

COMMUNITY CONTENDER

I TIMOTHY 2:15

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USE YOUR HEAD

Everybody knows that children are often foolish. Sometimes, that's because they are ignorant, other times it is because they have not learned to connect knowledge to their actions, and it may also often be that the child does have the knowledge and ability to apply it practically, but doesn't have the desire to do so. Whatever the case, children are often foolish. When I was a child my father would often find me or one of my brothers doing something foolish, usually because of foolish thinking. At such times he would often yell at us boys, "Use your head!" Perhaps this was not the most righteous way to make his point, but the point is there. Now, let's make application toward a certain illness which plagues Christians, and can be a negative influence even in our own body. That is the illness of wrong thinking. That is thinking that is against, apart from, or further than what the Word of God instructs the ideology of a child of God to be. A lot of people say a lot of things that sound good, but when brought under the light of Scripture, they are exposed for what they really are: "the words which man's wisdom teacheth" (I Corinthians 2:13.) It is time for God's people to have some biblical discernment regarding the menagerie of religious articles and ideologies adorning the social media walls. People are writing religious perspectives on everything these days, including political elections, social ills, homosexuality, music, philanthropy, modesty, flags, alcohol, and the list goes on. Sadly, Christians are duped, deceived, disarmed, and distracted from the truth on a daily basis. Instead of applying the Word of God as He would have us do, Christians are behaving like my brothers and I, foolish children who do not understand the ramifications of what they are doing, saying, and thinking. Let's examine just one of the many wrong ideas extant:



"Christians shouldn't judge LGBT's (or whoever) or make them feel marginalized or shunned."

We don't need to expose the sin of the LGBT movement here – it is understood, but we do need to expose the wrong thinking in the ideas and articles of many religious "thinkers."

After the very recent Islamic attack on a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, many Christians echo the sentiments of one pastor of a church I know, who made this statement on his social media: *"Standing with the LGBT Community today as they are seemingly being targeted by a Radical Islamic Terrorist. We are to weep with those who weep. May we respond in love, church."* He is only one of a mass of religious folk who promote this idea. First of all, that's a terrible misapplication of both Christian love and of Romans 12:15 ("weep with them that weep.") Christian love has nothing to do with making concessions to or showing solidarity with sinful behaviors. Romans 12:15 has absolutely no application to standing with the LGBT community. We weep over the loss of precious human life and more over the eternally lost souls, but do not embrace or connect with the LGBT movement. Second, ask yourself this question: If it was any other sinful group that was targeted, for instance, a bar known as a "thieves and robbers bar," would anyone say "Today I stand with the TRMB (thief, robber, mugger, and burglar) community?" No, nobody would! (My wife helped me with this illustrative question – it's a good one!) Christian, use your (biblical) head!

Dan Chappell, a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) author and "gospel-centered" blogger also uses the misapplication of Romans 12:15.¹ He applies the weeping of Christ over Lazarus to the weeping we ought to have in solidarity with the LGBT community. I think we can each see the issues with that application. He also makes this statement: *"'I love you' carries a call to action. Otherwise, it is a 'noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.'" He then cites I Corinthians 13:1. That passage was written to believers in a local church concerning the way they practice their spiritual gift in and for that church. Again God's Word is taken out of its context. Taking Scripture out of its context effectively removes it from one's argument, as well. Chappell says: "Our faith can never be a reason to turn away from each other, but it should be... must be... the reason we [press] toward each other and press in, even when we don't understand or approve. Christ calls us to nothing less! When we change these realities, we start to be the people of God, the ambassadors of Christ we are called to be. Whatever, our theological differences are, make no mistake, LGBTQ persons are our neighbors, fellow image bearers, and fellow souls that Christ died to reconcile to himself. We stand at the same foot of the same redemptive cross, and this is always true! We will waste this despicable tragedy if we fail to see that more intensely today!"* I'm not sure where he gets the idea that believers ought to "press in" with immorality. Also, there is a terrible renaming of sin here to "that which we don't understand or approve." He goes on to mention "theological differences." They are more than trivial-sounding theological differences! These differences put one at enmity with the God of the Bible. While we "stand at the foot of the same cross," we stand there differently. Christians stand there redeemed because the blood has been applied. The LGBT community stands there "already condemned" (John 3,) and under the wrath of God.

In regard to the social-media proposed boycott of Target, Jaci Lambert, a pastor's' wife and blogger (religious bloggers are usually outside their biblical sphere of influence, authority, and accountability) writes this: *"...And I just really think that if He were here, if Jesus were walking the Earth today, He would be standing outside that Target bathroom ... not to freak your children out ... but to tell that transgender teen who is so confused and alone that He loves him, that He died for him, that He has more to offer him than anything he will find here on Earth. I think He would much rather be inside Target with people who are broken and messy than outside of Target signing petitions to make the outcast feel a little more shunned."* Mrs. Lambert exhibited unbiblical thinking. The first problem is an emphasis on one's own thinking, feelings, and experiences above or parallel with the Word of God. "I just really think..." This is perhaps the most common justification for one's own view that has ever been known to mankind. "I just think..." "I just feel like..." "I've had this happen..." The fact that Christians use this logic is frightening. This was the logic of Cain in Genesis

1 <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/narrativeandnuance/being-the-people-of-god-a-response-to-orlando/>

2 <http://www.faithit.com/jaci-lambert-straight-conservative-preachers-wife-target-transgender-bathrooms/>

4, and of those at Babel in Genesis 11. This was God's description of mankind in Judges 17 and 21. God said, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This is ungodly thinking. It is unbiblical. Many are the Scriptures which denounce man's thinking and honour the Truth of God and His Word: Psalm 94:11, Psalm 146:4, Isaiah 55:6-9, I Corinthians 3:20, etc. The apostle Peter, who learned this lesson well, realized that his own knowledge (Luke 5:1-9) and even his own eyewitness experience (Luke 9:33) were far inferior to the Word of God (2 Peter 1:16-21.) Second, the boycotting of Target specifically is not about "hating" someone who is LGBT. It is about promoting righteousness and accurately designating that which is sin. They say that less than 4% identify as LGBT in the United States,³ with only .3% self-identifying as "Transgender."⁴ This indicates that there are actually an extremely few amount of people who identify as LGBT at all. Of the small number who do, the number of "confused teenagers" is another small subset. Of those left, how many are actually inside Target at any given time? These masses of "confused teens" inside Target, to whom the petition signers are causing all this marginalizing anguish, don't even exist. The average trip to Target would leave me without the sight or thought of a transgender person. So the boycott against Target has nothing to do with Christians being "afraid" of the LGBT community, but a whole lot to do with Christians being against the corporate pushing and prodding forward of debauched behavior. It is also just a common-sense idea for trying to protect children from predators. Those who deny that sexual predators would use this to their advantage have their heads stuck about as far down in the sand as their necks will reach. The less that the immorality of transgenderism and homosexuality is decried in this nation, the more we will see those with a "gender identity" problem. Of course, it is no longer seen as a "problem." It is encouraged. Third, the marginalizing of sin is a good thing, not a negative thing. It accomplishes three purposes: 1) It reveals sin to the sinner, which is necessary for salvation! (John 16:8, Romans 7:7.) 2) It helps keep a nation moral before the Lord, blessing that nation (Proverb 14:34, Psalm 9:17.) 3) it allows churches to flourish in peace, something for which Paul instructed God's people to pray in I Timothy 2:1-4. Most contemporary theologians propose this: that because the day in which the early NT churches existed was bleak and sinful (Nero as emperor, etc.) Christians today should not be very vocal when their nation begins to go awry. This is not what the Lord instructed concerning His churches. The marginalizing of sin exactly what God commands and that which Jesus (God), John the Baptist, and the apostles practiced. In Matthew 21, Jesus marginalized the moneychangers. In John 8:11, He verbally shunned the sin of the adulterous woman, and confronted another loose woman in John 4. John condemned the immorality of rulers in Mark 6, and Paul specifically marginalized and shunned the very sin in question, homosexuality, in Romans 1. Contrary to the opinions of many Christians, the Bible tells Christians to speak out against sin, even to those who do not live by the law of God. The law is our "schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ," says Galatians 3:24.

If Jesus was here, He would tell these "confused teens" that He loves them, because He loves them with true, pure love. Because He truly loves them, He would (from Scripture,) also tell them that they are sinners on their way to eternal Hell, and that a perspective of repentance and expression of faith in Him is the only way of salvation. Following Mrs. Lambert's hypothetical, "If Jesus was here..." let us ask some questions. If Jesus would not be "outside signing a petition, but inside, with the broken and messy," what would He be doing? Would He be talking with them about their day, or about their financial struggles, or about the sales of the day? Would Jesus be "putting His arm around them," or somehow "being a blessing to them?" How would Jesus be "ministering to them?" If we must use this hypothetical, we must discern from the Bible what Jesus might possibly do if He decided to darken the door of Target. Jesus might possibly be "inside Target with people who are broken and messy," but He would leave them convicted about their sin, God's righteousness, and eternal judgment before His holiness. If they responded in the right way to the message of Christ, they would also leave purposing to become heterosexual and to identify as the gender which God created them. A wise preacher once told me this: "Your preaching ought to cause either a riot or a revival." He was picturing the Biblical preaching results of Jesus and the apostles, and of the Old Testament men of God. He was right. If the message I preach allows a culture that is shaking its fist in the face of Almighty God to feel comfortable, then I'm not preaching the Bible message. Do we use foul language toward, spit on, or behave violently toward practicing sodomites? No! But saying "homosexuality is sin" to this culture is the right thing to do.

Lambert continues, "but for the love of all that is holy (seriously) PLEASE be kind. And offer mercy. And grace. And love. That is not the same thing as having your beliefs trampled on." Mercy, grace, and love that do not confront the sinner with his sin are neither mercy, nor grace, nor love. Let's return to the "TRMB Community" illustration. Is it wrong to "judge" thieves, robbers, liars, rapists, adulterers, murderers, pedophiles, etc.? We would allow it, assuredly. In fact, not judging them would be a grave mistake, not only for their sake, but for the sake of all others. Why is it different with the LGBT movement? It shouldn't be. The extinguishing of the LGBT movement is not the end goal. That is only a blessed byproduct of the biblical process. LGBT folks are sinners, they need their sin to be marginalized so that they know they're sinners and are headed for Hell, so they know they need a Savior, so they'll be saved, and then, by default, the LGBT community will not exist.

While the specific instance is the LGBT movement, the broader emphasis is on sound judgment and biblical discernment. When an argument of a softer attitude toward sin comes out, look to the Word! When someone tries to "bully" you into realizing how bigoted you are, look to the Word! It's a sad thing when God's people buy into unbiblical, liberal ideas. Before we "share," retweet," or "post," we ought to take heed to the Scriptures. Here are a few helpful questions for discerning whether or not what you're reading is good, and good enough to pass on:

- 1) Does it minimize or rebrand sin in any way? (God's Word never does, but Satan always does.)
- 2) Does it give the "true" Gospel? (That is, does it speak of sin, judgment, sacrifice, faith in Christ, and not just "love?")
- 3) Is the application contextual? (Is the Scripture being interpreted for what it says, where it says it, how it says it, why it says it, when it says it, to whom it says it? These are the "six friends" of Scripture application!)
- 4) Is the application congruent? (Is the situation in the passage comparable to the current one? Are we comparing apples with apples?)
- 5) Are the premise, body, and conclusion supportive of Bible principles? Are they supportive of the preaching of God's Word in your church? (The local church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15.)

"Let's us use" Biblical discernment, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Corinthians 2:13.) Use your head!

3 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/183383/americans-greatly-overestimate-percent-gay-lesbian.aspx>

4 <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/09/upshot/the-search-for-the-best-estimate-of-the-transgender-population.html?> ²

JULY BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES:

Nick Smith-4	Mark Jacobs-18
Rebecca Spangenberg-8	Gavin McGonigal-18
Nathan Jacobs-8	Bella Rosario-23
Felicity Bell-9	Jesse and Emily Smith-23
John Narvaez-11	Rebekah Narvaez-24
Sharon Hockenberry-14	Bud and Marion Shultz-27
Dick Keller-14	Jackie Parise-28
Vickie Rosario-15	Wanda Capelli-29
Esther Kerr-18	Steve and Maribeth Spangenberg-30
	Chad Love-31

STEPPING INTO THE WATER

Joshua chapter three records the journey of the children of Israel up to the Jordan River. God speaks to them through His servant Joshua to sanctify themselves because the Lord will do wonders among them. God had commanded them to cross over the river, yet the river overflows its banks during the harvest season. The path is obstructed, the way unsurpassable, the situation impossible. For at least one night the children of Israel are camped with no way to move forward. Many thoughts could have gone through their minds, many doubts, many fears, and questions. God had told them based upon that which He would do, they would know that He was among them. God would surely keep His promise and bring them into the promised land and most assuredly give them victory over their enemies, even when the odds were against them, yet here they are in their tents on this side of the river, with *only a promise*. What should the children of Israel do under such *hard* circumstances? What should any child of God do when they have reached the edge of the water and there is not another human step that can be taken? They must move forward in faith according to what God's Word has said.

Faith steps into the water obeying the command of the Lord, trusting His word (Joshua 3:13; Hebrews 11:1, 6). The waters did not part until the feet of the priests were actually *in* the water. Faith takes the step based upon the promise of God and finds that God's Word is true. Faith believes that the results will take place without having to experience them.

Faith steps into the water even though it is contrary to thought (Joshua 3:15). There will be logical roadblocks to our faith. Faith does not have to make common sense. It would seem foolish to step into a flooding river, perhaps even downright dangerous, but when God has called and commanded, one must step out obediently by faith.

Faith stands in the middle of the river on dry ground (Joshua 3:17). Faith allows one to go where others cannot. Those who will not be *all in* and trust God will never stand where they have the privilege of experiencing the mighty hand of God and knowing that He is personally among them. They will be relegated to viewing God working in the lives of those who believe His Word enough to take the next step by faith.

Faith is blessed by memorials (Joshua 4:1-9; Hebrews 11). True to His Word, God parted the river, the priests stood on dry ground, and Israel passed through on dry ground. Faith allowed them to reach the other side and look back as the river returned to his strength. Faith allowed them to set up memorials of stones for their children to come as a testimony of the working of their God. Can I show and tell my children with my "pile of stones" what the Lord has done for me?

Faith works that which is eternal (Joshua 4:9). Those who step out in faith accomplish that which will last forever. To live without faith is to live for the here and now and to miss opportunities to impact lives for eternity. Take that step of faith. Witness to a co-worker or a neighbor. Begin to obey in giving your tithes and offerings. Begin or continue to have family devotions. Begin and continue your prayer life. The stone memorial stands somewhere in the middle of the Jordan river as you read these thoughts.

Step into the water.

FROM THE KITCHEN OF ABE PARISE: JALAPENO POPPERS

Ingredients:

14-18 medium to large jalapeño peppers
1 8oz package of Philly cream cheese, softened
8 oz shredded cheese (cheddar, colby jack, or Mexican mix)
1 pound bacon

Directions:

Rinse Jalapeños under cold running water. Slice top off each pepper, discard top. Using a small spoon (baby food spoon works great), scoop out seeds and membrane; discard seeds and membrane, rinse peppers again inside and out. Set rinsed peppers aside on a clean dish towel.

In a medium bowl combine cream cheese and cheese. Gently fold the cheese into cream cheese until combined.

Using a small spoon stuff each pepper with cream cheese mixture. Use spoon to gently pack mixture into each pepper.

Wrap one slice of bacon around each pepper, use a toothpick or two to hold bacon in place.

Grill peppers on medium-high heat on grill. This can either be done with the peppers standing up in a jalapeño grill rack OR lay peppers on side and turn occasionally. Grill for 10-15 minutes or until bacon is cooked fully.

Remove from grill and allow to cool slightly before eating; cream cheese mixture will be hot (temperature) right off the grill.

NOTES:

Wear gloves while prepping peppers.

Use caution to not get juice from peppers in your eyes. If using thick bacon, bacon may be partially cooked before wrapping around peppers.

If jalapeños are too spicy for your liking, a small sweet pepper may be used in place of jalapeño. Cool 10 minutes and savor!

MEMORY CORNER:

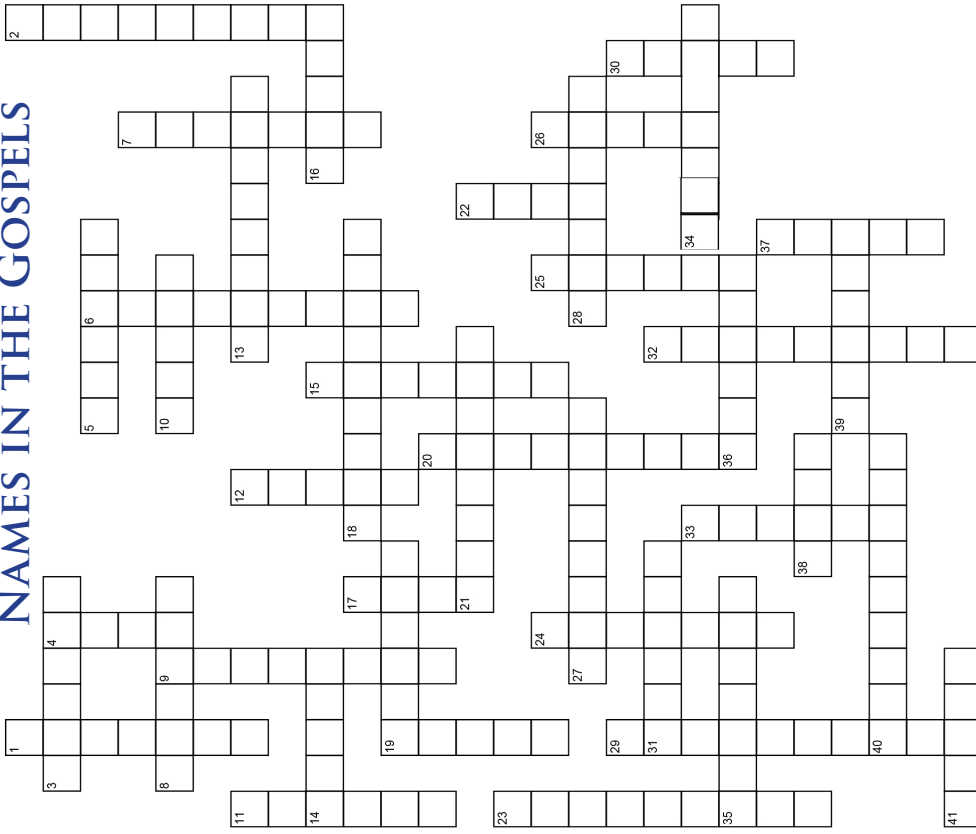
"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Romans 6:12-13

NAMES IN THE GOSPELS

*The first three completed correctly and shown to Pastor David will receive a treat!



ACROSS

- 3 Mary's sister
- 5 a Roman
- 8 tetrarch of Iturea
- 10 son of thunder
- 13 a high priest
- 14 cross-bearer
- 16 son of Simon
- 18 another tax collector
- 19 wife of Chuza
- 21 had a son named James
- 27 freed instead
- 28 John's father
- 31 brother of Peter
- 34 had a sick daughter

DOWN

- 11 buried Jesus
- 12 a high priest
- 15 father of prophethess
- 17 prophethess
- 19 traitor
- 20 John's dad
- 22 the beloved physician
- 23 sought him by night
- 24 messenger
- 25 they were many
- 26 also known as Simon
- 29 a blind man
- 30 Herod's steward
- 32 name for Satan
- 33 spice-bearer
- 37 a king

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