

The Church, the APA and Homosexuality: Outsourcing God's Work?

by Tim Wilkins, Christian Post Contributor

The American Psychological Association (APA) recently met and a task force of that organization is to determine if forms of counseling that steer interested individuals away from homosexuality should be banned.

Recently a letter was sent to the APA's Board of Directors- representing scores of religious leaders from various denominations, churches, organizations and universities. In brief, the letter asked that the task force take into consideration the religious beliefs of counselees who have unwanted same-sex attractions. It is believed by many that the APA is left-leaning and anti-religious, particularly when the religious views support the belief that homosexual behavior is sin.

At this writing, conservative spokespersons are offering a running commentary on the task force- which is expected to present a preliminary report to the APA's Board of Directors in December.

Before I launch in a different, though I would argue, biblical direction, let me say I added my name to that letter. While I believe it crucial that counselors maintain the right to assist persons with unwanted same-sex attractions, I must remind my Christian brothers and sisters that God has not empowered the APA to deal with homosexuality; that righteous responsibility belongs to the Church.

Many Americans have long lamented the outsourcing of labor to other countries. Why? Of the reasons given, one is 'cheap labor'. Another reason is that some people from foreign countries gladly accept 'menial work' while many Americans detest it.

It may be that outsourcing is legitimate in today's global climate, but the work of God can never be outsourced.

I believe evangelicals long to see God work; we want to see a miracle, but few of us want to be a miracle. Being a miracle means investing oneself in another person who needs to know Christ and experience forgiveness. Jesus called this process "making disciples" and evangelicals have, for all time, labeled Jesus' pronouncement "The Great Commission."

In its May 2003 edition, Christianity Today featured Larry Crabb. Crabb has a Ph. D. in clinical psychology and yet he eventually "turned his back on diagnostic counseling methods in order to care for people's souls in an unpredictable, unprofessional, fickle, and, in his opinion, most useful context: caring relationships."

Crabb believes healing of non-organic disorders "should not be in the hands of specialists-it should be in the hands of the church." People needing relational healing have had to turn to psychotherapists. "The therapeutic revolution has been an indictment of the church" said Crabb. "The deepest longings for significance and security going on inside my clients are needs that God actually intended to meet through the community of believers." "I believe that God has ordained the local church to be his primary instrument to his people's aches and pains."

You may agree with Crabb as he addressed hurting people in general, but question whether the Church has a biblical precedent as it relates to homosexuals in particular. Indeed, it does!

This precedent is based on a simple reading of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (Emphasis added)

Individuals who were previously homosexual were no longer homosexual according to this text. We should ask “what was the dynamic of this church in which people were finding freedom from homosexuality?” Was this a perfect congregation? Was it characterized by unity? Did this church model Christ flawlessly? The answer is “No - on all counts.”

The “First Church of Corinth” exhibited factions and gossip. Believers were suing each other in court. A man was having an affair with his step-mother. Members argued over who had the “prestigious” spiritual gifts.

The Corinthian church, like most churches today, was similar to Noah's ark. “If it weren't for the storm outside, you couldn't stand the smell inside.” And yet something powerful was at work in this church. The APA did not exist. Cross Ministry, which this writer directs, had not been established. Cognitive therapy had not yet been fashioned.

The Corinthian church had something most current churches apparently do not have—a “hands-on/no outsourcing” attitude to sin. If we attempt to rationalize “that was then, this is now” we make ourselves to be cessationists on this issue and in so doing, imply “once a homosexual - always a homosexual.”

Two churches which appear to have caught what the Corinthian congregation was doing (or being) are Brooklyn Tabernacle in Brooklyn, NY and First Baptist in Woodstock, GA. I am sure there are others.

Maybe the remedy to today's plateaued and declining churches is a more “hands-on approach.” Such an approach, if taken seriously and steadfastly, could rejuvenate churches across the country - and while ‘farming out’ menial labor may be appropriate in the secular world, helping people out of sin is neither “menial” nor contrary to the work of the body of Christ.

However, such an approach must be motivated, not by as one church member groaned “we need more members”, but by the fact that people need the Lord.

In a 2004 article on homosexuality the passionate and compassionate Dr. R. Al Mohler wrote “Evangelical Christians must ask ourselves some very hard questions, but the hardest may be this: Why is it that we have been so ineffective in reaching persons trapped in this particular pattern of sin?”

It may be that the Church's real or perceived lean toward outsourcing is one answer to Mohler's piercing question.

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