

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Here's how you can respond to homosexuals and the gay church movement in a loving and Christlike manner.

Members of the gay church movement are not our enemies. Although they have fallen for the strong delusion of pro-gay theology, they say they claim Christ as their own. How we confront the movement and handle the issue is crucial.

Dos:

- Know your pastor's and denomination's official position. If you are not sure what it is, write the denomination's headquarters to request a copy of the position statement. Ask your pastor for ideas on combatting pro-gay theology in your denomination, if that is an issue, and offer to participate in the process. Discuss developing a counseling ministry or support group in your church.

- Invite speakers to address your church. There is a great need for education on the subject of homosexuality. If you do not know anyone in your area who teaches on it, contact Exodus International for a referral.

- Stick to verifiable facts. When confronting the issue in a discussion, statements such as "The Bible says..." or "Studies have shown..." are verifiable and tough to argue against. Read books on the subject, and brush up on current programs and studies. Understand the arguments of the gay church movement, and be sure you can articulate a response.

- Admit error. Don't blindly defend everything Christians have done in the past. We have made mistakes, and if we refuse to admit them, we cannot expect gays or society to take us seriously.

- Stay flexible when discussing theories but adamant when discussing the Bible. What the Bible says is absolute, but theories are all subject to question. We can't be certain, for example, what makes people homosexual (theory), but we can be certain it is wrong (Scripture).

- Show Christlike love. By our lack of love, we have contributed to the growth and strength of the gay movement. When a gay person is brought out of delusion, who is wait-

ing for him? Is the church a father to the prodigal, celebrating his return? Or are we better represented by the self-righteous older brother?

Don'ts:

- Do not attack people's character. Some Christians seem bent on "proving" that homosexuals are neurotic, sex-obsessed or hateful. I personally knew many lesbians and gay men who were responsible, likable, hardworking people. Keep the issues straight. The character of the person is not in question. The person's behavior is.

- Do not stereotype people. Extremists can be found in any group, Christian and non-Christian alike. To point out the extreme factions of the gay rights movement and hold them up as the norm is just as cheap and manipulative as picking out the "pro-lifers" who shoot abortionists and saying they are representative of the whole pro-life movement. We need to avoid such games.

- Do not use clichés. Clichés are grating and weaken the argument of the person using them. They make one sound as though he or she is relying on sayings rather than sound reasoning. Here are a few clichés to avoid:

1. "Gay lifestyle." There is no such thing. Homosexuals live their lives in many ways, just as heterosexual people do. Some are promiscuous; some are not. Using this cliché will cast doubt on any other statements you make.

2. "Love the sinner but hate the sin." This is an appropriate recommendation, but we need to find another way to communicate it. This cliché is so overused and overly simplistic that it is sure to get a laugh.

3. "If you are gay, that's your choice." No one chooses to have homosexual feelings. People do choose, however, to act on their homosexual desires. Make the distinction and keep it clear.

4. "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." Avoid using this statement. Sarcasm is rude and never wins an argument.

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