

THE SINCERE BUT MISGUIDED APOLOGY OF BRIAN McLAREN, GREG BOYD, BRIAN ZAHND, AND BRUXY CAVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CHURCH TOWARD THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

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There's a sense in which this teaching is a losing venture. By their very nature **apologies** are humble and compassionate and beautiful. People who apologize are usually **right**. Apologies are what **end** fights and **create** peace. Marriages are saved when people learn to apologize. Friendships are restored when people apologize. Church splits are prevented when people apologize. So what kind of fool would speak out **against** such a visible apology?

You've seen the video. Look at the faces. Listen to the gentle tone of voice. Listen to the soft music in the background. Who doesn't resonate when we hear the dangers of **judging** and **condemning** and **excluding** and **scape-goating**? Those are powerful, ugly verbs. You're on pretty popular ground when you're calling the church away from those things. Those things are bad. Each of the speakers is right to tell us these things are wicked, demonic, and not to be tolerated in the body of Christ. Agreed.

Let me say up front there have been foolish voices raised in the church expressing hatred toward the LGBTQ community. Something in me wants to crawl into a hole when people carry signs with "God Hates Queers" written on them. My skin crawls when supposedly Christian people are heard spewing sinfully wicked words of hate through megaphones. So I can relate to those voices who question the Christianity behind such obviously evil behavior. Again, nothing but agreement from me and, I'm sure - I hope and pray - from this congregation at Cedarview Community Church.

But while I don't mind having brothers in Christ helping me repent by publicly apologizing for my **sins**, I'm not very comfortable with them apologizing for my **theology**.

That's the problem with this video. These four men have developed a theology of welcome to faithfully practicing, unrepentant members of the LGBTQ community. To be fair, Bruxy says he has not yet "**progressed**"(his word) to the point of totally agreeing with the others in this foursome, but says he may well be wrong in his present moral stance.

These men are good with words. Most of them are writers. And they know the right words to use to obtain the desired emotion and reaction. I have chosen to structure this unusual teaching tracing their phrases and sentences back to see if they have Scriptural roots. I want to see if what **seems** so gracious and loving and Christian actually has anchorage in the New Testament.

That means this teaching won't fit that neatly into the standard outline of three, four, or five points. I'll try, but the outline won't be very tight. I'm just going to pull out some of their exhortations urging us to fully embrace and accept the LGBTQ morality into full participation in the body of Christ and see if the reasons for this apology fit into what we know to be true of Jesus Christ. There can't be anything wrong with doing that.

I need to point out one more difficulty with responding to everything these four men say in this video. They use so many terms without explaining what they mean. And, while I can't prove it, I think this is done intentionally. Some terms can be made to feel more blunt and impacting when they're just tossed on the emotional fire and allowed to burn.

What, for example, does **Greg Boyd** mean when he apologizes for the "**judging the church has done**" toward the LGBTQ community. If I'm to join in apologizing for this I need more information. Is **judging** the same as **disagreeing**? Am I guilty of "**judging**" if I hold the conviction the Bible won't condone the actions of the LGBTQ community? I'm not told.

And what does **Greg Boyd** mean when he says the church has been "**self-righteous**" toward the LGBTQ community? Does he mean we all consider ourselves sinless? If that's the case we certainly **do** need to apologize. But I can't remember meeting a Christian who thinks like that. Not once. Or does he mean we think homosexuality is the **worst** sin anyone can commit? Again, then we **do** need to apologize. But if he means we are self-righteous merely because we call same-sex activity sinful, then I think the term "**self-righteous**" is incorrectly used.

These hard to interpret terms and phrases are used over and over again in this video. **Bruxy Cavey** laments the church has failed to "**show Jesus**" to the LGBTQ community. And once again, I'm left wondering what this phrase means. If Bruxy means we haven't allowed the LGBTQ individuals into our churches then he's right - we need to apologize. If he means we haven't told the LGBTQ community they, like the rest of us, need the gospel and can be freely forgiven their sins - just like the rest of us - then, again, we need to apologize.

But if by "**showing them Jesus**" he means we should never speak honestly of their sin, he's using the term in a way Jesus

would never want to be **“shown”** to anybody. If Bruxy means the church should leave the LGBTQ community to practice their own sexual ethic and expect it to be accepted in the body of Christ, then I think that vague phrase **“showing them Jesus”** is poorly used indeed.

Perhaps the most dangerous feature of this apology is the way these four leaders - who should have, even with a casual reading of their New Testaments, known better - constantly **impute motives** onto those for whom they presume to apologize.

Examples abound. **Greg Boyd** is arrogant enough to tell the church she has **“excluded them (LGBTQ) because they are different from us.”** Because they're **different from us?** Really? If I look around our church on any given Sunday **differences abound.** Young and old. Black and white. Rich and poor. Single and married. Calvinists and Arminians. Saved and unsaved. Educated and uneducated. Liberals and Conservatives. Anglicans and Pentecostals. Seeker sensitive and liturgical. The list is as endless as the variety. So no, we're not in the least afraid of differences.

But **Greg Boyd** knows what he's doing. Because once you **eliminate “differences”** as the motive for condemning homosexual activity you may have to admit other possibilities - like **Biblical faithfulness and thoughtfulness** into the equation. And we can't have that.

Then we hear from **Brian Zahnd.** And we hear a different set of motives ascribed to the church. In words I'm still not sure I've sorted out he says we Christians who question the acceptance of homosexual activity do so because we are **“scape-goating.”** He says, and I have quoted this as best I can, **“We have pooled together our anxiety, and fear, and rage, and projected it on some....group. It's called scape-goating....and too often it has been on gay people....”**

Again, the unwillingness to condone homosexuality is attributed to some state of psychological disorder. We are taking out on others what is actually going wrong in our own selves. No room here for a sane, ordered, compassionate, careful examination of the Scriptures. No desire to reach all peoples of all orientations with the gospel of forgiveness for real sins. No deep prayerful study of God's Word resulting in a rejection of homosexual sin. No. Our motives have been **assigned to us** by those **apologizing for us.**

Allow me just one more example of motives imputed to the church in not advocating for the LGBTQ community. **Brian McLaren** is, I believe, the only speaker of the four to call the church **“homophobic.”** It's a terrible, loveless word. And I would plead to the church never to resort to the kind of name-calling she has so often received.

I went to the dictionary and looked up that word, **“phobia”**- **“noun - a persistent, abnormal, or irrational fear of a specific thing or situation that compels one to avoid the feared stimulus....an intense, abnormal, or illogical fear of a specified thing....”**

Tossing out that term, **“homophobic,”** is a move as clever as it is over-worked. It eliminates rather than invites dialogue and thoughtfulness. The homophobic person is **mentally unstable - psychotic** in some deep fearful aspect. And immediately I'm made to be **abnormal** because I don't think the same way **Brian McLaren** thinks. Is this the best way to display unity?

You hear Brian lament the misinterpretation and misapplication of Scripture by those finding homosexuality condemned in the texts. He provides no examples. But according to his harsh terminology he undercuts even the possibility of a proper interpretation of the text by **anyone** in the homophobic camp. How could these phobic, semi-psychotic people ever be trusted with honest Biblical interpretation?

When **Brian McLaren** calls those who refuse to condone homosexuality **homophobic** he's not just saying we're **wrong.** No. He's saying people like we are incapable of ever being **right.** We are **“abnormal”** according to the dictionary meaning of the word. Our state of mind can't be trusted to interpret Biblical revelation in a **tolerant-enough fashion.**

Such a biased, closed-minded, judgmental approach is beneath **Brian McLaren.** He knows better than he speaks when he imputes these motives to conservative Christians. I would urge the church not to resort to such uncharitable judgments.

Not surprisingly, references to Biblical texts are very sparse in this video. **Brian McLaren** mentions none, though he is the one who complains about the church's abuse of Biblical texts. **Brian Zahnd** also mentions none. **Greg Boyd** and **Bruxy Cavey** make very loose references to **parts** of texts and come so close to telling us what those texts are about it will not occur to most church goers to doubt this is their actual meaning. They give a very warm, inviting, close-but-not-quite slant to biblical texts. And it's to those texts I want to turn in closing.

- 1) **GREG BOYD CALLS US TO REMEMBER THE OCCASION WHEN JESUS WAS MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE “JUDGED THAN WITH THOSE DOING THE JUDGING”**

My assumption is Greg is referring to **Luke 5:27-30** - "After this he went out and saw a tax collector named **Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, 'Follow me.'** [28] **And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.** [29] **And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.** [30] **And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'"**

This is the go-to passage for those seeking to expose the judgmental heart of the Pharisees and, by application, the loveless distancing of the church from those she considers bad. And goodness knows the church can use any prompting available to reach that crowd of people identified by the Pharisees as "**sinner**."

But perhaps this passage says more than **Greg Boyd** would like. Jesus isn't quite as comfortably inclusive as many might think in His reply to these legalistic Pharisees:

Luke 5:30-32 - "And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' [31] **And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [32] I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'**"

That Jesus wants to eat and mingle with these people works perfectly for **Greg Boyd**. That He rather bluntly calls them **sinner**s who must **repent** doesn't. And our Lord's illustration of the **sick** needing the doctor rather than the **healthy** only deepens His meaning.

Don't get me wrong. Jesus **does** love these sinners. He models a perfectly balanced love of both **presence** and **truth**. He wants to reach them and loves them too much to **not** tell them they're sinners. Unlike the four presenters in this video, Jesus' love is a deeper love than mere "**acceptance**" - the verb of choice by all four speakers. The church, we are told, must **accept** the LGBTQ community. Jesus' love goes deeper. He has something more precious to offer than **acceptance**. He offers **forgiveness**.

So why the noticeable shift **away** from Jesus' **forgiveness** to the church's **acceptance**? **Forgiveness** is never mentioned - I don't think even once - in this video. Why is this marvelous "**F**" word never once used in reference to what a loving church - a church called to be like Jesus - should offer the LGBTQ community? Because that would mean they needed to **repent** - just like Jesus said those sinners He loved to be with needed to repent. And if we ever hinted the LGBTQ community needed any call to repentance, these four in the video would think we were "**judging**" or not "**accepting**" the LGBTQ community.

There's something else we need to deal with. Can we ever put to bed the endless references to the **Pharisees** whenever the church is being critiqued? Can we finally move past the over-worked idea that the Pharisees were **mean** and Jesus wants His followers to be **nice**?

The Pharisees were **devout Jews**. They lived under the Old Covenant of Law and added hundreds of other regulations to boot. But even if they hadn't done that they still rejected Jesus, God's Messiah, as He stood right in front of them. And because they rejected God's saving work in the promised Messiah they had nothing to offer wrongdoers but **law**. Without **forgiving grace** **law is all you have left**.

This is so important. These leaders didn't tell Jesus the woman caught in adultery had to be stoned just because they were **mean**. They said she had to be stoned because that's exactly what the law - **God's Old Covenant law** - demanded.

Think about what this means. Think deeply. The church doesn't present God's intended **opposite** of the Pharisees when she merely **accepts** all people. The Pharisees' **condemnation** was no solution to these people's deepest needs. And nor is the church's **acceptance**. That's because both condemnation and mere acceptance grieve the Holy Spirit because both of these responses leave out the gospel.

The calling of the church, contrary to **Bruxy Cavey**, isn't just to "**live like Jesus**" in front of the LGBTQ community. While that is truly important, our calling is to **both live** like Jesus and **tell** about sin and redemption through the **gospel of Jesus**. That's what Jesus clearly meant when He said he came to "**call**" (note the verbal term) "**sinner**s to repentance."

2) **BRUXY CAVEY REMINDS THE CHURCH THE APOSTLE PETER CALLS US TO RESPOND TO THOSE WITH**

WHOM WE DISAGREE WITH “GENTLENESS AND RESPECT”

The text in mind here is clearly **1 Peter 3:15** - “....but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect....”

Bruxy is right saying the church ought to respond to **anyone** in **any situation** with gentleness and respect. It doesn't seem we could go very wrong with that reminder. The real question is **how is Peter using this reminder in this text quoted by Bruxy Cavey?**

A quick read will answer that question - **1 Peter 3:13-17** - “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”

Clearly this is a text about a **persecuted church**. They are “**suffering for doing good**”(17). And they are being “**slandered**” due to their loyalty to Christ (16). And it is at this point the Apostle Peter reminds them not to respond to their persecutors with anything other than “**gentleness and respect**”(15).

So in Peter's words the **church** is not the **persecutor**. She is the **persecuted**. And the **church** is to treat her persecutors with “**gentleness and respect**.”

All of this begs the important question - **What would bring this kind of persecution on the church?** What would make our Lord absolutely certain His **church** would be just as hated in this world as **He** was hated in this world?

John 15:18-20 - “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. [19] If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [20] Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you....”

Peter remembered these words from Jesus. That's why he warns the church about its attitude when unjustly persecuted by the surrounding culture. But again, **what would bring such unjust persecution?** How could Jesus and Peter be so certain? What would make such persecution **inevitable?**

Some things seem obvious. No one is going to persecute the church for feeding the hungry. People - virtually **all** sane people - love to see the hungry fed. No one is going to persecute the church for clothing the poor and destitute. People - virtually **all** sane people - will applaud any group for caring for the poor. No one will persecute the church for ministering to Syrian refugees. Virtually **all** sane people admire such desperately needed manifestations of compassion. These are the things that make the church **loved**, even by godless people.

From whence arises persecution? Persecution arises when there is any exposure by the church of culturally accepted sin. It comes when the moral allegiances of two kingdoms collide. It comes when one religion claims exclusive rights to divine saving grace. It comes when nice, decent people are called to repentance. This is the context of Peter's plea for the church, even in the middle of this inevitable conflict, to exhibit “**gentleness and respect**.”

So is **Bruxy Cavey** right? Well, yes. Sort of. Christians are called to manifest “**gentleness and respect**.” And yes, that command will serve well in almost any application at all. But if we're going to refer to **Peter's** application, it's a command for the church as the **object** of persecution specifically for its commitment to moral “**righteousness**”(1 Peter 3:14). It's a command based on **increased counter-cultural conviction in the church**. Not **less**.

3) GREG BOYD CALLS THE CHURCH TO REMEMBER GOD'S RAIN ON THE JUST AND UNJUST IS A CALL FOR THE CHURCH TO LOVE BOTH THE GAY AND THE STRAIGHT

Matthew 5:43-48 - “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ [44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends

rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? [48] You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Greg Boyd's conclusion from this text is this: ***“The rain doesn't pick and choose where it's going to land. It just falls on everyone. And Jesus says that's how we're supposed to love. We're to love without distinction - with no consideration of sexual orientation....”***

No one should disagree with Greg Boyd's words in terms of the call to the church to freely offer love and grace to all. But that is not what this text is about. This is a text about how Christians treat their **enemies**. The verses immediately preceding this text are a caution against any kind of **retaliation** for being mistreated (38-41).

That is not to be the Christian's response. We are to respond in **love** and in **prayer** to the **“enemies”** who **“persecute”** us (44). This is **not** a passage about merely being accepting of all kinds of different people. It's about the Christian's response to the enemy who persecutes him unjustly.

Do I need to say the obvious? The LGBTQ's aren't my enemies. They have not been persecuting me as far as I can tell. I don't hate any of them, though I am convinced God's Word demands I see their homosexuality as sinful.

One more thought. Though they are not my enemies, the exhortation to pray for them is gloriously applicable.

4) **WHY GOSPEL FORGIVENESS, THOUGH INCLUDING LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE, IS SO MUCH GREATER AND SAFER THAN EITHER**

I'm arguing that the love demanded of the body of Christ - the love **demonstrated** by our Lord - isn't best displayed by mere **acceptance** of one another. That we are all sinners is true enough and it's never to be forgotten. The fact we're all sinners should remove forever the condemnation of any **one** particular sin. And this point - this **important** point - is thoroughly made by each of the four speakers in our video.

But while this is tremendously important, it is not enough. The fact that we're **all** sinners doesn't make it **safe** to continue in **any** sin. We can't just pat each other on the back while we each rebel against the love of Jesus in any particular justified sin.

In other words, the gay person's sexual sin isn't made safe by my addiction to pornography or materialism. And the way **I** would see the body of Christ working - at its best - would be each of us leading each other into fresh areas of repentance. We should take our lead from the words of the Apostle Paul in **1 Thessalonians 3:12-13** - ***“....and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, [13] so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”***

Any love or acceptance that doesn't further that goal in the body of Christ isn't worthy of Jesus Christ - who died for all - gay and straight.