

Homosexuals and the Local Church

Written by Barry Napier

Tuesday, 25 October 2011 15:50

A recent column, in response to the query "Do you accept homosexuals?" quoted a pastor who said "Yes, the Church welcomes everybody!" The pastor made correct statements before that, so is he right? Can we welcome everybody into the Church?

He is wrong, and this is why: The Church universal, to which all who are saved are 'members', is exclusive. It consists only of the saved. The local church should be a microcosm of the universal Church, so all the same 'rules' apply. It is often said that the local church should welcome anyone. But, what does that mean, and is it correct?

The local church is not in existence to be a social department for all local people who 'hurt'. Nor should its meetings be aimed at the unsaved, with 'gospel' messages. This is because the local church is a gathering of saved people and no others. It is not a place where saved and unsaved meet without distinction! The unsaved are welcome to sit in the local church, be cordially greeted, and treated with peace and gentleness. But, that is about it.

Can we welcome homosexuals into the local church? It depends. 'Homosexual' is not a unique condition requiring special treatment. It is a gross sin and it is very public. It is this public aspect that most affects our decision, though not exclusively. The visitor is just as prone to scriptural discipline as anyone else. So, the homosexual may enter a local church if the Spirit is prompting him to do so. God can do that. He may sit and listen. But, he or she cannot be 'welcomed' as an homosexual - only as a person of sin in need of repentance and salvation in the Name of Jesus Christ.

If he or she is obviously homosexual, or boasts of it, or admits to it, and does not repent or change, they must be warned that refusal to change or be silent on the matter will result in their removal, in the sense of 'not be welcome'. They must be warned that their behaviour is a sexual sin condemned as gross by God, and they should hear the Gospel, one-to-one. If they continue to boast, or to tell others of their behaviour (sin) without repentance, they may not be welcome. Indeed, it may be necessary to tell them to leave. Why? Because otherwise they contaminate others and may lead them to sin. This goes for any sinner whose sin is public and may affect others in the membership.

So, they are as welcome as any other sinner to just sit and listen. But, there should be no special place - they are sinners in need of salvation! For myself, I have no personal hatred for

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homosexuals, even though many have done me immense harm. My words are reflective of what God says, and not of my own ideas. I am no better than they, but I must uphold God's honour and His attitude towards sin. It is difficult to see why any homosexual should be allowed to be amongst saved people in a local church. The Gospel is meant to be spread outside the Church, not inside it. And the purity of the local church is paramount for its members' sake. Those who commit gross sins condemned by God in a vivid way may not, therefore, remain in the local church without very good spiritual reasons.

Yes, homosexuals may enter a local church, but, if they refuse counsel and the Gospel, they may not stay.

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