have a much more deleterious effect on the human race than others.

Kendra Perry
1 month ago

This article does not specify practicing or non-practicing gays. Part of my point is that we need to stop assuming that someone who is gay is of necessity participating in sinful behaviors. They may in fact be celibate, or even monogamously married to someone of the opposite sex (as Tom very poignantly points out).

The bottom line is, whatever anyone's behaviors, they are PEOPLE just like you and me. They are in need of love, acceptance, and yes, a Savior. Approaching anyone in an attitude of love and humility is, in my opinion, more likely to help them meet that Savior than an attitude of condemnation and arrogance.
William Noel  

Truth Seeker,

People behave in particular ways for identifiable reasons. The gay lobby is vocal in seeking recognition and legitimacy because they are not finding it and they are seeking to minimize or avoid the social and moral condemnation that accompanies their behavior.

The voice of Christianity has been loud on the topic and quick to condemn. Christians in North America are known for being anti-gay and anti-abortion. We are not known for being FOR anything. Our challenge is to stop condemning and learn redemption for ourselves so we can be seen as being FOR the power that can relieve their guilt and give them peace.

If God is for us, who can be against us? If we are FOR the redemption of sinners and have truly experienced that power in our own lives, how can we not be seen as FOR the fallen sinner and seeking their redemption?

Elaine Nelson  

"Excessive attention" is a most subjective opinion. The armed forces is finally admitting that gays should have no more, nor less equality than all heterosexual soldiers. If that is "excessive" then surely the previous position of "don't ask, don't tell" was calling excessive attention to their differences; now it is simply applying equality to all the troops. Is there a problem with equality?

Was it churches who initiated AA? Or, did they turn their collective backs and proclaim them sinners? Ditto for divorces: ignore and maybe it will go away? Is there a more deleterious sin than domestic abuse? Something the church has long turned a blind eye and pretending that Christians could not be involved. Is there a church without sinners? Is there a hierarchial list of sins in order of worst to least offensive? Has gossip been dealt with--a pervasive condition in judgmental churches.

Tom  

Hmm, I don't remember saying anything about affirming a "lifestyle" of anything but that of a hundred I just don't have the in-your-face gays. As for Truth Seekers claim of the excessive attention of gays, he's right, homophobes do give excessive attention, negatively that is. Some folks are clearly uncomfortable that we even exist. They would just as soon we stayed locked in a closet of fear, so they can pretend we don't exist in the church.

As for gays serving in the military, the late legendary conservative Senator Goldwater said, "you don't have be straight to shoot straight," when the subject of gays serving in the military was debated shortly after Clinton was in the White House. You are right Elaine, AA was not started by a church.

Cherry Ashlock  

I appreciate the article.
"Since we can not know what is driving a person from the inside, what the reasons are for his or her behavior, we aren't capable of judging fairly. When we criticize another person, we are only passing sentence on ourselves."

Just knowing 'truth' does not change a person's heart. History shows that those who claimed to know the most about God often were the cruelest and most evil. Saying you are a christian but not acting like Jesus gives God a bad name.

Matt Britten
1 month ago

What a curly ball: God loves gays and so should we. (I like it!)

As for me, I still believe in the healing ministry of Jesus. He came to restore the whole man: mind, body, soul and spirit. The only question I would ask is: Why don't we see healing ministries in the church? We have all sorts of interesting stuff on vegetarian cooking and natural health remedies etc etc...but where are the supernatural "gifts of healings" that Paul talks about (1 Cor 12:9)?

If restoration was Jesus' goal, I'd say we need to take another look at the ministry of Jesus, with all of His grace, love, and power to heal the broken, the sick, and set the captives free!

William Noel
4 weeks ago

Matt,

Why don't we see healing ministries in the church? Simple: we're not seeking the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Everything Jesus did was empowered by the Holy Spirit. He told us to seek the Holy Spirit and that he would be present with us only through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the first revelation of God mentioned in scripture and the last. But we're largely ignoring Him. Why?

Kendra Perry
4 weeks ago

Does the fact that Jesus healed blind men mean that the church is failing if there are still blind people in the world? Jesus also healed many people with physical deformities. Should the church be healing all of these?

William Noel
4 weeks ago

Kendra,

The Bible promise is that believers would be empowered to do a number of supernatural things, including physical healing. So I believe the Biblical answer to your question is a definite "Yes!" Whether it is you doing the healing or me is not the issue so long as we are both ministering in the way God has giften and empowered us.

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago
Matt, such a suggestion has been tried before--check the success rates. "Change therapy" is, to be blunt, a colossal failure. Believing is like wishing--it won't make it so. Are all those who are born with anomalies of all sorts "cured"? Did God ever promise to heal all those who needed healing? "Supernatural gifts of healing" are just that--supernatural and rarely seen. Where are the examples of one who was born gay who became heterosexual--not in behavior, but in complete gender orientation? To pray for a turn-around orientation is to tell God he made a mistake, isn't it?

Margaret Lynn
4 weeks ago

After reading through the article and thread, the main idea that I think Kendra and others were pointing out was that we should try and understand before judging...if we are to judge at all. (I think that would be a no.) It is not an easy answer.
I do feel like living in a sinful world has caused many issues in genetic make-up, and also has impacted God's original plan for families and couples. I also think that the Bible is clear on what sin is...sexual immorality is rampant in our world in every possible way you could imagine. The Devil has prevented it so much, far from God's original plan. We should all be praying for God to take sin out of our lives, and purify us for His purpose, and asking Him to use us to glorify His name and lift Him up.

God does want us to encourage each other and help each other if we are stumbling spiritually...but I also think that I'd be much more receptive to Sister Matilda knocking on my door to discuss an issue of concern in my spiritual life if she had first established a caring friendship with me. That being said, the issue of homosexuality is still difficult. I can say it is a wrong practice based on the Bible, along with fornication. As Kendra implied, I don't see too many people being pulled aside in the church and counseled on their sins of fornication. (I've always noticed the blatant difference in many people's strong feelings against homosexuality vs. fornication.) Think about it, sexuality is a very private issue, and who would really be comfortable discussing it with a random church member?? Maybe this is an issue that should be discussed and worked through with one's Heavenly Father, and a close circle of supportive, loving friends and family.

Why couldn't our church be that family? I've often noticed that when someone has a "bomb" to drop, the place they are most afraid to discuss their issue is in the church. The church could be that loving, supportive family, where people are not afraid to share their deepest fears and struggles. It starts with building that loving relationship, and then allowing God to use us in each other's lives according to His purpose. Isn't that what family is for? :)

William Noel
4 weeks ago

Amen!

Kendra Perry
4 weeks ago

Margaret said:
"Maybe this is an issue that should be discussed and worked through with one's Heavenly Father, and a close circle of supportive, loving friends and family.

Why couldn't our church be that family? I've often noticed that when someone has a "bomb" to drop, the place they are most afraid to discuss their issue is in the church. The church could be that loving, supportive family, where people are not afraid to share their deepest fears and struggles. It starts with building that loving relationship, and then allowing God to use us in each other's lives according to His purpose. Isn't that what family is for? :)"
I love this. Yes, yes, and yes.

Matt Britten 4 weeks ago

Hi Kendra,

In my Bible it reads that "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Mt 4:23). A short list is then given: "... and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" (Mt 4:24).

I find in Jesus ministry, he had power to heal bodily disorders, mental disorders, emotional disorders and spiritual disorders. Nothing was beyond the range of His grace and power.

Jesus gave the early church this very same "power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Mt 10:1). I believe God wants the whole church to have the same power (Ac 1:8).

I grew up in the church and suffered from "closet" sins as I suspect most of the church does. (I say closet because of the shame and fear of condemnation if they were shared). However, after God got me and things turned around, I received a lot of personal healing. Some friends and self decided to pursue the ministry and lifestyle of Jesus (Jn 14:12). So, back in 1996 we organized time at the end of our home groups meetings to pray for people regardless of the need. I have to say the gospel of Christ still possesses the same power from when it was first preached. We have had blind eyes open, fused back disks healed, Rheumatoid arthritis healed, emotional and mental disorders healed (insomnia, depression etc) sexual disorders healed (homosexual orientation included). It is hard to describe the grace (where people felt comfortable sharing with a couple of folk) and the power that was released in our meetings. I guess you would have to see it to believe it!

Like I said, I still believe in the healing ministry of Jesus. By and large the church still believes in the third person of the God head, but rejects much of His power and presence by the unrenewed mind (Rom 12:2). Paul mentions that the carnal mind (unrenewed) is in fact at war with God (Rom 8:7). Now going back to Jesus' message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mk 1:15).

That word repent actually means "change the way you think". We don't think "Kingdom". That would be a good place for the church to start!

Elaine Nelson 4 weeks ago

One may be able to "change the way he thinks" but where did Jesus promise to heal or cure all our conditions? Can someone pray to be cured of heterosexuality (for some that might be a relief!)? Are only homosexuals to pray for "cures"? Should someone born with a physical anomaly from birth pray for cure? At what point should we accept that God created us and we are in his image? Are Down's syndrome folks in God's image? Why aren't homosexuals from birth not in his image?
Elaine,

Please consider Paul's "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12. He doesn't say what the problem is, but he thanked God for it because it kept him humble and aware of his need of salvation. I struggle with a particular weakness to sin that used to be the cause of great spiritual despair until I let God make it my "thorn in my flesh" and use it to keep be depending on Him. When I did, the despair left and was replaced by the confidence of salvation. Have I completely overcome or been healed? No. Still, looking back I can only believe I would have been ruined spiritually if that problem had been removed. Instead God is using it for His glory and I have a gift-based ministry that is strengthened by knowing my weakness and need of God.

Hi Elaine,

I don't recall saying that men and women aren't created in God's image. But I would say, that image is somewhat distorted (since the fall). My understanding is that the Gospel is all about restoration. Satan is the destroyer, God is the restorer. I used to think (like yourself) that people are born this way or that way ect. But since I embarked on this journed with the great Holy Ghost, I have now come to believe, that nothing is impossible for those that believe.

I don't know too much about Jesus promising to heal all our conditions but I have read that the believers "will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mk 16:18).

I have also read that it is "with his stripes we are healed." (Isa 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24). But then again, that is the Gospel.

Yes, God has promised to restore us, but not necessarily in this life. Most will be fully restored in Heaven. Until that time, we should exercise humility and less judgment and accept people as God created them. Habits can be changed, who they "are" cannot.

To hold out "nothing is impossible for those who believe" often ends in a cruel hoax. Be very slow on such promises. Only God fulfills HIS promises, not man.

Kendra, I very much appreciate your column. Have you all already discussed the 7 or so verses that speak to the idea? What are the hebrew and greek translations of the few references concerning such?

We have not, and I am not an expert in the original languages. Can any language scholars help
Kendra Perry 4 weeks ago

In effort to promote at least a few positive comments on this article, let me post a question for reflection. (This also helps satisfy my English teacher inclinations).

**In what ways have YOU seen "the works of God" displayed in the lives of LGBT friends, family, or acquaintances?**

As I said in my comment to Tom above, the commitment of my still-churched LGBT friends to Christ and the church in the face of prejudice, ignorance, and even outright hate truly amazes and humbles me. It challenges me to keep my focus on Christ rather than perceived slights I may receive from other church members.

Matt Britten 4 weeks ago


David reminds himself to not forget all God's benefits: "Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" (Ps 103:2,3).

My point being: I believe churches are to be healing communities where the presence of God dwells bringing healing and restoration to all people regardless of their background and state of being.

There are some good ministries out there (outside of our denomination) that are bringing sexual wholeness to gays and lesbians. One in particular that I have visited personally (in 1999) was Desert Stream Ministries at the Anaheim Vineyard, California. I enjoyed hanging with these folk. This ministry was started by a former gay called Andrew Comiskey. He has written several books but the one I highly recommend and maybe the most popular is: Pursuing Sexual Wholeness.

It would be nice to see churches transformed and receiving everyone in their midst with no judgment, fear, shame or condemnation. It would also be nice to see healing ministries flourishing bringing restoration to the whole man.

**Maybe Kendra Perry might like to investigate such ministries (I have listed but one) and spearhead something in our tribe...Just a thought.**

William Noel 4 weeks ago

Matt,

It is refreshing to see your desire for more ministries in churches. While it is hopeful to see churches transformed by such ministries, I am not hopeful of seeing such a change happen. While there are a wide variety of situations in different congregations so there is potential, my observations have been of most Adventist churches I have visited being deep into
the defense of particular doctrines and traditionalism instead of seeking the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Expecting a new ministry to take root and grow in such a situation is like expecting a tropical plant needing frequent watering to survive in the Sahara desert.

Fortunately I have the blessing of being part of a congregation (Grace Fellowship in Madison, AL) that was established with the objective of helping each member discover their giftedness and developing that giftedness into ministry. The results have been nothing short of amazing. Our formation was more of a church division than a church planting. We came out of a tradition-bound church where ministry innovations were short-lived and died miserable deaths. But there were enough of us living on the west side of the county who shared a desire for gift-based ministry and freedom from traditionalism that we formed a new congregation. What is most amazing to me is watching how the Holy Spirit grows new ministries and how those ministries contribute to the harmony and fellowship of the church. I am far closer to my fellow church members than I have been at any other church where I have been a member. We share bonds of love that I never knew were possible. We are one of the fastest growing congregations in the conference-- all without holding traditional evangelistic crusades, passing-out literature, etc. It is all the result of the Holy Spirit.

So if someone wants to pursue the Holy Spirit and grow new ministries, but they are trapped by tradition, I suggest they start a new congregation.

Kendra Perry 3 weeks ago

Matt,

I don't dispute that God COULD change someone's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, but I also know that there are many good, devout Christians who suffer from seemingly inexplicable physical, mental, and emotional impairments throughout their lives despite prayer, laying on of hands, and the search for miraculous healing.

I don't feel called to start a ministry such as you suggest, but if you do, please go ahead. What I feel called to do is to make God's love visible to those around me. Some of those people happen to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and these are my thoughts on how I personally, and other individuals in the church, could best make God's love visible to them.

Matt Britten 4 weeks ago

Hi Noel,

I agree whole heartedly. I have had my fair share of working within traditional church "frames". I did not touch on that in my former post as it might of been a bit overwhelming for some folk (I don't want apear critical). I'm glad you brought it up. I believe, new congregations with fresh expressions of Holy Spirit creativity and power, with a Christ-centred Kingdom focus will release heaven on earth...and that is what I pray: On earth as it is in heaven!

Glad to hear what God is doing in your corner of the planet.

Blessings
I too believe in an all powerful and healing God. He used 3 specific people, a pastor, a husband and his wife in the church to minister and show me the love of God and convince that I wasn't just fuel for the fire of hell because I was gay. Yes he healed me from living in a self induced hell of hating myself and a destructive pattern of looking for love in all the wrong places. He rescued me from alcohol, the gay bars and bathhouses. He changed my life, He even brought the one and only woman in my life that I could have ever loved enough to marry.

But as one that has "been there, done that" I could never pray the gay away. Change? After 25 years of struggling and wishing I would just wake up straight some morning, it never happened. For what ever reason changing sexual orientation is a myth propagated by folks who think if you just pray hard enough, or have hands laid on you. demons cast out, filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, and a host of other notions, that God will miraculously make you straight. Many of us have clung to some of this snake oil spirituality to our utter dispair and come up feeling more burdened than ever. I know, I have been there.

I am not trying to make excuses, just telling it like it is from my experience.

When I finally unshakled myself from this thinking, I came to see it more as a thorn in the flesh that God has chosen to leave, so that I will rely more on Him. My love and committment for Him has deepened since I have come to that kind of acceptance of myself. That doesn't give me license to leave my wife and go and do the things I haven't done in over 30 years now.

Not every gay person's experience is the same so I would never want to make my experience the template for every gay person. Neither do I want Andrew Cominsky (psuedonym), who claims to be so completely ex-gay that he has absolutely no same sex attraction anymore, the poster child for reparative therapist and many religionists claim that one can become totally straight, even in the realm of temptations. I met him at the conference on homosexuality at Andrews in 2009. After watching and listening to him, let's just say I wasn't convinced that he was straight, as in completely changed to heterosexuality.

As I see it, the burning question in most gay people's mind who are christians is, "will the church love me if they knew?" Let me tell you, the secular gay community is out there with a big welcome mat and plenty of affirmation, for those who feel rejected by the church. People naturally gravitate where they feel the most love and acceptance. I would rather the church be the safe haven where gays can be spiritually nurtured and feel that God loves them.

Tom said,"As I see it, the burning question in most gay people's mind who are christians is, "will the church love me if they knew?" Let me tell you, the secular gay community is out there with a big welcome mat and plenty of affirmation, for those who feel rejected by the church. People naturally gravitate where they feel the most love and acceptance. I would rather the church be the safe haven where gays can be spiritually nurtured and feel that God loves them."

Absolutely. This is my key point, stated much more clearly than I was able to.
Kendra,

That issue of where and how a person feels acceptance should be at the heart of everything we do in God's name. As is well illustrated in the book "Unchristian," modern christians are know first and foremost for being anti-gay and anti-abortion. I already instinctively understood that but reading it still was a startling confirmation. So I like to turn the issue around with some questions: "I see what you are against. Now, what about God and redemption are you FOR? Do people know you are for that? Or are you just assuming they know it?" It makes people think.

Ella M.

Thank you, Tom, for sharing with us your very real person experience. You have led your life in a most admirable way. If it gives even a little understanding to some, it will be well worth your effort. It is hard for me to understand the brashness of some on this subject.

I wonder if some of the change therapies have found success in those who are bi-sexual or have a lesser degree of desire. I once heard there are different levels of homosexuality and that even "straight" people could experience it to some degree. I haven't heard this recently, so maybe the idea has been disputed.

Thank you, Kendra, for presenting the issue in the way you have. Unfortunately this is not being done in church papers and the misunderstanding continues. What bothers me the most is that when people hear someone is homosexual, they jump to the conclusion that they practice it. If we were to do this with all single people, we would believe all of them as being sexually active.

Kendra Perry

Yes. The term "gay" or LGBT is absolutely loaded with assumptions, many of which I have found are completely false. I think people can only speak in broad, judgmental generalizations if they do not personally know someone who has this life experience.

Kevin Riley

A sociology course in gender, sex and sexuality would prove useful for many who want to join this debate. Much about homosexuality - including how many homosexuals there are - depends on how you define 'homosexuality'. Both sides tend to choose definitions and statistics that suit there agenda. It is rarely as simple as either side in the debate would like to believe - real life rarely is. Dividing those who are homosexual from those who are heterosexual may prove to be as simple as dividing those who are black from those who are white, and just as pointless.

Kendra Perry

This is also very true, Kevin. I have lumped LGBT together here as one general category for the sake of starting a very simplified conversation, but even the four separate categories lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender have widely varying life experiences, not even taking individual variation into account. This is indeed an extremely broad and complex topic, but often not presented that way.
Kendra Perry 3 weeks ago

And we have not even begun to pretend to try to address issues such as genderqueer or intersex. So, yes, lots more ground to cover.

Tom 3 weeks ago

Dividing homosexuals from heterosexuals is not as easy as dividing those who are black from those who are white. Where would one put President Obama, who is a combination of both.

The Kinsey scale of 0-6 with complete heterosexualty, with no sexual feelings toward the same sex at 0, and a 6 for those who are exclusively attracted to their same sex. There are a lot of people who fall somewhere in between those exclusives. They may never act on homosexual attractions, but it is there nonetheless to varying degrees. I believe that sometimes, boys who have been sexually molested, by an older male, at an early age, become confused and gravitate toward homosexuality even though that is not their dominate orientation. Andrew Cominsky says he lost his innocence at the hand of another man at age 11. The ongoing sexual trauma fixated in his mind that he was gay and for a time as an adult he embraced the gay lifestyle. He claims to now be ex-gay totally. Many church members use his testimony and point the finger at other gays and say "see it can be done". The notion is hinted, if not downright stated, that gays don't want to change. In reality what it is considered change in sexual orientation, is really someone who wasn't gay in the first place, but more likely acted homosexually because of early molestation trauma.

Perhaps what I've ventured into here is not the purpose of this blog, but I am just trying to give some possible answers to questions Ella posed

Quite honestly many of these studies on both sides of the great divide over this issue, are a source of further anxiety at times. Remember we are people not laboratory rats in some big experiment.

pagophilus 3 weeks ago

Kevin Riley wrote: "A sociology course in gender, sex and sexuality would prove useful for many who want to join this debate. Much about homosexuality - including how many homosexuals there are - depends on how you define 'homosexuality'."

And this is the problem with sociologists and other researchers. They would like to define something to the n'th degree. And by the time they have examined the issue and categorised everything they have been corrupted by the behaviour they have been examining.

God, on the other hand, states things very simply: don't lie with a man like you would lie with a woman, and don't exchange the natural use for the unnatural one. So, what God is saying is, don't do man-to-man (or woman-to-woman) what should only be done man-to-woman. There doesn't need to be any more detail than that. Otherwise we have to get into detailed definitions and semantics and might end up like Bill Clinton "I did not have sex with that woman", which he "technically" did not have according to some people's definition.
Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

So "don't do man-to-man" what should done "man-to-woman"? What a novel way of expressing a most intimate physical love expression! Are such moments simply what we "do" to someone?

Seen that way, all sex becomes what Augustine described:

"if it was good company and conversation that Adam needed, it would have been much better arranged to have two men together as friends, not a man and a woman. Whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in a woman."

The letters of Jerome teem with loathing of the female and Tertullian wrote of women as evil temptresses, an eternal danger to mankind. Is it any wonder that all sex became an evil that only should be permitted for procreation? Or that this fear and hatred of women could lead to closer relationships between men? Can there be love between opposite or same sex without sex? Can two same-sex people live together without being suspect as to their sleeping arrangements? Whose business is it? When we can allow other to make their most intimate decisions and trust they have sufficient ability to do so without our aid, we will be less encumbered with judgmental duties which God has never given us and learn to accept and love people who may not be just like us.

BTW: "God says" is the usual biblical writer's ensuring that such admonitions will be obeyed. Did God actually say that or did man choose to do so? What part of the Bible did God write?

pagophilus 3 weeks ago

What part of the Bible did God write?

All of it, using human hands!

Elaine, what does early church fathers' loathing of women have to do with anything. Sometimes it seems like you ramble on just because you can.

Trevor Hammond 3 weeks ago

I think we need to be candid and admit that this ain't just about God (and us) loving 'gays'. The article also strongly alludes that homosexual behaviour should be accepted as 'normal' sexual behaviour even to the extent of accepting it as the closest thing to the Edenic ideal. In other words, is it better to be in a monogamous homosexual relationship than any other sexual immorality? Question is: "Did Jesus teach this? Does the Bible teach this?" Or is it just but the overwhelming dictates of a liberal culture within a society that has lost its way? A society that cannot discern spiritually between truth and error; right and wrong; light and darkness; and which has its constricting tentacles right within the church just cannot be trusted - the word of God will have to suffice: always. Extrapolating sexual immorality to be the equivalent of what constitutes biblical holy matrimony is clearly a secular cultural (even socio-political of late) worldview rather than a biblical mandate (in my opinion of course). I admire the sincerity of Ms. Perry’s article and the charge to love others which I will wholeheartedly concur with; but to be asked the Church compromise biblical truth in its quest to love, just ain’t on...
Kendra Perry

3 weeks ago

I am not SAYING any of these things. I am asking questions. If some of those questions lead you to think that gay marriage might not be out of the realm of possibility for a Christian, well, there you go.

It is still entirely possible that celibacy is God's will for his LGBT children. Again, I DON'T KNOW because this is not an issue God and I have to work out together.

But if celibacy is the only road, all the more reason for love, compassion, and acceptance in the church.

Timo Onjukka

3 weeks ago

Jesus had lunch with Photina at the well of Sychar; she perhaps was looking for a 6th (and better) husband.
He did not revile her behavior, and encouraged her to return to her husband.
Jesus sat on the curb with Mary, and covered her with the dignity of his robes, rather than reviling her apparel and behavior, "caught in the very act".
One wonders...if homosexuality (today, ostensibly due to a puritanical cultural aversion more than anything) is ascribed special condemnation within the broader corporate church, why was Jesus entirely mute on the subject? Does anyone believe homosexuality did not exist then? Or perhaps he was less concerned with the little specifics, and more with encompassing principle.

Seems that both of these women became phenoms, Photina as the first evangelist, who brought back all the men from her village to hear him speak, and Mary became the most celebrated, and devoted disciple, loyal into the Friday afternoon dark of death, and the Sunday morning tomb.

It is disheartening to see that many in our church today would preclude these offices (and even membership; certainly social inclusion) from such people, on basis of gender, and behavior.

Somewhere I've heard he came for the sinner. A prideful and perfect church of neo-conservative has no need...seems we've compromised on the spirit of the Royal command, in lieu of the (misconstrued) letter.
Perhaps erring on the side of love is not erring at all.

William Noel

2 weeks ago

Timo,

Preach on! You are so right that Jesus came to save sinners, including you and me. I have been richly blessed by the fellowship of believers who are willing to be open about their weaknesses, pray with and encourage each other in times of temptation, and celebrate the victories God gives.

Somehow we've come to expect a greater degree of perfection in our leaders than is credible or possible. The sooner we recognize they are human and embrace that weakness in the fellowship of grace, the better we will all be for the experience.
Another point to also consider in all of this is paraphilias. These may also be characterized by claimants who may say they were ‘born’ this way. Much of this sexual immorality and perversion is ironically accepted wholesale by modern society. Such immorality stands diametrically opposed to a biblical understanding of sexuality, sex and the sanctity of holy matrimony which clearly refers to a relationship between a man and woman. I found a list of paraphilias in a medical journal article on Psychiatric disorders found among some of the aged.

Mind you, much of these paraphilias are accepted as normal among many in western society. (Incidentally the disorders found among the aged were exhibitionism, fetishism, frotteurism, pedophilia, sexual masochism, sexual sadism, transvestic fetishism and voyeurism). My question is: "What if those who practice such claim they are ‘born this way’ too" - just like the gblt constituency does?

As an aside: “Homosexuality and Bisexuality were listed as paraphilias ("sexual deviations" in the original terminology) in early versions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and were removed from the third version.” [wikipedia]

♥T

Trevor Hammond

The claim "I was born this way" is most often used as a convenient excuse to shift blame onto God and divert attention from dealing with the root issue. As Christians we know the root cause of the problem is sin. The problem we as Christians have with the issue is that the defects sin has cause in us include genetic variations where there are real situations where a person can legitimately claim that they were born that way. These are no different than other genetic variations that we see as color blindness, baldness, physical deformities, etc.

Any discussion of "God made me this way" really is fruitless unless the person is willing to recognize both that they have a problem and allow God to transform them from within. This leaves us to deal with the problem of judgemental Christians who define redemption as another person being instantly victorious over whatever sin they are accused of having.

William Noel

Kendra,

Not sure I understand how your comments are the churh's stance on the subject of gays, etc. Is your stance what our church stands on and it's belief? I must first tell you that I admire you for putting your name to such a contraversial subject, I don't feel I have the knowledge to write such an article. I can only say from my perspective I cannot point an accusing finger at anyone - as I have so many faults of my own. My opinion is that people who are a part of what you called as a group: LGBT is solely a choice of those people as individuals. I, just like all people will solely have to answer to God. I must say it seems hard to believe that our SDA leadership would in words...
"condone" a lifestyle that is without question Not in harmony with my understanding of God. Jesus loves the sinner, and hates the sin is what I understand. It would appear that this subject, just like that of La Sierra having to defend the position of teaching creation in our college. Taking into account that I 'most definitely' do not have a place at all to judge others does not mean I cannot feel the human emotion of anger towards the pastor of the Fayetteville, NC church - Pastor Huskins as he swept the dirty little secret of my ex-wife's adultery under the rug, and subsequently divided the church. So you see, I have my own demons and faults to work on. I can only imagine that many would condemn me for my 18+ years of service to the U.S. Army in the Rangers and Special Forces. I'm so glad that God is in control, and I'll admit that I need his mercy and grace every day. Robert T. Wooster, Sr.

Kendra Perry 3 weeks ago

This is NOT the church's official stance on homosexuality or same-sex marriage. These are my independent and individual thoughts.

Official statements voted by the church can be found here:
http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat46.html (Homosexuality)
http://adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat53.html (Same-sex marriage)

Tom 3 weeks ago

Rngrbird,
You show that you don't have any knowledge on this issue, as you stated, when you admit that your opinion is that being gay is "solely a choice of those people as individuals." You make it sound as if it was as easy as choosing whether to turn the hot or cold water faucet on. It isn't!!!! If it was I would have chosen years ago not to have been gay!!!! I would go even further than that. I would have just about paid any price to not be so. As it was I spent a considerable sum on change therapy, only to find it was a waste of money.

Why is it that some folks can't accept the fact that some people are born that way? When I finally accepted that as a possibility, if not in fact a probability, with myself, I was finally able to salvage at least a little self esteem and peace of mind. It didn't change my behavior, which I have already stated was continued fidelity to my wife of 28 years, inspite of the sexual frustrations I live with on a daily basis.

"As for love the sinner, but hate the sin," that is a tired worn cliche forced from the lips of someone who can't muster anything better to say because they are uneasy about this subject. It's what I call lip service love. To gays it's more like a guided missile closing in on a target, than a genuine gesture of love.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

My personal opinion, not subjected to professional study, is that all dark-skinned people have chosen to be that shade. If they were unhappy with that condition they should have undergone therapy to have a change of color.
My personal opinion is that people who have no understanding of what it's like to be other than themselves, show an ignorance of human beings that is extremely sad. I chose to be female and all those who are male simply chose their sex, also.

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<th>Tom</th>
<th>3 weeks ago</th>
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<td>Can a leopard change its spots? I guess with enough bleech anything is possible. Look at Michael Jackson whose skin seemed to turn from black to white over the years. I get your point, Elaine, and I agree. However I have never seen a cat turn into a rat. But I have seen a few people turn into rats, figuratively speaking that is. I did have a cat once that liked cheese and dog that drank milk. So I guess one can say that behaviors can be changed or modified, but the orientation remains the same. Marrying a woman did not make me straight anymore than standing in a garage made me a car.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
<th>3 weeks ago</th>
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<td>Tom, well said! Spoken from personal experience, which few can claim. Advice is often freely given from those who have no understanding of what they speak.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Steve Billiter</th>
<th>2 weeks ago</th>
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| Why are you attempting to create undue, overly sympathetic feeling, as well as making excuses for homosexuals? Not once did I read a single line that says the homosexual sinner needs Jesus for deliverance from sin just like everyone else does. Why? Coddling any type of sin and those who engage in these sins, may simply lead to the eternal death of the person(s).

Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
Rev 3:21 To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

The real message of love to the one who breaks the Ten Commandments is the one that leads to Jesus Christ—His forgiveness as He absolves the repenting sinner and encourages him/her to “go and sin no more” as the Holy Spirit provides power for obedience. Overcoming all sin through Jesus Christ leads to everlasting life in the soon coming kingdom of God! Making excuses for any sin is the message of hate—please brothers and sisters, let’s not give those for whom Christ died that message.

1Jn 5:12 He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life. |

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<th>William Noel</th>
<th>2 weeks ago</th>
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| Steve,

I take hope in Paul's declaration that God is able to save "unto the uttermost ALL who come to him." How far is "the uttermost?" How inclusive (or exclusive) is "all?" |
Are not homosexuals also sinners whom Jesus died to save? I think your concepts of salvation and God's power to redeem need some expansion.

Elaine Nelson  2 weeks ago

Perhaps someone can furnish the commandment condemning homosexual orientation. Is it a "sin" from birth? Jesus clearly stated that neither the cripple nor his parents sinned.

For anyone who is heterosexual to condemn a homosexual is denying that he or she needs to walk in another's moccasins first, before condemning. Jesus said he did not come into the world to condemn the world but to save the world. "Who is without sin cast the first stone." Does someone here claim to be sinless? Only he who is sinless should cast the first stone.

Trevor Hammond  2 weeks ago

This is something new: associating homosexual practice as a 'cripple condition' rather than what the Bible calls it ---> sin.
♥T

Kendra Perry  2 weeks ago

You are persistently conflating ORIENTATION with PRACTICE. Elaine clearly says ORIENTATION in her post, yet you respond to her talking about PRACTICE. They are NOT the same.

Elaine Nelson  2 weeks ago

No one is being asked to condone homossexuals, but there is a command to love one another and to be kind to others is God-given. How can one be insensitive to others without necessarily condoning? Must someone be questioned on his actions and beliefs before he is accepted as one of God's children? Who has been asked to judge others? God is the judge and man has not been given that task. Let God be God, in the end will not God do what is right?

Has a homosexual asked you to condone his actions or orientation? Have we not sufficient problems in our lives that we can begin worrying about others? Why the puerile interest in other's private lives?

pagophilus  2 weeks ago

Must an adulterer be questioned on his actions and beliefs before he is accepted as one of God's children? How about a murderer?

The word "Lord" implies a master-servant relationship. We are willing servants of Christ. How can we call him "Lord" if we refuse to obey Him? Try telling your army commander "yes, you are my commander but I'm refusing to obey you!"
Who has been asked to judge others? We have.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

1 Corinthians 2:15

I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?

1 Corinthians 6:5

Then you shall again discern
Between the righteous and the wicked,
Between one who serves God
And one who does not serve Him.

Malachi 3:18

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Isaiah 8:20

“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Revelation 2:2

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

John 7:24

Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

1 Kings 3:9

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem;
See now and know;
And seek in her open places
If you can find a man,
If there is anyone who executes judgment,
Who seeks the truth,
And I will pardon her.
Elaine asked the question about which commandment condemns someone for a homosexual ORIENTATION. Some of you folks commenting here are so uncomfortable with this subject, you can't see a gay person but for sexual acts. You are long on coming down on sin with a capital S, which yes God does. But first he loves the sinner beyond anything we can even imagine. The church has not done a very good job ministering to gays. It has only recently made some small steps to try and understand it all.

I put my pants on one leg at a time like any other man. If I am damned to hell just for having a homosexual orientation, then I might as well put in my order for ice water now. Me thinks folks in the amen corner of the church who cheer on with a "let those gays have it" with those few clobber texts, may want to put in their order too before it's all sold out. They are certain to get a ring side seat in the hot spot, too.

Would any of the "straight" men on here understand this better if they put themselves in the place of a man without a wife in today's world and no chance of marriage? Would they have no desires? Would they be lonely? Would they long for human touch? How would their lives be changed? Would they be happy? Would they struggle with their desires? Hopefully they would be celibate--but would it be easy? I don't think so. And if you met a woman and fell in love, yet could not marry, how would you feel? Or if your wife were around but you could not touch her and it would be considered a great sin if you did and it would cause people to persecute and even hate you? Does this make some sense to you? If it does then I suppose you could relate to this condition of homosexuality. Until you can understand that you were born this way as a heterosexual, you cannot understand these others' trials and pain.

I am not a man but a happily married woman, yet hope to help the "judges" here to have some sensitivity. My plea is on the behalf of the few men I have known or heard from over the years who suffer the pain of this affliction they came into this world with. "Let him who has not sinned pick up the first stone."

I think these are very powerful and apt analogies. Thank you for sharing them.

Thank you Kendra for dealing with a very sensitive area in your blog. Thank you Tom for sharing your experience. I appreciated reading all the responses.
It seems that some blog responders consistently accused Kendra (and anyone else who urged that love and compassion should be extended to those who are gay) of condoning sin. They seemed deaf and blind to the distinction that was repeatedly made between orientation and practice, and to have condemned both. After reading all the responses, I do not recall a single one that condoned the practice. Kendra and perhaps Elaine and others did point out that homosexuality is not the only sin, and is no worse than many other sins. But then so did Paul in the latter part of Rom 1, so they are in very good company. (According to EGW, if there is a priority list, pride is at the top).

Though I have had little contact with gays or lesbians, I believe from what Tom and others have said that while the gay lifestyle may be a choice, the orientation is not for many gays. Someone denied that there is a gene for being gay. But is not the tendency toward sin--sinful human nature--passed on through the genes? If not, where does it come from? Why cannot it include a tendency toward homosexuality in some people? Then too, what about the effects of possible unknown pre-natal influences or sexual abuse in early years? I think there is great deal of evidence to support the idea that many are born with a constitution that predisposes them toward a homosexual orientation, or develop it very early in life.

Apparently God does heal some people from gay desires. But does He heal all? Will He heal everyone of every disease that comes along--including aging itself, which in a sense could be considered to be a kind of "disease?" Will God remove sinful human nature and all of its genetic consequences from all who truly believe in Christ before they die or before He comes? Or is it rather that He gives increasing power to overcome the effects of sinful nature, and that victory comes not through changed human nature but through a consistent, living, growing relationship with Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? I would be particularly interested in seeing answers that the more critical blog responders would give to some of these questions.

Kendra Perry 2 weeks ago

I am so glad to see that someone is reading carefully!! I would also be interested in hearing the responses to those questions.
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<th>Ron Henderson</th>
<th>2 weeks ago</th>
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<td>It really saddens me to see how some people pick apart clear statements of God against sin, and the sin of homosexuality. It also saddens me to see how some continually repeat trite, well worn, excuses to defend the indefensible; it also saddens me to see how many Adventists love all people, including gays; as if the majority of us hate gays!! If one does not warn gays of their sin (as we warn other non gays) who will do it? Kendra? Do we love the philanderers and hate gays? Of course not. We love them all, for such were some of us. However, we have the God given mission to kindly talk to gays (as we talk to others) about their lifestyle. If it is not done then their blood will be on our shoulders. Finally, just look at the gay agenda for our society and you should think twice and control your feelings! Never give the impression that to be gay is okay. There is no gay gene! The Swedes tried to prove it unsuccessfully; one is not 'born' gay no more than one is born an adulterer. Every sin is wrong, and that includes homosexuality.</td>
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<th>Kendra Perry</th>
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<td>BEING gay does not make a person any more or less a sinner than BEING straight. Philanderers are those who have engaged in a behavior outside God's will. Knowing that someone is gay tells us nothing about their actions.</td>
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<th>Ella M.</th>
<th>2 weeks ago</th>
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| Ron,  
Maybe you didn't mean it that way, but you are still not making a distinction between homosexuality as a condition and the practice of it. As stated here, you are judging people rather than the behavior. That is a big part of the problem in the church--people are being stereotyped by the way they were born rather than actions and lifestyle.  
When you talk about the practice outside the church, however, you need to recognize that the marriage or partnership of one person to another borders on civil or even religious freedom. Like polygamy in some countries, a missionary does not come in and start condemning the practice, first they start with Christ and His love for us before getting into cultural practices. And I do not see that one of these sins is worse than the other. I think adultery is more pervasive and deadly to more people. It is usually when the polygamist decides to be a Christian that they need to make a decision about their lifestyle. The same goes for co-habitation. |

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<th>William Noel</th>
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| Ron,  
Where in scripture do you find greater condemnation of homosexuality than other sins, or that one sin is more despicable to God than another? I find that God is against all sin, that we are sinners and that He offers His power to redeem us from whatever sin we battle. |

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<th>Ron Henderson</th>
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| In my ministry I have never hated gays; nor have the members of my churches. I hear that there are a lot of people who hate gays, yes, just as there are a lot of gays who hate non gays, do not kid yourselves about that. Why Kendra and others think we mainly hate gays is strange to me. Who
does not know that God does not hate gays? God came to die for gays as well as fornicators. But both will perish if they continue in their sins after being warned. I fail to understand how a guy with a great desire for women is any different form a guy who has a great desire for men. In no way should they be positively reinforced in their sins. Just as the Christian who is struggling to keep his desire for women under control through God's power, so must the Christian who is gay in his thinking, control his abnormality as well through God's power. Whether it is the abnormal sin of homosexuality or the abnormal craving for women, it is still sin on both counts, and both need a Saviour, and indeed have one. Will they accept him? It is there choice. And someone has to introduce him to them. Again I say, you do not seem to know what the gay agenda is for our society; go to Europe, especially the UK, just look at the governments of Canada and other countries and you should tremble. As a minister I would be arrested in my home country, the UK, if I preached on homosexuality from the Bible. I am allowed to preach about other forms of immorality but not homosexuality. They would like to make homosexuality as just, and good, and pleasurable for all to follow. Our children from kindergarden are indoctrinated in that. So when we talk out it is not hatred; people must be warned for their own good or they will be lost if they continue in any sin, including homosexuality! Someone must stand up for God and preach the clear Word, calling men from their sins, and yes, the sins of homosexuality, for heaven is for transformed homosexuals as well.

Kendra Perry 2 weeks ago

You assume that all gays are practicing. They are not.

Anonymous 2 weeks ago

Such a pity that there are still so many homophobic individuals still out there preaching hate. I would bet that none of you antigay folks have ever had a friend that was close enough to you to share their pain and struggles trying to fit into a straight world and very straight church. The lack of compassion is really hard to understand when all you have to do is look at the example Jesus set in his life where he accepted people of all stripes and focused on healing rather than condemning. How about letting God be the final judge and working on showing other's love instead of hate. Ever thought of that? How you can call yourself a christian while being so hate filled is unbelievable. No wonder the modern world has little use for today's "christians".

Tom 2 weeks ago

I don't think that anyone here is preaching hate, or at least as I define the term. But there is a great deal of insensitivity, misunderstanding, and downright ignorance displayed toward gays in general here. Walk in my shoes for awhile and you might see just a hint of what I am talking about. For the record, I was never molested as a child, I was raised in a loving home by two parents, attended church weekly, went to church school, and was surrounded by straight people. I didn't even know anyone who I might have remotely thought was a homosexual, yet as far back as I can remember, I found myself oriented to my own sex. Imagine the frustration, fear and loneliness of a young boy who thought at the time he was the only one with feelings like this. Imagine the confusion swirling in my young mind trying to make sense of it all and wishing and praying it would go away. Why is there this insistance on the part of some that if they admit that some people are born this way, they are soft on sin and want to promote lifestyle choices that go contrary to biblical teachings.
For me it is a difficult enough burden to bare, without hearing constant reminders from folks who, figuratively speaking, look at a gay person through prejudicial eyes, point the finger and loudly proclaim "unclean".

Kendra Perry
2 weeks ago

I admire and respect your willingness to continue taking part in this conversation, and thank you so much. Those who are willing to listen to and actually try to understand your experience have the opportunity to learn a lot, and to demonstrate the love they continually claim to have for "non-practicing" gays.

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

"sin of homosexuality."

So now it's come to homosexuality being a sin! Where in all of scripture is the condition of homosexuality ever called sin? Those who are so certain it is sinful have also admitted that they really don't personally know, or have talked with any, so they are now able to judge? Should homophobia now also be a sin? Why not?

Please spare me your self-righteous manner: "Thank God, I am not one of these." If that's Christianity, spare me, also.

Ervin Taylor
2 weeks ago

Like Elaine and several others, I have been waiting for many weeks for those who seem to be so sure that know what the Bible says on so many topics to quote a Biblical text that says that homosexual orientation is a sin. I know what Jesus is recorded as condemning – religious pride, religious hypocrisy, an outward show of how orthodox ("straight") one was, an attitude that "I’m glad I’m not like certain other people."

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

Adventism resurrected Pharisaism. Perhaps it never died.

Tom
2 weeks ago

Thank-you Erv and Elaine for acknowledging what so many people in the church just can't see or refuse to. They see a news story about a gay pride parade, complete with provocative photos, and they conclude the worst about all of us. Oh well, the Jews in Christ's day had no use for the Samaritans, which makes Jesus parable about the good Samaritan all the more compelling. Maybe it's time to update the characters a bit for contemporary times. Imagine telling an all white church in the south this story fifty years ago and the one who showed compassion was a black man, or today that he was gay. Better yet what would be the response of some religious folks if the one who had been robbed, beaten and left half dead had been a gay man? I suppose there is some
degree of prejudice in everyone. Jesus was crucified because He dared confront hypocrisy and prejudice. We all should take note, be aware and act accordingly, of what divides the sheep from the goats in the end.

Rngrbird 2 weeks ago

Kendra - Many thanks for the sites w/official statements. I respect the rights of others to exercise the freedom of speech that ( I, my oldest son, and many others) fought to protect!!

Tom - As a Veteran I will set you in your place; "At-Ease in the harness". I fought to protect your freedom of speech. Don't point the finger at others saying they don't have the knowledge! Be very careful as I'm not soft on sin, YET I will tell you straight up, I gave you your rights to express your opinion - Not to lash out at others. Again, since I paid the price for free expression - YES, it is a choice, and this "born this way" is B.S. Do I need to pat you on the head and tell you how nice you are to have had 'continued fidelity' to your wife for 28 years.... poor boy.

As I've already expressed, Yes I do believe that it is my duty - As someone who is trying to be a Christian = as a Christian is someone who is Christ-Like.... Sorry, didn't say I was, but rather trying to be. I do believe that we are admonished to love the sinner and hate the sin. Don't strike out saying that "that is a tired worn cliche"... By far, I'm not uneasy with the subject - IT'S WRONG - PERIOD. Well if you feel like it is a guided missile - then, buckle up.

Want to hear something that has hurt me to the core, and I don't even know if it was true to this day ???

My younger brother, Sidney was murdered in Bakersfield, CA in August of 1981 along with his boss Jack Blankenship on a dirt road, at about 21:30 hrs., and yes I've got the 8x10 color glossy's of the scene - and I can see the path where my brother crawled while the 4 bullets bleed his life out of him. Ok, the murderer, William Robert Tyack shot and killed Sid and his boss Jack - as they were going out to talk to a man about listing his property with the realestate firm. Mr. Tyack said: "I aimed to kill those 2 gay guys ----- How dare you tell me I don't know anything!!!!! Mr. Tyack spent a few days in a half-way house, So would you like a little of my rage directed at YOU ???

Like I said, At-Ease in the harness, you self-righteous, holier-than-thou "whatever you are"........ Nuff said.

Trevor Hammond 4 days ago

Hey Rngrbird, I lost a brother in April this year due to cancer and a first cousin of mine was brutally murdered a few months thereafter by a known assailant (the case is still in progress). It is so tough to lose loved ones, more especially I assume, when one doesn’t have all the answers to have full closure. May God give you the peace and comfort for your tragic loss of your brother back in 1981. ♥T

David 2 weeks ago

I ask myself if the only sinner in this world was a homosexual, could have Jesus die only for him/her to saved. The answer is YES, YES, YES.

EE (Elaine and Erv) are waiting for and passage of the bible expressing that homosexuality is a sin. “For the wages of sin is death”

The OT and NT is pretty clear: an abomination, result is death
“If a man also lie with mankind...both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Looks that abomination (which includes homosexuality) is placed among other conditions, that will result in death.

Christ died for homosexuals, liars, murderers, unbelievers, idolaters and as well hypocrites including SDA. But the power of GOD produces a change in a life; the liar becomes to be honest, an unbeliever in a believer, and a so on.

Ervin Taylor
2 weeks ago

I know this is not going to help David. But he might want to look up what the Old Testament text he is quoting actually is addressing. Also, stringing texts together as he has, even if they are totally out of context, is a favorite strategy in this discussion. Let's all just leave each other to follow their own presuppositions. Kendra's original blog made an excellent point. It's too bad that David is not capable of understanding that.

Anonymous
2 weeks ago

So David, assuming one agrees with you that same sex orientation is a "sin", and that is still a long stretch, does that mean that we must all enforce the notion that those with this particular "sin" must stop "sinning" to be accepted and welcomed into our church family? If so how does that compare with all of the other "sins" that all of us are guilty of in one form or another (pride, jealousy, impatience, belittling those we have power over (like our spouse), cheating others in business transactions, domestic violence, closet habits like porn and singlehanded sex, a glass of wine with dinner, and on and on the list goes? This seems to be such a hypocritical argument. Jesus came to save all of us and again, His ministry focused on redemption and forgiveness, not condemnation. Is it so hard to let God be the judge? Why not focus our efforts at making all of God's children feel welcomed to our church family instead of trying to be exclusive and judgemental because of our own natural bias and discomfort with same sex orientation? These people are in our midst, and they are not going away. What do you think Jesus would do?

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

David committed adultery, many of the patriarchs said to have been the faithful have committed grievous sins, including murder. If they are entitled to heaven, which of all the sins will keep one out of heaven?

Adultery used to be considered on-going if a divorced person remarried, it was not a one-time sin but he or she was a sinner until death. How is that different from homosexuality? Please explain the rationale. Any sexual act outside of marriage was also the sin of fornication. Are homosexual acts more sinful than fornication? Both are common today, including Adventists. Are they kicked out of the church? Should they be? Or, is it a program to winnow down the some 13 million members down to the proper number 144,000 to ensure the Lord's coming?

There's going to be a pretty big bonfire.
Elaine you asked for a text biblical that homosexuality is a sin, the evidence has been shown. Mark the church I assist is full of sinners, I’m one of them, but I saw the changing power of GOD. Thieves becoming to be honest persons, adulterous becoming to be faithful husbands, liars becoming to be credible, yes even homosexuals changing their past habits. I believe that grace of GOD and his power is greater than any tendency or sin. As a hospital is for sick people the church is for sinners, but in both places we expect people to get better.

Ella M. 5 days ago

David,
You are still saying that "homosexuality" is a sin instead of the practice of homosexuality, and I object to that. I can understand the "practice" being sinful but not the orientation.
On the other hand, was polygamy considered a sin in the OT? They seem similar taking into account the cultural context. Such may be the case were marriage allowed for the homosexual. (I am not saying this would be true in the church setting.)

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

If homosexuals can change their past habits, why isn't same-sex marriage allowed? This has been the best method for heterosexuals for most of the world's history: marriage prevents promiscuity (although, not always). If heterosexuals were never allowed to marry, does anyone believe they would always be celibate? Paul said it is better to marry than burn, and humans, regardless of sexual orientation, have God-given sexual desires. Monogamy should be permitted for all couples who desire to remain faithful to their spouse. Such a position never occurred in Christ's time as all sex outside of marriage was a "sin." Does anyone ask a heterosexual couple if they are being intimate? Why should homosexuals be asked such questions? Are they considered legitimate targets for questioning?

What if the church simply accepted everyone who wished to worship? For those who are second or third-generation SDAs, should these people, suspected of such behavior, be questioned and then disfellowshipped? Many SDA young people growing up only discovered their attraction to the same sex in the teens or later. Is someone prepped to carry out a questionnaire? How many church members do you know who have confided in you that they are homosexual? Are you required to then report to the church board? Why the prurient interest?

Tom 2 weeks ago

Say, BURR UNDER THE SADDLE, how does being a veteran give you the right to stand on a pedestal to set me straight? Cool your jets man!! As for your trying to be christian, you better stop trying so hard, 'cause it ain't working. If being a christian is being Christlike, your response to me was anything but that.
Oh well, I'm not going to let it ruin my day. Your post is ample evidence of some of what I have been trying to say here, about how some christians show little tolerance or compassion for
someone who is gay.

Some church members already think they are bending over backwards for gays, when in fact the church has for the most part turned a cold shoulder to so many. Kendra has shown a charitable attitude. She has put out the welcome mat so to speak and opened this blog for discussion. I have tried to put a face on all this with my experience, but not hold myself up as the template for all gays. Perhaps I shouldn't use the term gay because it conjurs up so many negative feelings with some. Would same-sex-attracted sound better?

Either way people are going to think the way they want to, and look for texts that support their feelings on the matter. I ask the question, am I an abomination for having the attraction to my own sex, even though I haven't engaged in sex with the same for 3 decades now?

Let me make it clear, I am not looking for sympathy, only understanding and a willingness to show some compassion. The only time I am a cry baby is when I sob over the stories of gay teens who have committed suicide rather than face a seemingly unending life of harrassment and hate.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

The attitude expressed by some here is not far from being happy when another gay young person has committed suicide because of the sentiments written by some of those posted here. If this is not realistic, feel free to prove why it isn't.

To paraphrase H.L. Mencken: "There's a fear that someone, somewhere may be gay." Where should they go?

Trevor Hammond 2 weeks ago

Where are the Bible texts which advocate and condone homosexual relationships or the marriage of same sex persons? I suppose to cultural adventists the Bible isn't paramount in such a discussion. The 'out of context' defense of homosexual orientation and homosexual perversion/behaviour is a strawman in terms of the Bible's clear teaching against such abomination and shows how we as a society have lost our way in becoming a society devoid of a sense of shame.

Now let me get this 'straight' (pardon the pun). Dr. Taylor and Mrs. Nelson request Biblical text to substantiate the sin of unnatural sexual perversion (although they don’t present the same to justify such practice). Before I indulge them, I have got the unambiguous impression from other comments that they aren't Bible based believing Christians insofar as the inspiration of scriptures is concerned. They defend much of their arguments not on scripture but on cultural trends and non-faith belief systems. Not posting any bible verses was intentional on my part and maybe some others. There is a reason for this. The Bible as we all know unabashedly condemns sin in all its forms. That is a no brainer. Homosexual acts however are specifically mentioned, among others, as specific sins which anger our Righteous and Holy Creator who is Christ the Lord. By His word were ALL things created that are created.

The Bible condemns sexual perversion and it specifically emphasizes the sin of homosexual perversion which is clear and in no uncertain terms. To lie to the homosexual community that their ‘ways’ are ‘kosher’ and Bible based is a terribly misleading sin itself and a direct insult to God’s love as seen on the cross of Calvary. Yes Jesus died for the homosexual too. God would have
even spared Sodom and Gomorrah had there been only a few who were faithful. God eventually destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire for their sinful unrepentant ways which includes sexual perversion. The Bible also warns of the consequences of this course of action; and very strongly at that, I might add.

The Greeks and the Romans with all their ‘enlightenment’ in the arts and culture as a so-called civilized society, were very much into such debauchery which was in many instances practiced legally and openly thereby exposing a society devoid of a sense of shame: just like today. Nothing much has changed in this regard except now there are factions even within the Christian community (of all people) who come out in defence of such sin against the Almighty Creator by openly abusing the love He has unconditionally bestowed upon us sinners on this planet.

Orientation, practice, whatever: God CAN provide VICTORY in and from ALL SIN through Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!

♥T

Erv at least be honest and curious, go and see what was the original word in the Hebrew bible: *shakab* שָׁכַב. The translation to lie (of sexual relations) b) (Niphal) to be lain with (sexually) c. (Pual) to be lain with (sexually)

*Maybe this can help you*

Erv here is the text leviticus 20;13

13 “If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable (abomination). They are to be put to death.

You and Elaine were asking for a biblical text. Now that is has been produced don't play with words

I have friends and family a member that are gay I love them and pray for them I hope some day they will accept the grace and power of GOD.

If AT wanted to exclude me so be it. that will not change the reality

Cultural Adventists/ex-Adventists are so predictable. Now some are trying to sensationalize this topic by alluding and acusing others of hatred and harshness towards homosexuals, and accusing them also of inciting suicide by their posts here. Come on grow up! Falsey accusing those who believe what the Bible teaches is bad enough; but even worse, is to assert and preach that the Bible actually condones and supports such perversion (as the Bible calls it) is really what is so sad.

A 15 year old teen sadly committed suicide Thursday past just after her dad scolded her for something which obviously didn't go down well with her. Does that mean that all parents are guilty of promoting suicide when they admonish their kids for something they do wrong. Come on! I
thought that a rational discussion was on the table but obviously it seems not. No Christians I know get happy when ANY teen takes their own life for WHATEVER reason. To assume otherwise is purely a malicious attempt to GET BACK in a below the belt attack at opposing views and is not reasonable.

♥T

Tom 2 weeks ago

"Orientation, practice, whatever: God can provide VICTORY from and in ALL SIN through Christ Jesus."

Trevor, I see you make no distinction between orientation and practice. After all I have said here, you still just don't get it, and probably never will. What you see as one and the same, and probably discard as hair-splitting, is quite different if you were in my shoes. Go back and reread some of my posts and you may see what I mean. It would redundant for me to repeat it all. Also, if I understand Elaine correctly, her comment about some folks rejoicing when a gay teen commits suicide, was probably one of her tongue in check remarks, and not serious. But I will let her speak for herself. I have observed at times she throws a little fat in the fire or water in the face to jar folks a bit into thinking outside their neat little box of pat answers.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

When one looks on another and declares it an abomination, how can it not be an accusation against the individual at whom it was directed?

"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the dark, but anyone who loves his brother is living in the light...unlike the man who hates his brother and is in the darkness, not knowing where he is going, because it is too dark to see" (1 John 2:9-11).

David, since you appear to be obsessed over homosexuality as abomination, I suggest you use a concordance and give us a list of everything in the Bible that is called an abomination; eg., touching a dead body is an abomination; even the proud of heart ("God, I thank thee I am not like them").

Is anyone innocent, given the many abominations that can be committed?

"To hate your brother is to be a murderer" (1 John 3:15).

David 2 weeks ago

Elaine my participation in this blog was limited to answer you challenge (to show if homosexuality is a sin in the Bible). It was presented few passages to show it. They are many other actions that are abomination too (see your concordance). I 'll finish repeating that the grace and power of GOD is greater than any sin. If he was able to forgive me and change my life He could do for anybody. That is his amazing Grace.
Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

"She was a model student and a star athlete – an honest young woman in her final year at a private Christian high school, The Master's School, in Connecticut. But when school administrators asked her about her sexual orientation, she answered courageously and honestly that she is a lesbian.

And then those same administrators told her to withdraw or she would be kicked out.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students across the country are back in school, many facing bullying from peers. The last thing these students need is a school administration that refuses to protect them from unfair treatment."

From today's Human Rights newsletter.

Is this the Christian's attitude?

Brothersdown
2 weeks ago

Hello folks, i'm new here but old to the bible. Now let me see if i have this right, Kendra said lets pretend that Jesus used the word gay insted of blind. If the man was gay insted of blind i dont think he would have done anything, in Leviticus chapter 18 verse 22 it says tho shalt not lie with a mankind as with a womankind, it is an abomination, it later says that a man that lies with another man should be put to death. There is a lot of differance between being blind and being gay. BUT Jesus can heal anyone with this disease, man was not created gay, he has achoise about that like he does about everything else in life. I am not saying we should shun them but we should pray for someone in this condition, if they dont want to change then have nothing more to do with them. God created man perfect, satan has brought sin into the world and now this is one that people are trying to teach our children, some as young as 6 that it is alright to have feelings for someone of the same sex, this is a lie straight from satan, if you cant see it than you cannot expet to understand your bible. Dont say that this was in the old law of Moses, if it is an abomination with God punishable by death then it is still the same today, our Creator says, I am God, i change not, neither does his word. We need to put a stop to this awful sin and teach our children moral values of a christian home, but to many people are to busy to have anything to do with their children, no bible studies, no conversation, no time spent with them at all, they are all left up to fend for them selves and no one knows this better than the RCC. This is their doing and they are antichrist. DO NOT pity the gays and lesbins, all they want is to seduce your children...

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

Brothersdown:

May I assume that you are heterosexual? May I also assume that you chose to be heterosexual? If so, can you tell us when you made that decision and what led you to that choice? Is blindness a choice? What is the meaning of the words of this song:
"I once was blind and now I see"? Is there a blindness of the heart? (Eph.1 4:18)

Joe Erwin 2 weeks ago

Who knows what goes on behind the bedroom doors of other people? Why should any of us care at all, as long as what is occurring is consensual? And, what if what someone else does is not what you or I thinks of as appropriate? Basically, it is none of our business. If God does or doesn't approve, let whatever is going on be between God and the individual or individuals involved.

So, who among you is prepared to cast the first stone? I think I see several hands raised....

Can't you just accept God's love and grace and quit the quick & insensitive condemnation?

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

Too many Adventists are Seven Day Voyeurists. Why, oh why, are you so curious about what goes in the privacy of people's homes? If you are straight, are you seeking congratulations? Is there some special honor for celibacy? In the Roman Catholic system there is, but does Adventism also have such requirements?

Trevor Hammond 2 weeks ago

If this was just a bedroom private topic then why was it brought up on a public platform? Nobody is throwing stones or been insensitive or condemning for that matter. Neither do we want to snoop into homosexual bedrooms. Some may have been caught up in the sensational exciting side of such activity and are intrigued so much by it that they support its practice in order to satisfy their curiosity by encouraging homosexuals. Perhaps there are many who get a kick out of talking and supporting sexual immorality and immoral living. The SDA church has a scriptural basis for our belief and it is clear that God does NOT approve of such behavior even if we may find some cultural socio-political basis for this practice. Warning sinners who are trapped in sinful living (including all types of sin) by showing them love and calling them to repentance in Christ Jesus is what the church does or at least should be doing apart from its many other objectives. Those who are standing in the path of sinners, please put your hands up! Wow! There are many...

It's a long shot but should we then just change the Bible like some churches have done so that sin can be accommodated and practiced? Well some are suggesting that here...but don't expect or try to force or manipulate the rest of us into such a voyage of destruction. We just can't let sexual excitement rule over the standards set forth in scripture. Homosexuals have to come to terms with this just like I had to let the Lord deal with my addiction to dope and tobacco and alcohol and sinful living. The blood of Christ has power indeed for every single shortcoming and sin.

No one has even mentioned the high risk among the homosexual community of contracting HIV AIDS and other STD's which they too are very susceptible to and about how many of us have seen the devastating effects on homes and family's as a result of loved ones who have died of AIDS's related illnesses and complications. What about loving the many orphans on our planet who have lost their parents to HIV-AIDS? We as a Church are loving these children too. So our love as
Christians is broad based and not limited only to homosexuals. Shouldn't we love them enough to tell them enough, just like we as a church do for others who are trapped in an orientation towards sinful living or even those practicing sinful living. Isn't the love of Christ enough to for all of us? Apparently from some comments here there isn’t enough power in the previous Blood of Jesus Christ. Maybe we have it the wrong way ‘round: perhaps we should first surrender our lives completely to Him and allow Him to work repentance in us, the old school way – the way of the Cross.

The mistake we have made here is to assume that to love means to condone. This is a misrepresentation of God's love. We have to admit too that just like the governments of our world have through their systems of education forced non-empirical evolution theory on society, they are now forcing social disorder and cultural sex as a normal part of sexuality which is been taught in school and promoted in the media. This is what the Greeks and Romans did when they chose to embrace sexual immorality. Seems Rome still rules much of our world today and they seek to hand homosexuality on a platter even trying to force the practice on the church.

♥T

David 2 weeks ago

Elaine stated, “Too many Adventists are Seven Day Voyeurists". Could provide the source of that observation? Was ever conducted a survey to find out the “too many”? or is this just your unfounded impression? It good to remember the 9th commandment “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor(s)"
The Adventists that I know are not interested in such sick perversions.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

There seems to be such an interest expressed by some posters here who are intent on diagnosing and prescribing expulsion for private behaviors. If this is not voyeurism, please give another definition than Merriam-Webster:

**Voyeurism: A prying observer who is usually seeking the sordid or the scandalous.**

David 2 weeks ago

Elaine here is some definitions of voyeurism. Also to use the words “too many” is inappropriate. It will be more honest to say “I exaggerated... my apologies” than defending the absurd.

“In clinical psychology, **voyeurism** is the sexual interest in or practice of spying on people engaged in intimate behaviors, such as undressing, sexual activity, or other activity usually considered to be of a private nature” (Hirschfeld, M. (1938). *Sexual anomalies and perversions: Physical and psychological development, diagnosis and treatment*)

“Voyeurism is a psychosexual disorder in which a person derives sexual pleasure and gratification from looking at the naked bodies and genital organs or observing the sexual acts of others. The voyeur is usually hidden from view of others. Voyeurism is a form of paraphilia”
“the practice of obtaining sexual gratification by looking at sexual objects or acts, especially secretly”

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

One only needs to read the many comments here to see that there are some who have an inordinate interest in people's private lives; suspicion that they may be committing abomination. Question: have you observed such abominations with your own eyes? Either you have (which is certainly voyeurism) or there is a suspicion. We should always believe the best of others, especially when we have no absolute evidence, and then, why condemn them? Let God speak to them; we have not been asked to do that.

David 2 weeks ago

Elaine your phrase: “Too many Adventists are Seven Day Voyeurists”. Is unsustainable. No matter how much you wanted to avoid it. Take your own medicine “We should always believe the best of others, especially when we have no absolute evidence”.

David 2 weeks ago

Erv, I know what I think and I’ll post it any time but first you answer to my questions that you never responded. Well now you have again the opportunity to do so. The street goes both ways! You want me to refresh you the questions?

Trevor Hammond 2 weeks ago

RE: abomination:

God said it... I believe it... and that settles it for me!

No need to 'see' sin to know sin. God's instruction on what constitutes sin will suffice any day as a credible source of instruction.

♥T

Tom 2 weeks ago

I haven't seen one post here on this blog where anyone has proposed the church sanction gay sex. But that seems to be the automatic response from some folks who seem to have their skin crawl whenever the subject of loving gays comes up. I won't even give the dignity of a response to the guy who said all we want to do is seduce children. Some people's minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set. Trying to convince them otherwise is a waste of time.
and effort.

To try and elevate the discussion a bit and cool the hot pokers jabbing back and forth of late, I'd like to ask WWJD? There is no biblical account of Jesus ever talking directly about homosexuals, but there is one concerning a prostitute. Since some of you automatically put gays down there with the prostitutes, I'll use this for an example. The story is in John 8.

A prostitute, caught in the very act, was drug before Jesus. Her accusers stated that the law of Moses said she should be stoned. so they asked Him what should be done to her. They were trying to trap Jesus. Only the Romans could invoke the death penalty since the Jews were under their rule. If He told them to stone her, they would rush to the Romans authorities and accuse Him of usurping their authority. If He refused to tell them to stone her, than her accusers would go tell the Jewish religious leaders that He was disregarding the law of Moses. The catch 22 insured consequences whichever way he answered.

Jesus foiled their plot by saying, "he who is without sin, let him cast the first stone." As they one by one left, after seeing Him write their sins in the sand, he then asked her where her accusers were. "They are gone," she answered.

He didn't issue some long winded lecture to the woman about her sordid lifestyle, quoting biblical passages declaring she really should be stoned. No, he simply said," neither do I condemn you". By those words He didn't let her off and tell her "you can go back to work now." He followed his non condemnation by saying, "now go and sin no more."

I believe that Jesus greatest emphasis, the thing that gave this woman hope and a feeling of being loved were those words, "neither do I condemn you." This woman probably was treated like dirt and was looking for love in all the wrong places as a result. His following that with "go and sin no more" was not a qualifier for the first, but a follow up invitation to a better life.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

How will we relate to these people as our neighbors in heaven? Who are we to bar them?

Joe Erwin 1 week ago

If only we could look at others and their actions (or what we may think they have done), and recognize that they had their own personal (usually quite private) reasons for feeling as they feel and doing as they do. We attribute this ability to God, so S/He would be able to understand and show compassion where it is warranted. It is quite clear that we have no such gift of looking into a person's private reasons for being who they are or doing as they do. Shouldn't we act accordingly? Isn't this the basis of our charge to treat others as we would wish to be treated, and to judge not that we be not judged?

I think we can all agree that sexual identity, sexual orientation, and interpersonal relationships, are all very complicated and very private and personal, regardless of outward appearances. Every person is worthy of our respect and due consideration. Do I need to tell you this? Who am I that I should do so? Fortunately, Kendra has put it just right in the title of her essay.
Who is baring them from entering heaven? Some would very fast type the answer as SDAss......but if we see Paul on Mars hill.....the lesson is clearly there that God has revealed his purpose through many ways and LGBT in their heart sure know what is to be done morally i guess......but the problem is more with the so called LGBT advocates who think they are the voice of the minorities and the tradional Adventists are just someones who try to rip the LGBT of their human rights.........THERE ARE SO MANY INSTANCES in the SCRIPTURE implying God's desire that we abstain from immoral sexual practise. Some would pop out the issues and when the scriptural references are provided they would take the Word Advocates as inhuman etc but then 'WE ARE TO CALL SIN BY ITS RIGHT NAME.....does that mean we are trying to banish them or so and so.......well there was this sermon preached once in my local church where a new convert came to attend and while the pastor was sharing the message on sinful attitudes such as stealing, lying, cheating etc this man gets up and asks the people 'how come he knows so much about me'.........well the word of God speaks a volume........by the way most of things are clear in this thread through the statement of someone on'Sexual perversion' and with the textx from the Bible to support what actually is sexual perversion.........but some would just not take it ,,,such is the diversity hahaha atleast in the AT land ....all for ......all for......well you all know may be.....

Thank You Kendra! Thank You Tom! We need to have a more heartfelt understanding of this issue. We musn't let anything distract us from the Gospel. Jesus was not afraid that sin would rub off on Him. He came and dwelt among us so that we might all be saved! Sin can and will be left behind, Jesus can and will help us all overcome anything it is His will for us to overcome. It is not my place to judge another's heart, only God can do that. I must look on each of my fellow human beings as potential members of God's kingdom and treat them ever and always as such. Let's lift each other up and encourage each one to choose life and follow what God leads them to do. He wants us all to be pure and holy and will give us the grace and power to be so if we will let Him. What exactly that means to each individual is not my place to say. We each have our own sins to struggle with, let's encourage each other in love. "..I may understand all the secret things of God and all knowledge and I may have faith so great that I can move mountains. But even with all these things, if I do not have love, then I am nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2

All the "Apples of Sodom" are SIN (Adultery, Fornication, Lust, Self Abuse& Homosexuality). Christ would have died for even one sinner, even a homosexual. But that's the point. Their homosexuality is SIN. All SIN (unrepented of) will keep us out of Heaven.
Of Life, Love, Death and Hate (Crimes)

Submitted Oct 3, 2011
By Stephen Foster

Because systems of criminal justice are inherently flawed to the point that few question whether it is probable innocent people are occasionally executed and guilty people are occasionally exonerated, I am against the death penalty. Whether someone is executed by the state is often directly dependent on the quality of the legal defense the accused can afford immediately or soon after being charged.

There is nothing worse, in my view, than an innocent person being executed for a crime that, by definition, he or she did not commit. Whatever is gained by the existence and imposition of the death penalty is not worth the occasional and perhaps inevitable execution of people who are not guilty of the crimes with which they have been charged.

It is no more evil, in my view, to murder someone in cold blood (will malice aforethought) than it is to put to be willing to kill an individual who might be innocent. The willingness to do this - that is, to put someone to death who may actually be innocent - is the evil that precedes and enables the actual act of executing someone who may be innocent. Without the societal willingness to do this, it would not happen.

This is, of course, reminiscent to what happened to Jesus at the hands of Pilate. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent but, for reasons of political expediency, was willing to satisfy the blood thirst of those who wanted Jesus dead. Conversely, the willingness to die for something that you did not do in order that the guilty does not have suffer the penalty that they deserve is the opposite of the willingness to kill someone who is, or may be, innocent. The former is motivated by love; the latter is motivated by the opposite of love - indifference.

The willingness to execute someone who may be innocent is very, very similar to the willingness to execute someone who is certainly innocent. Perhaps the difference is similar to the difference between that of hate and indifference; in either case, love has nothing to do with it.

As far as hate crime legislation is concerned, to be against such legislation is an admission that you are not willing to give a harsher punishment to the perpetrators of such crimes; and you are therefore willing to protect those who are most often accused of such crimes (no matter who they may be) from harsher penalties.

In hate crime legislation, no one is excluded or treated differently. Such legislation applies to anyone and everyone no matter the race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or political persuasion of the accused/perpetrator.

Now, for those who may, in general, actually favor harsher sentences for crime, to NOT be in favor of harsher penalties for hate crime convictions is evidence of a curious hypocrisy at best. They are, for some strange reason, in effect protective of those who are the more frequent perpetrators of such crimes (whoever they may be).

To be clear, not to mention consistent, I would have much preferred that James Byrd's murderer(s) in the Texas dragging case been given life in prison without the possibility of parole.

If, because of his race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or political persuasion, they had "just"
beaten him up — instead of having dragged him to his death — they should then have simply received a more severe sentence than would normally have applied; very much like the aggravated circumstance penalties for assaulting or killing a police officer, or for using a gun in the commission of a crime.

Hate crimes, of course, are not punishments for thoughts; they are punishments for actions. Much like gun crimes are not crimes because of guns, they are crimes because of actions. If someone acts with criminal intent on a thought (which anyone is free to have), it is like acting with criminal intent with a gun (which most adults are likewise free to have).

In point of fact, I actually favor stricter sentences for murder than most currently meted out; in that I do not believe that parole should be considered for people who have been convicted of murdering someone. Life means life, 30 years means 30 years, etc.; I am simply against the death penalty for the reasons I have stated above.

It is my view the legal authorities in Georgia recently committed legal manslaughter; simply because — over two decades later — it was not obvious that Troy Davis was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt; and they were hoping the U.S. Supreme Court would bail them out.

Did this also make the Court — by perhaps even a 5-4 vote — “guilty,” beyond a reasonable doubt?

Ron Corson
1 month ago

Stephen wrote:
"Hate crimes, of course, are not punishments for thoughts; they are punishments for actions"

If that was true there would be no reason for the addition of a hate crime. Because the action would be identical to the action of someone who committed the crime without hate But I see the reason you want to believe that incorrect idea. I mean it does sound awful to want to punish thoughts...but that is what hate crimes do. Oh yes and gun crimes are in fact crimes involving guns, yes because the gun was used in the crime. You do seem very confused on this article.

Horace Butler
4 weeks ago

The idea that a person should face a stiffer penalty because it was a so-called "hate crime" is ludicrous. Murder is murder, pure and simple. If someone commits premeditated murder, they should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, whether they murdered them for their money, or because they hated the ethnicity of the victim. All premeditated murder stems from hatred of some kind. You beat a guy up to steal his wallet, or you beat a guy up because he belongs to a different ethnic group. What's the difference? The guy gets beat up. It's assault and battery, no matter why you did it. You don't help the guys wounds heal any faster by a stiffer sentence for it being a "hate crime."

As for the death penalty, I agree that it is despicable to execute someone if there is reasonable doubt as to their guilt. But the Bible does give the state the authority to execute murderers. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.* Gen. 9:6.
Enacting hate crime legislation borders on the idea of unleashing the "thought police." I can imagine a scenario in which someone acts in self defence and kills someone of another ethnic group, but when it is found out they were prejudiced against that ethnic group, they get convicted merely because of their erroneous thinking.

So, are you both in principle against aggravated circumstances sentencing (in general), or only (against them) in relation to hate crimes?

Would you consider yourselves "hard" on crime generally; but have a somewhat nuanced, evolved, or enlightened position relating to hate crimes?

Would you acknowledge that opposition to aggravated sentences for such criminality is protective of those who engage in such activity; as opposition to the death penalty is protective of those who have actually murdered someone?

(Remember, to be convicted of a hate crime, it must be “proven” that criminal action resulted directly from previously expressed motives.)

Obviously each case must be decided individually, and mitigating circumstances must be considered, but we already have laws against violent crime: murder, assault, rape, etc. I question the need to add another category. If the penalty for murder is life or execution, do we increase it because hate was involved? As I said before, murder and assault have always involved hatred to some degree or another. I'm unaware of any method of executing a person twice or of increasing a life sentence beyond the grave. If the penalty for assault and battery is 10 years, do we make it 20 because the perpetrator happened to have a bias against the ethnic group to which the victim belonged? It would be too easy to attribute the motive of hate to any violent crime, especially if the ethnicity or sexual orientation of those involved were different. I think this opens a door to a path that should be avoided, or we may wake up some day to find monitors in all of our rooms, listening for any signs of disloyalty (interpreted as hatred) to Big Brother.

I'm not sure how to answer your questions. Violent crime deserves a proper punishment, but I'm not convinced that adding the category of "hate crime" will solve anything. It has the potential of turning bigots into criminals simply because they are bigots. Some of the reactions to ill advised politically incorrect statements by various individuals of late seems to be taking us in that direction. Freedom of thought and freedom of speech are close cousins. To restrict the one is to restrict the other. From creating a class of crimes prefaced by the word "hate" it is a short step to making it criminal to voice "improper opinions."
Since you are not quite sure how to answer my questions, Horace; allow me to suggest that you try to address them one at a time, or individually.

We do, after all, certainly have aggravated circumstances sentencing for crimes committed with guns. (As an example, armed robbery is generally treated differently than is other larcenous crime; even if the gun is not fired, and is legally owned, licensed, and registered.)

Stephen Foster 3 weeks ago

If either of you—or anyone else, for that matter—don’t mind, I would sincerely appreciate answers to my three (3) questions above; each of which can technically be answered with a “yes” or “no.”

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago

Stephen, only simple questions can be answered "yes" or "no." Those you asked do not fit that requirement.

"Are you both in principle against aggravated circumstances sentencing (in general), or only (against them) in relation to hate crimes?

Both and neither.

"Would you consider yourselves "hard" on crime generally; but have a somewhat nuanced, evolved, or enlightened position relating to hate crimes?"

Nuanced.

"Would you acknowledge that opposition to aggravated sentences for such criminality is protective of those who engage in such activity; as opposition to the death penalty is protective of those who have actually murdered someone?

Neither.

Now if you would kindly answer this question with either a "yes" or "no":

When did you stop beating your wife?

Stephen Foster 3 weeks ago

Elaine,
Yeah, I see your point; and on reflection, you're probably right. I suppose that I was just looking for ways to make it easier to address these questions; because Horace had indicated that he was not sure how to answer them.

Although I could not determine whether your answers were facetious to reinforce your point, or genuine responses; what I believe their answers should actually be are as follows, respectively 1) that they are only against aggravated sentencing insofar as hate crimes are concerned, but are not against this option in sentencing generally, 2) Yes, meaning they are "hard" on crimes generally, but have either a nuanced, evolved, and/or enlightened position as relates to hate crimes because of fear of the slippery slope syndrome (regarding “thought police”), and 3) while I anticipate their answers to be "No," the reality is that I believe the correct answer to be that, in point of fact, opposition to harsher sentences for hate crimes is a tacit protective act toward those accused of such activity; in the much the same way that opposition to the death penalty tacitly provides protection to the lives of those accused of capital offenses.

Elaine Nelson

The law only recognizes degree of homocide: involuntary (or accidental), premeditated, and 1st, 2nd, & 3rd degree, and motive should not be considered, as murder is murder. Killing, as in war, is not considered murder, although in most circumstances to deliberately shoot to kill is considered murder, so the circumstances do affect the charge.

I'm uncertain, has "hate crime" been legislated yet? And how is it defined?

Homicide has many descriptions. Currently, Michael Jackson's physician is on trial for his death. It appears he was very negligent as a physician, but he did not "kill" Michael. This is an example of one of the many degrees of homicide which may be prosecuted.

Nathan Schilt

What punishment would you find acceptable, Stephen, for someone who "might" be innocent? How about life without the possibility of parole for Troy Davis? Would you be okay with that? Surely not, since you believe he was legally innocent! If the person who is willing to impose the death penalty for someone who "might" be innocent is guilty of murder, then isn't the person who is willing to imprison someone who "might" be innocent guilty of kidnapping and false imprisonment? Have you not, by so dramatically taking away a man's freedom, deprived him of life in a very real sense?

Your moral views on this topic, Stephen, are so idiosyncratic and exceptional in the context of human history that it seems to me you should hold them very lightly. The ability of the state to hold a person criminally responsible is predicated upon proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, to a moral certainty. Does that standard, for you, mean "might" be innocent? If so, then why not advocate a higher standard? To better understand your argument, which implies that you'd be okay with the death penalty if the "possibility" of innocence could be eliminated, I would like to know what level of proof you would need to find the death penalty acceptable.

I do not want to debate the Troy Davis execution, or the mainstream media's highly selective and
biased reporting of the story. But the case has gone through multiple filters in a justice system predicated on the maxim that it is better for ten guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be convicted. Neither jurors nor judges reviewing the case thought that Troy Davis might be innocent. You did not hear or weigh the evidence according to the rules of law. So your belief that a legally innocent man was convicted and executed is not really an argument against the death penalty. It is an argument against the justice system that yielded a conviction. I'm curious...have you ever written to protest an acquittal or reversed conviction of someone who was clearly guilty of a heinous crime? Does such a result ever cause you to think that our justice system might in some ways provide safe havens for crime to flourish and go unpunished? Can you think of someone convicted and executed who did not fit into the "might be innocent" category?

Do you believe that in the moral realm, all possible doubt cannot be eliminated, and therefore, everyone charged and convicted of a criminal offense "might" be innocent? If so, then a legal determination of guilt is morally impossible, and your "might be innocent" rationale becomes a tautology.

Stephen Foster 4 weeks ago

Nathan,

It is really, really, this simple. Death is a worse fate than life; whether in prison or not. Now, if people are literally being physically tortured for the rest of their natural days, which would be indisputably unconstitutional in America (and which, of course, they are not), death would then clearly be the more humane approach. However, since this is not the case, it is evil to be willing to execute someone who might be innocent.

To the extent that someone might be innocent in cases where the death penalty is not on the table; the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard is theoretically appropriate, in my view, for conviction and sentencing.

To argue whether life in prison is tantamount to death by execution is not worth the time of either of us. If you are really in doubt about that (yourself), I would suggest that you conduct a poll among death row inmates.

Ella M. 3 weeks ago

I may not know the facts in the Davis case, but I know a lot of people more knowledgeable than I seemed to believe in his innocence. Such support should have made a difference in the outcome as it reflected a large degree of doubt.

I am opposed to the death penalty with the possible exception of serial killers. Not only are these more of a danger, but probably lead psychotic, miserable lives.

Ron Corson 4 weeks ago

While I disagree with practically all of Stephen's points I will say I agree to the the postion of getting rid of the death penalty. Not just because it often becomes more expensive through the appeals process then keeping the person in prison for life but on the more Christian philosophical view that a person can change and be a witness for God in prison. I think it was Carla Faye Tucker that settled me on this idea. She became a Christian in prison and helped her fellow inmates. She
did not request a stay of execution and acknowledged her murder and was executed. To me that is a light taken away from the job of Christian Ambassador to a group of people that few others could ever reach. So as a Christian the higher calling is to preach the good news even over public punishment laws that are traditionally based upon Judeo Christian beliefs, they may be right and good in most instances but to protect the exceptions where Christ can be proclaimed I will as Governor Perry said "err on the side of life".

Elaine Nelson 4 weeks ago

The Innocence Project has released more than 250 prisoners scheduled for the death penalty with their careful analysis of the cases. Many had very inept defense attorneys, police lied on the witness stands, judges and prosecutors who needed such cases to prove their were taught on crime, and falsified evidence.

With the possibility of life without parole at least there will be no cases that will afterward be found innocent, as has happened, and simply for the heavy costs of those on Death Row: they can live 20-25 years with repeated appeals that are costly and without end. It costs much more to have them on Death Row than in for life, and prison costs are now eclipsing education costs in many states. This must stop.

Jim Miller 3 weeks ago

Something not usually considered in the question of the death penalty. Ancient Israel did not have the facilities for life imprisonment. Their imprisonment capacity was extremely limited. If there is someone in the community who has murdered and is likely to murder again, they either can execute the murderer, or let the murderer live and probably murder again. In that society there is good reason to execute a person deemed dangerous, even if occasionally you execute an innocent person. Not executing a dangerous person perpetuates the danger in the community. Modern societies have the capacity for life imprisonment. Therefore, the death penalty is not necessary to protect the community from the violent person. And if the death penalty is still used, it should be reserved only for the most extreme cases where the evidence is overwhelming.

Gailon Arthur Joy 3 weeks ago

Regretfully, none of our opinions really matter. I personally support the death penalty as an essential weapon of law enforcement and appropriate retribution for the crime of murder, period. However, the death penalty will be expanded with time, not repealed, and applied to even “Sabbath Keepers”.

Therefore, we, at least those of us that believe the Seventh-day Adventist Message, know that we will be subject to a death penalty for a crime we did not commit, just as our Lord and Saviour suffered the penalty of death for a "Crime He Did Not Commit". And we will live with the stress of that reality as we make our choices as events will soon unfold. And it will weigh heavily upon our soles as we pass into the Time of Jacobs Trouble uncertain of our connection with the Spirit and the status of our Salvation. No sedative will be prescribed and if caught we will most certainly be martyred, uncertain of our Salvation.
Only the cement of Faith well exercised and developed will get us through, despite the weight of uncertainty. The rest of humanity faces an absolute death penalty. This reality should move us to share our Faith and give opportunity to thousands upon thousands of lawbreakers to avoid that most certain penalty and partake in the certainty of Heaven and Eternal Life, the pardon already earned by Another that died for us, innocent but willing that we be saved.

May we always be found in the Blessed Faith to avoid the final death penalty.

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**Elaine Nelson**  3 weeks ago

There have been far too many innocent people condemned and on death row for years, only to have their convictions overturned because of faulty evidence or inept defenders, and lack of DNA. It is a sentence that cannot be revoked.

Studies have shown that it has never been a good deterrent and is very unevenly used. Why does Texas have a far larger percentage of executions than any other state but not the largest population?

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**Connie Severin**  2 weeks ago

It may not be the best deterrent; however, it guarantees that the criminal will not go free to kill again. The two that murdered almost an entire family in front of the father in Connecticut should never see the light of day. My fear is of the numerous cases let out early by either overly sympathetic or activist judges. What's the average stay for life imprisonment these days? 10 years maybe?

Elaine - what do you mean by percentage of execution? If you mean per capita, why should state size make a difference? If you mean percentage of "death" verdicts compared to those condemned to life in prison, again, why does population make a difference?

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**Elaine Nelson**  2 weeks ago

The percentage clearly shows that in some states, notably Texas, has the highest number and percentage of executions that any state. FYI, percentage indicates how many per population.

Overwhelmingly, the death penalty has had no deterrent effect as numerous studies have shown. Also, there have been more than 200, on death row awaiting execution who were found to be innocent by DNA. Because there have been so many unjust people sent to death row it is fraught with many errors: inept defense attorneys, perjured witnesses, and more. If your loved one were accused, would you not want the very best defense available? Most who are on death row have been penniless and unable to get a top-rate attorney.
How do I know this? Two very close relatives involved in law enforcement for many years. For those who assume that everyone there deserves it, please be better informed. Also, when one says they will not be able to kill again, there have been murders in prison.

Jim
2 weeks ago

I wonder do we put people into prison to punish them, or to isolate them from society to prevent them from doing more harm? Personally I am against the death penalty. Life in prison is a very harsh sentence. BTW many lifers have become SDA Christians. Everyone is redeemable. Jesus saves to the uttermost.

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

Things they are a-changing! With the costs of prisons in the state of California exceeding the education budget, many prisoners have already been released because of overcrowding. Usually non-violent criminals. When the ratio of prison costs to education are upended, things must change or it will become a state with more jails than schools.

Andreas Bochmann
2 weeks ago

From a European perspective the death penalty is seen as quite barbaric, and the media of any political color were quite unanimous when it came to the case of Troy Davis. Obviously, for Christians the "public opinion" is not the ultimate criterion (but - as this blog shows - we are influenced by it!). Thus - simple question: What would Jesus do? John 8:11; Lk 6:27-35; John 10:10 just to name three texts. Too idealistic? Maybe - the Christian gospel is quite idealistic. And about the Tucker case .... I watched the relatives of the victim come out of the prison after her execution (yes, it was on European TV). What struck me - they didn't seem any happier or more peaceful. Revenge does not bring peace or "satisfaction" (in the original Latin sense).

Horace Butler
1 week ago

Ah yes, WWJD? But I see that the texts quoted only present a one-sided picture to the character of Jesus. It should not be forgotten that it was also Jesus who voiced the words found in Gen. 9:6, as well as those recorded in Deut. 32:41, and those quoted by Paul in Rom. 12:19. Loving our enemies does not mean that evil must go unchecked and that the perpetrators get off with light punishment, all in the name of forgiveness and political correctness.

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago

"Evil must go unchecked."

The U.S. has one of the best justice system and yes, they are not always met with complete public approval. There are attorneys, judges, juries who are responsible for punishment and sentencing. What suggestions for improvement are offered?
Horace Butler  1 week ago

Because the system is run by fallible human beings it will never be foolproof or perfect. The concept of "reasonable doubt" is an important one, and should play a part, especially when the death penalty may be imposed. The shenanigans that are used to keep legitimate evidence out of court should be eliminated. I know someone who is serving a life sentence for a crime of which he is innocent. The evidence that would have cleared him was not allowed in court. This is just as much a travesty of justice as when someone who is clearly guilty gets off on a technicality.

Tom  1 week ago

Texas ranks second in population. Only California has more people. My guess as to why there are more executions in Texas is that the death penalty is carried out in Texas, whereas here in California there have been so few executions for capital crimes where the death penalty is given, that the ranks of those on death row just keep rising.

As for the argument of whether it is a deterrent, it can't be argued that it isn't if the sentence is carried out. No chance to get out and murder again if you are dead.

Stephen Foster  1 week ago

Tom,

The points that should not be lost are that it is evil to be willing to execute someone who may in fact not be guilty; and that our system of criminal justice is sufficiently flawed to the extent it is clear that there is no possibility of infallibility.

Tom  1 week ago

Our criminal justice system has come a long ways from the days when lynching was a common practice. DNA has given us a new degree of evidence we never had in the past. Today a defendant has recourse of numerous appeals and no stone seems to be left unturned to determine guilt or innocence in capital crimes. The benchmark is reasonable doubt. To rise it to possibility of infallibility is unreasonable.

Capital punishment should be a last resort sentence, reserved for the most hideous murderers. I do not believe it should be used for anything less, such as treason.

Stephen Foster  1 week ago

Tom,

While DNA evidence is an obvious improvement—and provider of some “evidence” of how flawed the criminal justice system has been—it is by no means a forensic panacea for all criminal system injustice.
You have the impression that “no stone seems to be left unturned to determine guilt or innocence in capital crimes;” but, as was apparent in the Troy Davis case, prosecutorial professionals perceive an interest in maintaining an appearance of systemic integrity in cases where there is no physical or forensic evidence, or any impeccable eyewitness testimony. In this particular case, the so-called “reasonable doubt” threshold certainly appeared to have been essentially erased, decades after the original conviction.

Besides, reasonable doubt is in the eyes of the beholders—and with enough money, can be literally purchased—as evidenced by numerous high profile cases in the past.

If there is any doubt that an individual is guilty, it is evil to execute said individual. Clearly, it is my view that it is systemically evil to be willing to take the chance of executing someone who is not certainly guilty.

With money, human frailty, and the manipulation of emotions all integral to human systems of “justice,” the death penalty is something that should be relegated to history books.

Horace Butler 1 week ago

"With money, human frailty, and the manipulation of emotions all integral to human systems of “justice,” the death penalty is something that should be relegated to history books."

Considering how corrupt man had become before the flood, it is interesting that God spoke the words of Gen.9:6 after the flood was over, knowing how evil the world would again become. Does that text no longer apply to us? Should we relegate it to the dustbin of history?

Stephen Foster 1 week ago

I am certain that you realize that we do not live in an antediluvian or postdiluvian theocracy; nor has our society adopted the Divine edicts as constitutional law.

While we find no fault with the biblical principle of reciprocal justice, I have grave doubts about, and significant problems with, modern systems of criminal (and civil) justice.

Nathan Schilt 1 week ago

Because you have rhetorically framed the argument to dictate the conclusion you desire, Stephen, you foreclose the possibility of an honest debate where differences of opinion are respected. Who do you know that is content to see someone who "might be innocent" sentenced to death for a heinous crime? I have never heard anyone express the view that it is okay to execute someone "who is not certainly guilty." So it seems to me that you have really set up a straw man on which to found an implicit argument that those who support the death penalty are evil. All moral citizens would agree that moral certainty should be a prerequisite for not only implementing the death penalty, but convicting a person of any crime. They just differ about what constitutes certainty. That's why unanimous verdicts are required in our justice system - because we believe it is better for ten guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be convicted. That is the most formidable standard of morality the world has ever seen. But it's not good enough for you.

I assume you would concede that SOME who are executed for terrible crimes are certainly guilty.
If society chose to follow the Stephen Foster standard of certainty, would you be okay with the death penalty? Many moral, intelligent people believe that when one deliberately takes the life of another, justice is best served, in certain circumstances, by requiring the murderer to forfeit his life. The reality that miscarriages of justice have occurred, and will occur in the future, should not cause us to shrink from the solemn duty to do justice. When the quest for perfect justice, and the realization that it can never be achieved in this world, paralyze us from humbly and fearfully implementing justice in human societies, our justice will become an impotent oxymoron.

Stephen, you laud societies such as that of France, where the death penalty is outlawed. Nonsense! They just have different ways of making sure that justice is done. Do you know what prison life is like for the most violent criminals in France? I have heard that the French have made a verb of the word "suicide." They have a word that means "suicided". It's what happens when someone who has committed a heinous murder or series of murders is being interrogated by the gendarmes at police headquarters. While "no one is looking" the murderer suddenly bolts and jumps out a tenth story window to his death. RIGHT! The French knowingly say he was suicided. That's what happens when a society obfuscates justice in the name of justice.

Jim, 1 week ago

Maybe, we should take another look at the past and future events as depicted in the The Great Controversy?

Stephen Foster, 1 week ago

Gailon, Jim, Andreas,

You make excellent points, especially as relates to how the death penalty could be used for those who may be considered subversive, for religious reasons.

Nathan Schilt, 1 week ago

That is indeed interesting. How does one account for the fact that those who repudiate traditional values and advocate violent overthrow of Western governmental institutions are, and have been, vehemently opposed to the death penalty? These are the same folks who are defecating on police cars, parading Marxists slogans, and shouting "death to capitalists." They are backed by some pretty scary forces that believe in world government. (Does world government figure anywhere in SDA prophecy?) Contrast the venom, vulgarity and destructiveness of "peace" demonstrators and protesters of Western values and institutions with the decorum and cleanliness of Tea Party rallies, Christian mens' rallies, or The Glenn Beck rally.

"Peace" is of course a somewhat different issue than the death penalty, though they are philosophical siblings. So it is worth reflecting on the reality that the biggest supporters of peace movements in the Twentieth Century turned out to be champions of state sponsored murder. It is not difficult to see how today's death penalty opponents could be sharpening the
guillotine tomorrow. Those who are prepared to trample on freedom for the greater good will not hesitate to use the death penalty, once it seems useful and necessary, against those they hate and those who are considered subversive.

Right now, in the Western world, it is overwhelmingly those who despise Christians that oppose the death penalty. As they gain power and align their utopian visions with totalitarian methodologies that are the envy of our intellectual elites, I suspect we will see prophecy soon fulfilled in ways we did not imagine.

Stephen Foster

Nathan,

Let me try to address your concerns with my admittedly strong—perhaps even dogmatic—opinion, and then address concerns that you have expressed that are not representative of my opinion; but are themselves straw images of your representations of my opinion.

My concern with absolute certainty of guilt as it pertains to the administering of the death penalty is, of course, based on the principle that, as you put it, it is indeed “better for ten guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be”...EXECUTED. I have substituted your use of the word “convicted” with “EXECUTED” because that is precisely what I am arguing; that where there is not an absolute certainty—what John McLaughlin would categorize as metaphysical certitude—of the guilt of the accused, the death penalty should never be considered, much less administered.

The fact that miscarriages of justice are inevitable, and that this is a readily acknowledged and self-evident fact of societal life is the very basis of my case. It is both morally and logically untenable to be willing, in the name of our “solemn duty to do justice” no less, to take the chance of occasionally executing innocent individuals so that SOME/MOST guilty people may get what they have coming to them—that is, of course, if we believe that it is “better for ten guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be...” executed.

The unanimous jury principle and the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard are sufficient for convictions. I would, however, remind you that convictions and executions are not the same thing. My concern is about executions wherein, to answer your question, “the Stephen Foster standard of certainty”—where the guilt of the accused and the circumstances under which the crime was committed are as certain as life and death itself—in tandem with “the Stephen Foster standard of equal justice under law”—where everyone, regardless of wealth or the lack thereof, gets an O.J. Simpson quality “Dream Team” defense—would permit the death penalty to be administered; but short of these standards, no way.

As for your France reference/straw man, I have no idea where you get the idea that France’s system of justice, with which I am totally unfamiliar, is one which I “laud;” as I didn’t reference other societies in this context at all.

Nathan Schilt

What sense does it make to apply an oxymoronic standard of "metaphysical certainty" to the realm of human affairs? By metaphysical standards, it is quite possible that the execution you think is taking place is simply an appearance, and the essence underlying the appearance, if
indeed there is one, is in no way extinguished by the ritual we call capital punishment.

What superior knowledge or insight are 21st Century elites privy to that enables them to assert moral hegemony over history? The same evidence which creates uncertainty (DNA, for example) may also increase certainty, leading responsible, moral people to fine tune their standards of justice while maintaining the integrity of the principle that human beings sometimes commit acts so heinous that they forfeit their right to live. Your opinion that the very nature of capital punishment mandates an entirely different moral vocabulary than life in a dungeon is simply that - your opinion. It seems remarkably arrogant of you to assert, without new knowledge or information, that millions - probably billions - of intelligent people, now and throughout history, who disagree with you are benighted fools and moral cretins.

Throughout its history, humanity has been aware of its frailty. It has also recognized that, to the extent human finitude is a trump card to preclude acting on principles of justice, justice is sacrificed, since perfection is not possible. How many executions of innocent victims have been carried out by criminals who have gone free because legal barriers to truth finding have been erected by courts in the name of justice? How about trading those artificial barriers (Exculsionary Rule and Miranda) for the death penalty? Those who purport to know cosmic justice inevitably see it as a shield against imposition of consequences and personal responsibility for actions - a shield which prevents society from protecting itself against evil, since after all, it is society itself that is responsible for the evildoer. Justice itself seems to be the primary collateral damage of the chimerical quest for cosmic justice.

I accept and respect your political position on this issue, Stephen. But when we turn our political beliefs into universal moral mandates, characterizing those who disagree with us as immoral and evil, we sow the very seeds of hatred and evil that we purport to be uprooting. We also end up with a patchwork quilt of illogical, idiosyncratic morality that has no qualms about destroying innocent human life at conception, but sacralizes the lives of vicious predators. I am not suggesting that you support abortion, but most people who share your moral views on capital punishment do support abortion. Is it merely coincidental that they are also (with the exception of Jews) overwhelmingly non-religious and anti-Christian?

Obviously Nathan, you have not watched The McLaughlin Group. Otherwise you would have recognized the “metaphysical certitude” phraseology is similar to the late Johnny Carson’s Carnack the Magnificent reference to “hermetically sealed” envelopes. I’m not even sure what “metaphysical certitude” literally means; and it is doubtful if McLaughlin does either. It is simply meant to convey certainty.

The point of course, is that the death penalty should not be considered in cases where there is any question as to who did it; and under what circumstances.

For some reason, and I think I know what it is, despite the fact that I am focusing on the death penalty, you insist on including all criminal justice in your argument(s). I believe you are doing this because you have a philosophical approach to the law that you believe to be under attack. What I am attacking is the morality and logic—or lack thereof—that undergirds the societal willingness to risk the execution of innocent individuals, in the name of justice.
What abortion has to do with my arguments about the death penalty (or hate crimes) is truly anyone's guess. If by chance you wish to frame an argument or make a case against abortion or reproductive rights—as I have against the death penalty—you have a blog here in which you can do just that.

As for the raw numbers of people who may disagree with me, since when does what the vast majority of human beings think or do or believe, over millennia, determine what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, logical or illogical?

Nathan Schilt 1 week ago

You continue to wage battle against a straw man, Stephen. No one—at least no one I have ever heard of—thinks it's okay to execute someone who might be innocent. If you accept that human certainty of guilt is sufficient for a heinous murderer to be executed, then most people will agree with you. I misunderstood you to be setting a definitionally impossible threshold of absolute metaphysical certainty. It appears now that you are not philosophically opposed to the death penalty as an appropriate punishment, assuming there is certainty of guilt. You simply believe it is evil and immoral to impose the death penalty unless you personally are certain of guilt. And since no one is likely to make your subjective sense of certainty the final judge of whether certainty of guilt exists, you want to suspend justice when it comes to capital punishment. Strange logic...

If you do not see the irony of opposing the death penalty, while supporting abortion as a right, then explaining it to you won't do any good. The wisdom and experience of the ages is certainly not the final arbiter of truth or morality. But it is a valuable source of authority and should inform our moral framework. Without new data, information, or arguments (you have offered none) we should be quite humble about taking up the moral sword against those who have gone before.

Lucky for you, moral certainty is much easier for you to find in your own head, in the context of your subjectively held values and opinions, than it is when it comes to objective evidence of guilt unanimously adjudged to be certain by twelve dispassionate jurors and multiple appellate courts. I guess "certainty" means exactly what you intend it to mean—nothing more and nothing less. That's not justice; that's the Stephen Foster rule of law.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago

I don't mean to offend you, but it is disingenuous to imply that since no one wants—or perhaps has ever publicly advocated—the execution of innocent people, that therefore no one is willing to risk executing innocent individuals. Since we know that innocent individuals have been, and will continue to be, executed, what difference does it make—especially to those who will be or have been innocently executed—that no one either wants this to happen, or have advocated that it should happen?

The very suggestion that since no one is theoretically/officially in favor of executing innocent individuals, that therefore no one is willing to risk executing innocent individuals is the quintessential straw man argument! Anyone who is in favor of the death penalty in any case wherein there is any possibility that the accused is not indeed the actual perpetrator is in effect stating that they are willing to risk executing someone who
may not actually, as opposed to “legally,” be guilty; and this is evil.

Now, it is only evil if in fact one truly believes that killing an innocent human being is evil; in which case voluntarily and unnecessarily risking the possibility of doing so must also be evil.

This may be arrogantly dogmatic. So what? Surely you would agree with me that unnecessarily killing innocent individuals is evil—even if it is legal—would you not?

Nice try, but individual/unanimous certainty of guilt on behalf of jurors is not nearly enough. Individual jurors generally do not prescribe the parameters or create the criteria under which the death penalty is considered. (Correct me if I’m wrong—since this is your field—but neither do most judges.)

Insofar as convictions are concerned, unanimous certainty of guilt is, again, an appropriate moral standard for the “beyond a reasonable doubt” principle or threshold. A standard of absolute certainty, with there being absolutely no possibility of any other scenario of occurrences to have taken place, should be the standard for the absolute punishment of certain death.

If this is too high a threshold for any executions, then so be it.

Nathan Schilt
1 week ago

We have radically different world views, Stephen. You seem to see the world idealistically in terms of good and evil. Those who share your sociopolitical views are good; those who oppose them are evil. I have a much more cynical view of human moral pretensions and the cardinals of goodness who commit unspeakable evil in the name of justice and compassion. I see evil as an intractable, insidious presence in every realm of human activity. I agree with Solzhenitsyn that the line dividing good and evil runs through the center of every human heart. Tragic and unnecessary destruction and loss of innocent human life is the fate of all systems administered by human beings. We see "through a glass darkly" and argue over whether your system or my system prevents greater evil than the evil to which it opens the door. Politics is much more a trade-off between systems that can at best mitigate evil for a season or two than a choice between good and evil.

To support the execution of someone whom one believes may be innocent is indeed immoral. It does not follow, however, that the metaphysical possibility of being wrong renders the execution absolutely evil any more than the risk that I run of killing my children, by putting them in the car and driving them down the freeway, renders that act irresponsible or evil.

It is possible that the murderer you keep alive may murder again, either in or out of prison. That possibility does not make your anti-death penalty argument immoral. But it does underscore its moral incoherence. You implicitly believe that it is evil to execute someone whose guilt is morally certain, even if it opens up the possibility that many who are certainly innocent will be murdered as a result of your "compassion." This is a perversion of justice. There is a Talmudic saying: "Those who are kind to the cruel will in the end be cruel to the kind." Those who use abstract notions of justice to shield
evildoers from justice end up using abstract notions of justice as a sword against the innocent.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

In the news today, a man incarcerated for 30 years, was freed because the DNA evidence, plus prosecutorial ineptness, even criminal was allowed to be used in the trial. This is another of the 200+ convictions that the Innocence Project has overturned. So much for certainty of capital punishment.

Tom 1 week ago

Stephen

I agree that a higher threshold than beyond a reasonable doubt should be applied if the defendant receives the ultimate sentence of capital punishment. Does Sirhan, Sirhan killing Bobby Kennedy point blank with a multitude of witnesses watching on, and millions more seeing it on TV, satisfy you that with absolute certainty he murdered the senator? The guy should have been given the jolt in the hot seat over 40 years ago, but when the death penalty was temporarily tossed out by the Supreme court in 1969, his sentence was commutted to life.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago

So, Nathan, you appear to agree, in principle, that it is better that ten guilty persons are exonerated than for one innocent person to be convicted; but you appear not to agree, in reality, that it is better that ten guilty persons not be executed, than for one innocent person to be executed. Strange logic indeed…

Tom,

The Sirhan Sirhan assassination of Robert Kennedy is an example of the kind of absolute certainty to which I refer. If you couple that with a (universal) Simpson-quality “Dream Team” defense, we can talk.

Nathan Schilt 1 week ago

Not sure how you made that leap, Stephen. The fact that a lot of murders are enabled by the rules of our justice system is simply an illustration of my point, not an indictment of the system. I can also assure you, based upon my experience as a prosecutor in the distant past, that vastly more than ten guilty people go free for every innocent person that is convicted in our American criminal justice system. I would be deeply troubled if one out of every ten persons executed was innocent. That is way too high a figure for me. It would not cause me to question the justice of the death penalty as punishment, but it would cause me to question the justice of the society implementing the death penalty under those circumstances.
Stephen Foster

Obviously Nathan, I made the connection based on your comments on this thread. I won’t bother to put the quotes side by side, because I think that you get the point. Besides, my question at this juncture is what ratio of innocent people being executed is theoretically sufficient to get you to conclude that, though the death penalty itself may well be a just punishment for many, the societal implementation of this penalty is too problematic—in terms of the likelihood of innocents being convicted—to be considered unjust to continue?

My point—and my standard—is that we should never, ever, take the chance of executing anyone if there is any possibility at all that they are innocent. The execution of one innocent person is enough to stop executing everyone; if necessary.

Stephen Foster

I suppose that the last sentence in the first paragraph should actually have ended, "...—to be considered just to continue."

Nathan Schilt

I understand your argument, Stephen - that executing a human being is so consequential that it should be treated very differently from "mere" deprivation of liberty and happiness through incarceration. But one could as easily argue that the taking of another's life by murder is of such consequence that justice favors lowering the due process barriers that delay execution and impair the discovery of truth. Overwhelmingly, murder convictions and death sentences are overturned on appeal not because of doubt as to guilt, but because of technical procedural "errors" invented and ferreted out by judges who are philosophically opposed to justice as punishment. Resolution of these issues depend on one's values and worldview, not logic and reason.

Nathan Schilt

So I take it, Stephen, that you are unwilling to look at the negative tradeoffs imposed by eliminating the death penalty? The maxim that it is better for ten guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be convicted is just that - a maxim. I don't believe that perfect justice is possible in this world. Nor do I believe that the certainty of good faith human error occurring occasionally is a reason to suspend the imposition of justice. If we agree that justice requires that a murderer should, under certain circumstances, forfeit his right to life, it does not make sense to me to erect impossible barriers to doing justice. Logically, the same rationale you use to abolish the death penalty could also be extended to deprivation of liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It's just a matter of degree. In fact, most activists who oppose the death penalty also favor other laws and policies that result in more crime going unpunished.

Stephen Foster

Perhaps you should re-read the blog once more Nathan. I don’t consider “the negative tradeoffs imposed by eliminating the death penalty”, whatever they supposedly are, to be worth the risk of executing an innocent individual.
Are you now indicating that you don’t necessarily subscribe to the “maxim” that it is better for ten guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be convicted? If so, perhaps then you don’t personally agree with the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard; or perhaps with the unanimous jury verdict standard, which you have said is based on this “maxim.”

Frankly, I agree that if one’s values and worldview in this civil matter are neither undergirded or informed by, nor defended with logic and reason, then there can be no resolution with a differing view that is.

If you choose to make a case that the rule of law should be relaxed for those accused and/or convicted of murder, again, you have a blog in which to make that case.

It is a greater affront to justice if innocents are ever executed than if guilty murderers are held behind bars for the remainder of their lives. How is justice possibly served when—not if—the state occasionally, even through “good faith human error” (which I don’t but for a millisecond), executes an innocent person? “Good faith human error” might occasionally explain an unjust conviction; but never an execution. Finally, again, the difference between death by execution and life behind bars (or unhappiness?) is a bit more than a matter of degree!

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