

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Go and Sin No More

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Andy Stanley Doubles Down on His Departure from Biblical Christianity

1



North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Ga.
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Christians should find no joy in addressing theological error, but passivity in the face of serious error amounts to complicity. The Apostles warned the Church to be on guard against false gospels and teachings that contradict the faith “once for all delivered to the saints.” Clearly, that calls for careful discernment and a necessary note of humility. This stewardship also requires careful consideration of theological weight, Biblical substance, and ethical priority. A disagreement over eschatological timetables is not a first-order theological issue, but a subversion of the gospel is a first-order crisis.

On Sunday, Andy Stanley responded to my [previous column](#) about his departure from Biblical Christianity, speaking of my argument and noting, “Lots and lots of people saw it. That’s why we are talking about it today.” He did talk about it, and in both services at North Point Community Church in metro Atlanta. He said a great deal, and he stated up front that he “never subscribed” to the Christianity I represent, so he has not departed from it. Stanley represented my understanding of Biblical Christianity as drawing lines and suggested that Jesus, unlike those who draw lines, drew circles: “He drew circles so large and included so many people in His circle that it consistently made religious leaders nervous.”

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Lion and Lamb Apologetics

The problem with Stanley's assertion that Jesus drew circles rather than lines is that the four Gospels consistently present Jesus as drawing both. He did draw lines, such as when He told of the good Samaritan who, unlike the religious leaders of His day, helped the man assaulted by robbers. Casting the Samaritan as the God-honoring character in the parable was indeed a way of drawing a circle. Jesus came to save sinners, and thus we are saved. But Jesus never drew circles that ignored the reality of sin. Christ also drew lines with clarity, such as the line separating the sheep from the goats. Similarly, the Apostles preached the great good news of the gospel, yet also called Christians to holy living and to avoid sexual immorality. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" ([1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#)).

2

Remember also that Paul continued: "And such were some of you. 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" ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)).

In his messages on Sunday, Stanley addressed several of the issues of greatest concern. But he did not really clarify his personal convictions on LGBTQ issues nor did he really clarify the position or policy of his church. Stanley defended having two men who are in same-sex unions as speakers at the recent [Unconditional Conference](#) hosted by his church. He went so far as to say that the church's policy and conviction on marriage is that it means between a man and woman. He argued against marital infidelity and promiscuity but in largely pragmatic terms: "Hey, has sex outside of marriage made your life better or more complicated?"

There is no call to repentance in the message Stanley presented. Also missing is sanctification. There is no call to holiness, no call to flee from sin and obey Christ.

And yet, Stanley then turned to offer what amounts to a justification for allowing same-sex couples to be part of the Church. He spoke of same-sex attracted believers who practice sexual celibacy but then said: "But for many, that is not sustainable, and so they choose a same-sex marriage. Not because they're convinced it's Biblical. They read the same Bible we do. They chose to marry for the same reason many of us do: love, companionship, and family."

Lion and Lamb Apologetics

Stanley then asked how his church should respond. His answer: “We draw circles, we don’t draw lines. We draw big circles.”

What is missing here? What’s missing is not newly absent from Stanley’s preaching. What’s missing, first of all, is repentance from sin. That is not a small matter. The Apostle Paul summarized the gospel as repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ([Acts 20:21](#)). There is no call to repentance in the message Stanley presented. Also missing is sanctification. There is no call to holiness, no call to flee from sin and obey Christ. Instead, Stanley presented the idea that sinners may find refuge in a same-sex marriage because obedience to Scripture and a Biblical understanding of sexuality “is not sustainable.”

This is not the gospel as preached by the Apostles and held fast by the faithful Church. This is a departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. There is no joy in saying this, but Andy Stanley’s approach, as defended in detail this past Sunday, is flatly contradictory to what Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth. Paul’s argument in [1 Corinthians 5–6](#) is completely consistent with the New Testament as a whole. It is essential to our understanding of the gospel of Christ. Paul requires that Christians draw lines on this matter, but he drew lines inspired by the Holy Spirit and out of pastoral love: “I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children” ([1 Corinthians 4:14](#)).

Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, “Go, and from now on sin no more” ([John 8:11](#)). It is impossible to defend a same-sex marriage from Scripture. It is impossible to imagine the Apostles conceding that obedience to God’s Word might be “unsustainable” for some believers. Theologically, Andy Stanley appears quite ready to “unhitch” the Church, not only from the Old Testament, as [he has previously argued](#), but from the Apostles. This is not Biblical Christianity. It is Andy Stanley’s own invention, and it is not plausible. The sexual arrangements and behaviors covered by his own logic cannot stop with what he identified as same-sex marriage. The idea that a Biblical mandate can be dismissed as “not sustainable” can hardly stop with same-sex marriage. The sexual revolution will plow right through that argument.

On one side you have 2,000 years of consistent Christian witness to marriage, sexuality, and gender. On the other side you have [something new and completely irreconcilable](#) with the gospel, with discipleship, and with holiness. The train has indeed left the station, and my guess is that even Andy Stanley has no assurance of where his logic is headed. My sincere and urgent prayer is that faithful pastors and churches will not head down the same track with him.

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