



*This letter is written in response to a movement seeking to change the definition of marriage and biblical sexuality according to the Mennonite Confession of Faith which states in article 17 that marriage is one man and one woman for life and the only appropriate place for sexual intimacy.*

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Weeping seems like a lost emotion, especially within the church. We do not weep anymore today. Instead, we make parties and draw lines in the sand. We prepare ourselves to combat each other in theological warfare. Seems like a good strategy for the Adversary. If he can get Christians to spend their time fighting each other, they will not be spending their energy on the more important matters, more eternal matters, namely telling people about Jesus and making disciples.

It is intriguing that when Jesus saw Jerusalem from far off he did not sit with his disciples and create theological arguments. He did not analyze the Hebrew wording and come up with counter arguments for the way the Pharisees had interpreted and enforced the Law. He wept. As I survey the scene throughout the Mennonite church today I weep as well. We would all do well to take time and go before the LORD and weep.

It amazes me how a people who take such pride in their position of peace are willing to take aim at the body of Christ with reckless abandon. The state of the Mennonite Church is in uproar over questions relating to person involved in LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer) lifestyles. One side chants love means inclusion and accuses the other side of being bigoted hate mongers. The other side cites Romans and narrowly applies this passage to those in the LGBTQ lifestyle and says they will not inherit the Kingdom of God. And both sides seem to want to convince everyone that these are the only possible beliefs to have. Jesus, however, shows us another option. I call it the Biblical option: Love God, Love others.

First, we are called to love God. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey me." Since He is God, it is good to know His law. The Bible tells us in Genesis that "In the beginning" God created male and female. The man had no suitable helper and so God formed a female from his rib. The man called her woman. Jesus affirms this in Matthew 19:4-6. Simple enough: God ordained male and female from the beginning and He has not changed this. To love Jesus is to obey Jesus. The issue lies not in what the Bible says but in what we do in response. Some of us choose to simply refuse what the Bible says and say that a LGBTQ lifestyle is not sin. There is no support from this in our Bible.

Second, we are called to love others. It seems clear that we do not know what love is. We need to look at someone who does. I propose we look at Jesus. I think both sides could agree that Jesus is our best form of love. Let's take his actions with the woman caught in adultery. Quick

rehash: the Pharisees look to trap Jesus and bring a woman before Him while He is teaching. They tell Him what she did, remind Him what the law says and then ask what He thinks her punishment should be. In dramatic fashion Jesus answers by bending down and writing on the ground with His finger. The Pharisees were not happy with this and continue to barrage Him with questions. He finally stands up and says, "If you are sin free, you cast the first stone." Amazingly, they all eventually drop their stones and walk away until only the woman is standing there. Jesus then turns to the woman and asks where all the accusers went. She said they left. He responds, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." That is love. (John 8:1-11)

Unfortunately, neither side of the LGBTQ argument gets it. Neither side knows how to love fully. One side focuses only on not condemning while the other side focuses only on sinning no more. Jesus does both. If we are truly His followers, we will do both as well. Jesus never once condoned sin. He never once allowed a person to remain in sin if they wanted to follow Him. His entire platform was announced by "repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." But he also welcomed people with open arms. He washed the feet of Judas who was to betray Him. He spent much of His time with those who were called sinners and outcasts. And he loved them. This is the message and lifestyle we are to continue if we want to keep calling ourselves Christians.

We are not to change God's word. We are not to stop calling sin, sin. We are, however, to first recognize the sin in our own lives. We are to weep over the sin of our world. We are to love everyone, even those who hate us. And we are to cling to Jesus. Only then will we begin to live like Jesus, to love God like Jesus loved God and to love others like Jesus loved others. There is no reason to adjust the confession of faith as it relates to acceptance of the LGBTQ community. It is rooted in the Bible and consistent with Scripture. What we are to do is adjust our way of following Jesus.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to lead people into relationship with God through (and only through) Jesus Christ. This is done by daily repenting of all our sin, dying to ourselves (which includes our fleshly desires), taking up our own cross and trusting in Him. This also means repenting of the ugly ways that the Church has responded to persons identifying themselves as LGBTQ and how we ourselves as individuals have responded inappropriately. We ask for your forgiveness. We want to be like Jesus: loving God by obeying Him and loving others by walking with them to Christ through repentance.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Kris