



Christians should be more accepting of the LGBT community

American society has become increasingly polarized in modern times, and few subjects have engendered more debate than the issue of full rights and recognition for those among us who are of the LGBT persuasion. Nowhere, it seems, is this debate more volatile than among persons of the Christian faith.

In recent weeks, several Christian readers of this publication have submitted articles critical of the trend in our society to be more accepting of persons who aren't heterosexual in their orientation. Most of these commentaries have suggested that homosexuality is a grievous sin; that acceptance of LGBT folks is contrary to God's will; and that somehow inclusion and acceptance of LGBT persons will lead our nation on an irreversible path toward hell and destruction.

As a Christian, heterosexual, married father of two children, I'd like to offer a respectful, yet earnest, plea to those who

believe homosexuality is a grave moral concern and have chosen to editorialize their opinions here (and elsewhere) — STOP IT.

Please stop selectively interpreting Holy Scripture to match your own deeply-ingrained prejudices. Stop believing that it is your job to serve as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" in regard to this matter — rather than bringing people closer to God's grace, your commentaries only serve to isolate and shame people who are simply trying to be honest in who they are.

Stop equating homosexuality with pedophilia, bestiality and a host of other violent practices. Stop spreading the ugly rumor that people in the LGBT community are trying to "recruit" impressionable youth to their orientation.

Stop assuming that your sometimes virulent rhetoric can actually change anyone's sexual orientation — people of the LGBT persuasion know better than perhaps any of us that such changes are not possible. Stop believing that what consenting adults do in a free country has any impact or bearing on your personal lives, freedoms or on our society in general.

Stop assuming that it is your job to speak for all of Christendom on this

matter — while you may be sincere in your beliefs, you do not speak for every person of our faith, and your sometimes unkind witness does absolutely nothing for the cause of Christ. Stop the hypocritical practice of trumpeting individual liberties and "free will" while denying LGBT persons the right to engage in civil unions and opportunities for equal rights and access.

Most importantly: stop living in the fishbowl of a narrow worldview. Seek out people who have figured out that they are not heterosexual — listen to their stories and work to understand their perspectives. Spend more time working to increase social justice and equal access for all and less time focused on castigating those who aren't entirely like you. Start living the Gospel message and stop acting like those religious leaders who Jesus roundly criticized for their arrogance and self-righteousness.

If Christianity is to remain relevant in the 21st century and beyond, those who practice our faith must be inclusive — not exclusive. I hope that you will join with other like-minded folks toward that end.

CHAD E. BARKER
Gastonia

TO THE EDITOR:

the writer's name, address and phone number (for verification only).
edited for length, accuracy, etc.

- Preferred length is 300 words or less. Longer letters may be considered for "My Turn" columns.
- Writers are limited to one letter or column published every 15 days.

- The Gazette does not publish poetry, form letters, petitions or consumer complaints.
- How to send them:
Mail: P.O. Box 1538 Gastonia, NC 28053
Fax: 704-867-5751
Email: gastongazette@gastongazette.com

Publication becomes the property of the newspaper and are subject to reuse, in whole or part, in print, electronic formats and archives. Material is subject to editing and other changes.