

Cultural Shift: How Should We Respond?

By McKrae Game



Freedom from homosexuality through Jesus Christ

Volume 12, Issue 7 July 2015

Major events have the power to alter our lives and shift the culture to such a degree that we remember where, when, and what we were doing when we heard about them. I remember riding in the car with my mom when it was announced over the radio that Elvis had died. It was the summer of 1977 and though I was only nine at the time, it stuck out to me. He had shaped our culture in a large way, and his tragic death rocked our nation. In January of 1991, I was at an Amway conference in Tampa, Florida, when the evening speaker announced that Desert Storm had begun. This war broke a long-standing time of peace for our country, and it was the very next morning when I surrendered my life to Christ and left homosexuality. I was 22. It was September of 2001 and I was landscaping at a client's home when my wife called—a plane had hit the World Trade Center. We did not yet know it was a terrorist attack, but I felt I needed to stop what I was doing and head home to be with my family. We were all in shock. Our world, as we knew it, was forever changed. Then on June 26 of this year, I was at an amusement park in North Carolina with my son and his friends, when a friend texted me, "Did you hear the ruling from the SCOTUS on gay marriage?" I wasn't surprised or fearful, but our culture as we've known it had drastically changed.

Five Supreme Court justices decided for our entire country that gay marriage was not only legal, but actually equal to traditional marriage—except, of course, in God's eyes. At this point, we can only speculate on what will happen, but situations like The White House lit with the gay flag colors certainly mark change in ways that will challenge Christians to love others well in this "new normal."

Someone asked me the other day, "How do you think gay marriage is going to affect your ministry?" I said, "I don't really think it will affect it. We don't really deal with the gay or homosexual community. We have always dealt with repentant Christians." The gentleman who asked the question didn't understand my answer, so I explained.

I shared with him John 6:44a, where Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them." I said that the only people who seek our services are those wanting change. We always clarify that we're *not* here to change them; instead, we share with them our purpose, "We exist to help those affected by homosexuality to live according to God's design." And God's design is freedom to live in wholeness and holiness!

I continued sharing with the man that the primary group that Hope for Wholeness serves are those who became Christians at a young age, who struggle with same-sex attractions, and may have gone into homosexuality. I explained to him that I was one of the rare people who came to Christ *and* repented of my homosexuality at the same time.

I'm eager to lead people to Christ so they can live in freedom. I also realize that many people's hearts are hardened against Jesus and His church and do not believe they have to repent of anything. Yet, because of God's great love, His Holy Spirit will continue to draw His children to Himself. That's why I told the man, "I don't think it will affect our

ministry," because we're not the ones in charge.

All sin, including homosexuality, has affected our world. Sin distracts us from focusing on Jesus, His church, and His plan for our lives. Similarly, legalizing gay marriage has distracted those we serve; yet, I also see Jesus refocusing those same people on the truth of His Word. Let me share what I mean by referring to our recent conference. (Recordings from the conference are available.)

As you read in last month's article, according to our participants, June's conference was amazing! From around the country, 150 men, women, and youth—many who have walked away from homosexuality—came together to learn, grow, and be used in each other's lives. Through transparency, they established and were strengthened in community. Our annual conferences offer opportunities to experience Jesus with other like-minded brothers and sisters. By the time Sunday lunch is over, we are all sad to see our friends depart, knowing it will be another year before we see each other again. Most return home to few people, if any, to whom they can talk to or who understand them.

We're fortunate through social media to be able to stay connected. We have many different Facebook groups through which overcomers can connect. We were more isolated before Facebook, but today, we can encourage one another daily and help many who, for whatever reasons, cannot attend our conferences.

Within a few weeks after this year's conference, two significant events occurred that shifted our culture—events that caused a great deal of concern and anxiety amongst the people we serve.

The first was an unprecedented jury trial in New Jersey, initiated in 2012, against Jews Offering New Alternatives for Healing (JONAH). Sadly, the New Jersey trial ended in a victory for the plaintiff against



Arthur Goldberg, of JONAH on left. Benjamin Unger—one of the plaintiffs on the right—testified, "I was told from the beginning, gay to straight is possible."

JONAH for multiple charges of consumer fraud. The jury believed that JONAH misrepresented its abilities to change plaintiffs' attractions, and so JONAH was liable for fraud. The second event occurred two days later when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled by a narrow 5-4 margin that gay marriage is legal in all 50 states, overturning any



remaining state gay marriage bans.

As Christians, if we're going to live in reality—both the physical and the spiritual—then we're going to need to accept that we live in a country that has taken a large cultural shift. The burning question is: How are we going to respond?

I saw many examples on social media of how NOT to respond. There was one Facebook post that I was angered by its lack of Christ-likeness. It said, "We'll show them. Let's all come together this Sunday at all the churches around the country and make out with the same-sex for people to see that it's a choice." I was upset and dumbfounded by this level of ignorance (I really want to say stupidity), from those proclaiming to be Christian.

Although that's one example of how to *not* respond, I was blessed on the Sunday after the Supreme Court's ruling to listen to Mike Hamlet, my pastor from First Baptist North Spartanburg, as he called all Christians to hold the line on Biblical standards of both truth and compassion. I also heard Harvest Christian Fellowship's pastor, Greg Laurie, share about the destructiveness of all sin, including homosexuality. He emphasized we need to look at our own sin, first-and-foremost, and quoted Jesus speaking in Matthew 7:5, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." None of us like being told that we have the bigger problem, but Jesus makes it clear what the order is when dealing with sin.

The following Wednesday, my pastor arranged a Q&A session where he, Josh Kimbrell (an expert in constitutional issues), and I fielded a wide variety of questions on homosexuality. One of the things I did, as always, was to put a face on the person with same-sex attractions, the person living homosexually, and the person professing Christ but caught up in homosexual behavior. I explained that these people were not aliens who wanted to devour them. I reminded them that there is only one enemy—and his name is Satan.

There was a large turnout that night and many were concerned about how the ruling will affect their families, themselves, and even their jobs. What will happen now that gay marriage has passed? Josh covered the legalities of how some jobs will be affected by gay marriage, while I shared about parents talking to their children and reaching out to gay friends and family members. The one sentence my pastor said that really struck me was that God had not appointed him as judge to condemn people.

Remember the conversation with my friend who asked me what Hope for Wholeness does? He—like the church in general—doesn't seem to understand the difference between those with same-sex attractions and those who are unrepentant homosexuals.

If we as the church—the Body of Christ—are going to minister as Jesus did, we MUST love all people with 100% mercy and 100% strength, simultaneously. It's *not* about winning the culture war, because that won't happen until Jesus returns. For far too long, the church has taken on homosexuals as the enemy. Some Christian groups point to the most vile parts of homosexuality in order to gain support. Such groups may

gain notoriety, but they turn many with same-sex attractions away from the church.

Have you done any of this? If you have, then this is your opportunity to repent! Begin putting your repentance into action by sharing two of the greatest gifts—give them prayer and true friendship.

The church needs to embrace people dealing with same-sex attractions—and—the Christians who have same-sex attractions need to lead the way in being real and transparent. This is a prime source of ministry within the church!

The world, our flesh, and the enemy are pushing those of us with same-sex attractions to take on the identity and life of homosexuality, but this is not what we want. We desperately need to be a part of the church—to be welcomed, accepted, and loved in all our messiness. We need safe, Biblically-sound people to be real with, who will allow us the freedom to be honest, open, and vulnerable. We also need others to be transparent with us so we can grow in healthy relationships. As we work towards holiness together, we long to have men and women of God's church to come alongside us so we can stand firm in the faith. In order to do this, we need healthy, intimate, same-sex relationships, just like God created all of us to need.

In essence, we all desperately need safe, healthy people to "do life with."

As already stated, the Hope for Wholeness conferences and Facebook groups are invaluable; yet, they do not replace one-on-one relationships back at home. People with same-sex attractions need friends to hang out with, to invite them over for dinner or a movie, and to give them a much-needed hug. Let me say it one more time: safe, healthy intimacy is crucial!

If you, and/or your church fellowship, aren't willing to lay down your vitriol towards same-sex attracted people, then you will not be able to see them as being the "same as" you. Seeing others as the same as yourself is the beginning of lovingly engaging them, supporting them, and fighting *for* them—rather than against them.

If the church does not repent of its ugly, callous treatment of these precious men, women, and youth, then we cannot truthfully say that we love as God loves. I can assure you that if the church does not love-on and stand-with people who struggle with same-sex attractions, the gay community will. And that will be one more man, woman, or youth, who will likely be turned against the Body of Christ. What a crime it is for hurting people to not be able to trust the church because they are treated as "different from us," rather than "same as us."

Let's learn, let's change, let's grow! Let's mature by persevering through the painful, messy process of loving others as Jesus loves us. Learn to be okay that someone's temptations are different than yours. These men, women, and youth need our help, our friendship—and we need theirs! You don't have to have all the answers or always understand, but if you are real and vulnerable, and will point to The One who has the answers, then you and their lives will be transformed to more fully reflect Jesus.

Who do you know that may need our help? Give them this newsletter or tell them about our ministry.

Hope for Wholeness is a ministry of Truth Ministries, Inc. DBA Hope for Wholeness.

CONTACT OUR STAFF: President of Hope for Wholeness, McKrae Game, mckrae@hopeforwholeness.org; Office Manager, Nylene Wilds, nwilds@hopeforwholeness.org; Ministry Associate, Jacob Morgan, jmorgan@hopeforwholeness.org.

For the remaining staff and Upstate ministry team, see our website > About Us > Our Staff.

This monthly publication is available by email or US mail. Your donations are very much appreciated and are tax deductible.

We welcome your phone calls and/or correspondence about prayer, counsel, or partnership.

PO Box 5781, Spartanburg, SC 29304, 1-844-332-3809, www.hopeforwholeness.org

