

Opposing the Nashville Statement

There are a lot of people who don't know how a Christian can believe in the Bible, be gay, and celebrate their LGBTQ friends.

By [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

August 29, 2017



There's a lot going on right now. Nazis are parading in the streets. Texas is underwater. North Korea just sent a projectile weapon over Japan.

And to respond to the moral crises of our time, prominent evangelicals have released the [Nashville Statement](#). Which is not a condemnation of White Supremacy, or a call for us to help those who are drowning, or a renewal of our peacemaking commitments. It is a 14-article document to tell people to stay in their own lanes. Men are men. Women are women. And we need to adhere to our biological gender identity and be straight.

I'm not sure why this is the moral crisis of our time. At first glance, I wasn't sure why so many prominent Evangelicals needed reaffirm the same things that they have been saying for decades when we have a nuclear threat looming over us, families losing their homes, children going to bed hungry, and the KKK carrying torches. But, alas, I do feel the need to respond. Mainly, because in Article 10, they wrote:

We affirm that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

We deny that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

This seems to be the difference. And it breaks my heart... people in my family eat Thanksgiving dinner, celebrate Christmas, and care for one another even though we don't agree on human sexuality. We agree to disagree. So, are they asking families to cut each other off? Or are they just saying that I'm going to hell because I love my LGBTQ friends? Are they raising the bar? I mean, it sounds like their new and improved stance is that we're not allowed to be gay. AND even if we're straight, we're not allowed to approve of LGBTQ relationships.

How are these things essential when Jesus didn't say anything about them?

So, I'm writing this post because there are a lot of people out there who don't know how a Christian can believe in the Bible, be gay, and/or celebrate their LGBTQ friends. I'm not out to convince anyone or make any converts. What I would like to do is let you know that I love Jesus and the Bible, and I'm thinking about these things. You don't have to agree with me, but **we can agree to disagree**. Most of my thought comes from [James Brownson](#).

First, there's **Galatians 3:28**. **"There is no Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free. For you are all one in Jesus Christ."** Here and at Pentecost, Jesus and the Spirit broke down the divisions that separated and ordered us. In these verses, there's a radical shifting of social hierarchies and gender identities that I celebrate. **In Jesus Christ, there is no male or female.** What if we fully lived into these words?

But what about those who struggle with the texts that speak about same-sex relationships directly? How do we understand them?

There are seven texts that mention same sex relationships. Look how thick our Bible is—seven verses are not a lot. It's certainly not essential.

Genesis 19 and Judges 19 describe Sodom and Gomorrah. This story is not talking about gay men having a respectful relationship with one another and wanting to join in a life-long marital commitment. It's describing men who wanted to gang rape Lot's male visitors. (And Lot offers his daughters... which should be the subject of another post...). The issue is rape and sexual violence.

Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 calls homosexuality an "abomination." Christians see many laws in the Hebrew Bible that call for ritual purity for the Israelites. But we understand that Jesus is concerned with purity of heart. He said, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." The laws were made for people; people were not made for the laws. So these laws go into the category as those that say we should not eat shellfish and we should stone rebellious teenagers.

I Corinthians 6:9 includes "the effeminate" and "the homosexual" in a vice list. The words, *arsenkoites* and *malakos* were often used to describe the practice of [pederasty](#), which was common in ancient Greek. So the issue here is pedophilia.

Homosexuality also comes up on a vice list in I Timothy 1:10. Yet the word that is used in this letter is *andropodestes*, which could refer to a slave dealer or a kidnapper.

That leaves us with Romans 1:26-27. Brownson suggests that this verse is in direct response to Caligula, who had sexual relations with his sisters and raped the wives of dinner guests. He says that when Romans talks about receiving "due penalty for their error," he's referring to how Caligula was stabbed through the genitals. So, the letter is written about a very specific person.

You may not be convinced. I know these are arguments for people who want to believe, not for those who are determined to stay their ground. What I hope is that we don't cut people off or assume they're going to hell because they're gay or they rejoice with their LGBTQ friends.

Because loving God and loving our neighbors *is essential* to our Christian witness.