TRYING TIMES:

21st CENTURY SEXUAL REVOLUTION,

CHURCHES AND MINISTERS AT-RISK

A Thesis Project Submitted to

The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

Samuel H. Murray

Lynchburg, Virginia

April 29, 2019
Liberty University School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Mentor: Dr. Phillip McFarland

Reader: Dr. Dwight C. Rice
THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

TRYING TIMES:

21st CENTURY SEXUAL REVOLUTION,

CHURCHES AND MINISTERS AT RISK

Samuel H. Murray Sr.

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019

Mentor Dr. Phillip McFarland

The 21st Century Sexual Revolution in America is redefining marriage, gender identity, human sexuality and public interaction while simultaneously challenging those who dare disagree. As the pastor of a small church, this writer is concerned about potential litigation as a result of these societal changes.

These issues are rapidly emerging and evolving. Governmental bodies, corporations, advocacy groups, and courts at all levels are engaged. Churches and ministers may be at risk of adverse legal actions. A review of legal cases will reveal trends and precedents concerning these issues. Individual interviews will engage ministers and churches as to their preparedness and/or personal experience with such issues.

This project seeks to do two things. First, to provide awareness to churches and ministries of the comprehensive nature of these societal changes. Second, to produce a practical guide to prepare churches and ministries because of these far-reaching societal changes.
# CONTENTS

## Chapter 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Limitations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Basis</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Documents</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture Passages</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness for Potential Conflicts</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons Learned from Conflicts</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Population</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How long have you served in your current ministry position?  

Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.? 

How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry? 

Do you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues? 

Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding these issues? 

Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications? 

Did these issues have any real or potential financial implications? 

How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry? 

Did you seek any legal advice or counsel? 

What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry? 

What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers? 

Conclusion 

Chapter 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview One</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Two</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Three</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Four</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Five</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Six</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Seven</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Eight</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Nine</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Ten</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 11</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 12</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 13</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 14</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 15</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 16</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 17</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sometimes There is No Fight at All

Sometimes You Start the Fight

Sometime the Fight Comes Looking for You

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Sides Argue for Legal Rights</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches on Both Sides Cite the Bible</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of the Results for Practical Application</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Research</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Checklist of Preparations for LGBTQ Issues</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: IRB Approval</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA</td>
<td>Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMA</td>
<td>Defense of Marriage Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFRA</td>
<td>Religious Freedom Restoration Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The 21st Century Sexual Revolution in America is redefining marriage, gender identity, human sexuality and public interaction while simultaneously challenging those who dare disagree. Churches, staff, outreach ministries, and individual ministers have already faced litigations and terminations because of these changing attitudes, policies, and laws across our country.1 Dr. Eric Walsh is a renowned and highly qualified physician. The state of Georgia offered him employment and he accepted. Following his acceptance of employment, his supervisors discovered he also preaches at his local churches. Department staff reviewed several of Dr. Walsh’s sermons on YouTube. Shortly thereafter the department rescinded their offer of employment. Dr. Walsh alleges that he was fired because of his religious speech.

Former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran found himself in a similar situation to Dr. Walsh. Chief Cochran is also a deacon in his church. He was called in to report to his secular government employer. Chief Cochran was required to answer for some beliefs he had taught in his Church Sunday School class that homosexuality is a sin. He was then fired from his government position and his exemplary career of public service was ended. The issue was totally unrelated to his job or his job performance.2

1Walsh vs. Georgia Department of Public Health, District of Northern Georgia. Filed 20 April 2016. p1.

2Kelvin J. Cochran v. City of Atlanta, Georgia and Mayor Kasim Reed, United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. Filed 02/18/2015. pp 1-3.
Donald and Evelyn Knapp are married and are both ordained ministers. They operate the Hitching Post Wedding Chapel in Couer D’Alene, Idaho. The Knapps declined to perform a same-sex wedding, based upon their Christian faith. The Knapps were contacted by the city government and threatened with legal penalties if they did not accommodate the same-sex wedding. The Knapps hired legal counsel and filed a lawsuit with the US District Court for relief.  

These issues are rapidly emerging and evolving. Governmental bodies, corporations, advocacy groups, and courts at all levels are engaged. Churches and ministers will not be able to avoid taking sides. Evangelical Christians may agree with Albert Mohler. “Within a very short time, we will know where everyone stands on this question. There will be no place to hide, and there will be no way to remain silent. To remain silent will be to answer the question.” Mohler wrote that statement back in 2014. As recent as 2017, Mohler wrote with more urgency and more specificity. “As the sexual revolution completely pervades the society, and as the issues raised by the efforts of gay liberation and the legalization of same-sex marriage come to the fore, Christians now face an array of religious liberty challenges that were inconceivable in previous generations.” Mohler goes on to expand on this statement. He acknowledges the litigious nature of many of these conflicts. Some legal conflicts have already happened. An increase in legal conflicts seems inevitable. “We now face an inevitable conflict of liberties. In this context of acute and radical moral change, the conflict of liberties

---

3 Donald Knapp; Evelyn Knapp; Hitching Post Weddings, LLC. v City of Coeur D’Alene. US District Court, District of Idaho filed 10/17/14 Case No. 2:14-cv-441-REB.


is excruciating, immense and emin. In this case, the conflict of liberties, means that the new moral regime, with the backing of the courts and the regulatory state, will prioritize erotic liberty over religious liberty.” Many of the legal conflicts experienced by churches and ministries today would seem to bear out that statement.

Many government authorities and LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) advocacy groups have already moved to persecute and prosecute Christian citizens and businesses who refuse to support these new expressions of sexuality. Robert Knight states, “Sexual orientation laws are not about the preservation of civil rights or even the creation of civil protections that are necessary to ensure the liberty of all citizens. Instead, they are about hijacking civil rights in order to empower homosexual groups with the ability to threaten lawsuits against any institution that will not go along with the idea that homosexuality is normal, healthy, and should be promoted.” Church involvements in these issues are not a matter of “if” but rather of “when”. Erick Erickson explains the objective of militant LGBT advocates as being to eliminate all disagreement from conservative Christians. “Conservative Christian religion is the last bulwark against full acceptance of L. G. B. T. people.” He goes further to state that Christians will even be coerced into agreeing with LGBTQ behaviors contrary to the Bible. “Not must be ‘persuaded’ but must be ‘made’. Not won over, but compelled. Forced. Christian, you must be forced not just to change your behavior, but to

---

6 Mohler, ibid. p 25.


change what you believe. You must be made to give your approval.”

Chad Griffin is the President of Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ advocacy group. He wrote an open letter complaining about religious schools that disagree with LGBTQ behaviors. “Some religious educational institutions, however, are relying on a little-known provision in Title IX to seek waivers that exempt them from treating LGBT students equally. The Human Rights Campaign has investigated this practice and found 33 schools in states across the country have obtained waivers that allow them to discriminate against LGBT students in admissions, housing, athletics, financial aid, and more.”

Griffin and HRC seek to use the force of government to change policies at Christian schools across the country. Griffin’s letter is part of a lengthy report of HRC’s investigation. The report is part of HRC’s stated political agenda. There is no middle ground or compromise foreseeable in this conflict. Lynn Wardle likens it to the issue of slavery in pre-Civil War America. “Like slavery, same-sex marriage is a root paradigm-defining issue. In the end, one group or the other will prevail because both realize that the other is a threat to the institution they wish to preserve or establish.”

Another example of using force against Christians who disagree with LGBTQ behaviors occurred in Houston, Texas in 2014. Pastor Steve Riggle was one of five pastors in Houston who had their sermons and communications subpoenaed by the mayor and city government of Houston. Pastor Riggle and others had been preaching from their pulpits in

---

9 Erickson, p26.


opposition to a bathroom bill in Houston. The bathroom bill was an anti-discrimination ordinance which allowed transgender persons to use the public bathrooms of their choice, rather than their biological sex.

These cases and many more represent just a small sample of the current conflicts. They illustrate the jeopardy many churches and ministries face in 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues. These issues are either already present or coming soon to churches and ministries across the country.

This project seeks to do two things. First, it seeks to provide awareness of the comprehensive and fluid nature of these societal changes. Second, it seeks to fuel thought by churches and ministers on how they might face these changes.

STATEMENT OF THE LIMITATIONS

This study is not designed to be a substitute for specific legal advice or representation regarding any specific case at present or in the future. As a broad survey of the emerging spectrum of 21st Century Sexual Revolution issues, it cannot possibly serve as a definitive legal guide for any one case or class of cases.

This study by no means claims to be a comprehensive examination of all cases past or present that are relevant to the subject matter. Such cases are too numerous and too rapidly emerging. Rather, this study seeks to provide a broad familiarization and understanding of the subject matter and issues involved at the time of this writing.

12 Subpoena to Pastor Steve Riggle to Produce Documents or Tangible Evidence. District Court of Harris County, Texas 152d Judicial District Jared Woodfill; Steven F. Hotze; F.N. Williams, Sr.; and Max Miller Plaintiffs,v. Annise D. Parker, Mayor; Anna Russell, City Secretary; and City of Houston Defendants, September 10, 2014. pp 2-12.
This writer makes no pretense or claims of legal training of any kind. Readers are cautioned to always seek legal advice and counsel for their own situations. As the interviews and literature will demonstrate, legal situations are simultaneously similar and unique. Different states, counties, municipalities, etc. have differing laws and regulations. Laws and regulations often change and are changing at the time of this writing.

This writer hopes to help churches and ministers by exposing them to the rapid growth and volume of these cases across the country and by providing suggestions and ideas for churches and ministers to further explore on their own. Laws, circumstances and cases in various states, communities, and courts will all be unique. No suggestion, case study, concept, or information in this study should be acted upon without the benefit of competent legal counsel on the subject beforehand.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Bible-believing churches and ministers who hold to the divine inspiration of the Bible believe it to be authoritative in all issues of faith and practice in their daily lives. They base their objections to same-sex marriage, transgenderism, gender fluidity, etc. on the collective scriptural passages relating to these issues. These passages combine to present a body of doctrine on the subjects of marriage and human sexuality that preclude same-sex relationships, gender fluidity, and other expressions of identity and interaction.

Genesis 1:27-28 clearly indicates the first marriage created and ordained by God was between a male and a female. It also clearly cites the intent of God that the male and female biologically procreate. Genesis 2:18-25 recounts in greater detail the pairing by God Himself of the male Adam with the female Eve. Verses 24 and 25 summarize this marriage as the model for future marriages and as the pairing of a man and wife. These are clearly male and female terms.
Jesus Himself validates the intent of marriage as a male/female union. In Matthew 19:3-6, while responding to a question on divorce, Jesus quotes and explains Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24. Jesus was not ambiguous. In answering the question on divorce, He explained that God’s intent in marriage was one man and one woman. There no passages in the Bible recognizing any genders other than male or female. Other New Testament passages similarly portray marriage exclusively as a male and female relationship. In both Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33, the partners in marriage are exclusively described in terms of one male and one female respectively. There are many other Bible passages on this subject condemning behaviors that deviate from the God’s model for human sexuality.

There are no passages in the Bible where homosexuality or transgenderism is commended. They are not portrayed at all in a positive light or approved by God in any way. Only the opposite is true. All forms of sexual behavior outside of a male-female marriage are condemned. Therefore, Bible-believing Christians, churches and ministers seeking to obey God cannot in good conscious approve of or accommodate same-sex marriage, transgenderism or other similar behaviors.

In times past, churches, outreach ministries, Christian schools, etc. have been free to live and work in accordance with these biblical beliefs. Today, that freedom is being challenged, if not curtailed. Everything from pulpit preaching, to hiring practices, to dormitory rooms, and even bathroom usage, are subject to potential attack if they conflict with the new societal changes.

**STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY**

A set of interviews involving a wide variety of churches and Christian ministries legal cases will reveal trends and precedents concerning these issues. A review of several legal cases
and decisions as determined by various courts will supplement and inform this writer’s understanding. This study will result in a collection of advice and lessons learned to be considered by churches and ministers when they find themselves confronted by such issues.

Chapter One will consist of a broad overview of the 21st Century sexual revolution issues. It examines the varying views of different churches and denominations on the issue of same-sex marriage. It also looks at potential legal and government actions that churches and ministers may suffer if they choose not to these new expressions of sexual identity.

Chapter Two will review the literature already written on this topic. It will explore books, journals, government documents and official letters pertaining to LGBTQ issues and relevant legal cases. This chapter will also present a comprehensive collection of Bible passages concerning with these issues.

Chapter Three will proceed with a review of the research process. This will present the specific interview questions for individual interviews. It will discuss the relevance of the individual questions and interview participants.

Chapter Four will consist of summaries of the interviews with a variety of ministers and their respective ministries. These summaries will include paraphrased responses to the specific interview questions. The summaries will also include practical applications for ministry based upon their interview responses. This will provide a snapshot view of the state of various church policies, or the lack thereof, regarding same-sex weddings, transgenderism, gender fluidity, etc.

Chapter Five will present a collective analysis of the interviews. It will examine trends, similarities and differences among the interview respondents, their answers and their experiences.
Chapter Six will summarize the entire study and present conclusions. It will then recommend for consideration policies and actions to prepare churches and ministers for the conflicts of the 21st Century Sexual Revolution. It will also provide a simplified checklist of preparations for LGBTQ issues.

CONCLUSION

The research will lead readers to an understanding of these issues involved in this conflict. It will expose the readers to both Biblical and extra-biblical writings on the subject. The interviews will expose the readers to the thoughts and experiences of individuals who have experienced these conflicts. The analysis of the literature, interviews, and legal cases will bring the readers a greater awareness of the issues, and some conclusions about preparation to face these issues.
Chapter Two

FOUNDATIONS

This chapter is a literature review that expands on the information discussed in the thesis project proposal. It will examine various books, journals articles, government documents and official letters relevant to the topic. This literature will represent various diverse viewpoints on Christian ministry and LGBTQ issues. The chapter will also review numerous Bible passages pertinent to LGBTQ issues.

Books

Erick Erickson and Bill Blankschaen believe that Christians and churches will be compelled to come down on one side or other in this conflict. They contend that aggressive LGBTQ advocates actively work to silence and even punish those who disagree with the LGBTQ lifestyles. The authors cite numerous examples that have already happened. One example is former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran. Chief Cochran is a devout Christian, a deacon and Sunday School teacher in his church. Chief Cochran wrote a book for the men in his Sunday School class to encourage them to be strong Christian men. The book contains only a few lines that refer to homosexuality as sin. But somehow this became a major concern of the Atlanta City Mayor and Government. “Then without warning-nearly a year after he published his book-Cochran was called into a meeting with three members of Mayor Reed’s administration and suspended without pay for thirty days pending an investigation. His alleged wrongdoing was publishing his religious beliefs about marriage and sexuality.”13 The authors go further and describe the conflict between Christianity and the LGBTQ community as a war. “What happened to Chief Cochran isn’t an isolated incident. Across America over the last decade-and especially

in the last few years—the attacks on religious liberty have intensified in what I can only describe as a war on our freedom to believe.”

Erickson and Blankschaen seek to shed light on a broad conflict that appears to go far beyond the issue of marriage equality and LGBTQ rights.

Kelvin Cohran wrote a book for his Men’s Sunday School class that is an encouraging and uplifting piece. It is interesting and relevant to this research exactly because it should be totally irrelevant. Cohran only tangentially mentions homosexuality. The book has a total of 160 pages. Direct disagreement with homosexuality is only mentioned in a couple sentences on only two pages. “Additionally, since God made sex for procreation, he only intended it to be between a man and a woman. Since procreation is a spiritual act between carnal beings, God intended it to occur only in the institution of holy matrimony—marriage.”

The other direct and more direct reference to homosexuality is, “Sexual acts pursued for purposes other than procreation and marital pleasure in holy matrimony is the sex life of a naked man….Naked men refuse to give in, so they pursue sexual fulfillment through multiple partners, with the opposite sex, same sex, and sex outside of marriage and other vile, vulgar and inappropriate ways which defile their body-temple and dishonor God.”

These two brief passages from a Sunday School book were apparently more than enough to raise the ire of Chief Cochran’s employers, justify his termination from his secular job, and end his long and distinguished career in public safety.

Hernan Castano wrote about his experience and the experience of at least four other pastors in Houston, in which their sermons and all electronic communications were subpoenaed by the Mayor of Houston. Pastor Castano believes this action was in retaliation for preaching

---

14 Erickson p 10.


16 Cochran p 85.
against LGBTQ lifestyles. “I believe that the subpoena of my sermons at church was with the intention to destroy the integrity of the ministry, to accuse me as well as other pastors of being filthy and evil extremists filled with hate toward the LGBT community. The strategy of local government was to remove the influence of my ministry by affecting my reputation and credibility as a preacher and teacher of God’s Word.”

The author details the events and the outcome of a legal battle between the Mayor and pastors of Houston over LGBTQ issues. This is a first-hand and personal account of a conflict from 2014-2015.

Albert Mohler responds to Matthew Vines’ assertion that homosexuality is compatible with Christianity. Mohler refutes Vines’ claims and examines the Scriptural reinterpretations used by Vines. In a broader sense, Mohler also addresses the issue of same-sex marriage and weddings in Evangelical churches. Mohler states, “Within a very short time, we will know where everyone stands on this question. There will be no place to hide, and there will be no way to remain silent. To be silent will answer the question.”

Mohler then gets even more specific in describing how he sees the issues facing the Church. “The question is whether evangelicals will remain true to the teachings of Scripture and the unbroken teaching of the Christian church for over 2,000 years on the morality of same-sex acts and the institution of marriage.”

There is no neutral position on this issue. Either homosexuality and same sex marriage are sins or they are not. The historical, orthodox, fundamental interpretation of Scripture on these issues calls them sins. Either pastors and churches agree with that and stand by that, or they do not.

---


19 Mohler p9.
Erwin Lutzer wrote about same sex marriage and its potential impacts on religious freedom over a decade prior to the Obergefell decision. In a section subtitled “When Truth Becomes ‘Hate Speech’”, Lutzer foresaw legal conflicts ahead for churches. “An assistant state’s attorney told me that until now church has had a niche where freedom of religion can be exercised. But if, and when same-sex marriage becomes a reality, churches that refuse to perform such unions will find that their tax-exempt status will soon be revoked. He predicts endless lawsuits that will bankrupt many churches.”

When writing, even in 2004, Lutzer acknowledged that churches were being pushed by the changing culture to accept and support same-sex marriage. “The pressure to affirm same-sex marriages is relentless. We hear it from the media, from some politicians and from the gays themselves who plead with us to see their point: They also are human beings with sexual desires; it would be unfair for some people to express those desires while others are forbidden to do so.”

Lutzer was aware that emotional appeals, public opinion, and even government authority would be brought to bear against churches that fail to support and celebrate LGBTQ beliefs and behaviors.

Ryan T. Anderson has written what is almost a history/reference book on transgenderism, its treatment strategies, and its political evolution. He carefully documents numerous aspects of transgenderism and gender theory. One of those aspects is a very organized and very active political agenda. “The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), a large and lavishly funded LGBT activist group, published a ‘Foundation Overview’ documenting the work it has done to advance transgender ‘rights’ on campuses, at workplaces, in medical institutions, even in houses of


21Lutzer p71.
worship, aiming to force cultural and legal change.” The author also highlights a clear legislative agenda by the LGBTQ community. That agenda will have legal implications for churches and Christian ministries. “Besides expanding those laws beyond their current reach, the Equality Act would explicitly reduce protections of religious liberty. It would cover ‘Public Accommodations, Education, Federal Financial Assistance, Employment, Housing, Credit, and Federal Jury Service,’ thus going well beyond the proposed (but never enacted) Employment Non-Discrimination Act (EDNA), which applied only to employment.” Anderson details the major players in transgenderism, both for and against. He also includes numerous testimonies from former transgender persons who transitioned back to their biological sex after sex reassignment failed to bring them the happiness they sought. Anderson examines claims both for and against transgenderism. He also examines scientific evidence, or the lack thereof, for those claims.

Adam Hamilton writes and explains a contemporary and progressives set of Bible interpretations. He does not believe in the verbal, plenary, and inerrant inspiration of the Bible. He also rejects the Biblical condemnation of homosexuality as sin. “If every word in the Bible was virtually dictated by God, as suggested by those who hold to verbal, plenary inspiration, it would seem clear that God finds homosexual intimacy to be, in the words of the Law, an ‘abomination’ and in the words of Paul, a ‘degrading’, ‘unnatural’, ‘shameless act’ worthy of divine punishment. Though I reject this concept of inspiration, I believe that even those who hold this view have grounds for rethinking the church’s traditional interpretation of

---


23 Anderson p 37.
the biblical passages related to same-sex intimacy.” Hamilton believes that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality. He believes the passages that condemn homosexuality are directed at non-consensual and/or idolatrous homosexual acts only. “Again what I am hoping to demonstrate is that we might explain the condemnations related to same-sex intimacy in the Bible as pertaining to these kinds of situations: gang-rape, temple prostitution, idolatry, and pederasty.” Hamilton is also open to the possibility that Biblical writers were just wrong and misunderstood God on the subject of homosexuality. “That, for me, leaves open the possibility that Moses and Paul did not accurately capture God’s will concerning same-sex relationships.” Hamilton does give a clear contrast with the historical, orthodox, literary-grammatical interpretations of the Bible. The author cites his own opinions and societal/cultural issues to support his difference in interpretations. He gives his full support to consensual same-sex relationships.

Gabriele Kuby is a German author, and devout Catholic. She takes a worldwide look at the sexual revolution and how it is impacting the world in many ways. She specifically notes the impact on Christianity. “Today even churches are caving into the ideological pressure of the time, although to varying degrees.” She expands on that thought, “Even within the church, they are shaking the foundations of Christian anthropology and morals which recognize man as a creation of God, made in the image and likeness of the triune God as man and woman, and called to become one flesh and fruitful. For Christians, this is one of the non-negotiable fundamentals.


26 Hamilton p271.

Nonetheless, everywhere in the church it is being negotiated under pressure from the LGBTI agenda and is leading to division.”28 The author even gets more specific and gives examples of this reasoning and negotiated apostasy within major denominations. “The Anglican Church also leads in acceptance of homosexuality. This first occurred in the blessing of same-sex couples, because, after all, ‘God loves everyone.’ Then followed tolerance in pastoral offices, followed by the ‘abolition of hypocrisy’ through ordinary appointments of homosexuals, and finally in grasping for the bishop’s miter, which divorced homosexual Gene Robinson succeeded in getting in New Hampshire in 2003.”29 Kuby gives very specific support for each of her observations and assertions.

Robert Gagnon and Dan Via clearly and concisely explain the current divide in Christian beliefs on homosexuality. Gagnon calls the theological divide in Christianity a crisis. “The greatest crisis facing the church today is the dispute about homosexual practice. No other issue has so consumed mainline denominations for the past thirty years or holds a greater potential for splitting these denominations.”30 The book consists of two opposing essays on the Biblical condemnation, or lack thereof, of homosexuality. Gagnon presents the view that the Bible condemns homosexuality. Via presents the view that the Bible permits and blesses loving, consensual homosexual relationships.

Sam A. Andreades may seem somewhat unique in his approach to the subject of gender and the church. Andreades remains completely positive in his presentation of Biblical truth regarding gender. Instead of condemning those in the LGBTQI community, the author merely

28 Kuby p 184.
29 Kuby p 185.
points out the love and the blessings that God has provided mankind in the two genders. “Gender is part of the image of God in us.”

This book is filled with such loving statements and then gives many scriptural examples of the author’s claims.

Michael L. Brown writes to primarily answer a specific question in his book, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* A summary of the book, in answer to his question, would be “No, not really” [Answer mine]. Brown uses his book to systematically and specifically refute the most common arguments used by Christians to support homosexuality. Brown emphasizes that Christians must state the Biblical truth in condemning homosexual behavior but speak that truth in a loving way to homosexual persons. “We do not look down on you or despise you, since for us, the ultimate issue is not homosexuality or heterosexuality. All human beings fall short of God’s standards in many ways, and all of us – heterosexual and homosexual alike – need God’s mercy through the blood of Jesus.”

Brown’s arguments are detailed and extensive. His work is well-sourced and thorough.

Todd Starnes is relevant to the topic in many ways. He has one chapter on “Gay Rights… vs… Religious Rights.” In this chapter, Starnes chronicles several cases of Christians being both legally persecuted and, in some cases, threatened with prosecution for choosing not to support same-sex weddings. The case of “Hands On Originals” is about a T-shirt company in Kentucky that is owned by a Christian family. They were sued for refusing to produce an order of gay pride shirts. An employee at Cargill Foods lost their job because they had a sign on their personal car supporting traditional marriage. A student in North Carolina was suspended from

---


school because he wore a shirt with a religious message on the school’s official “Day of Truth”. A Catholic student in Michigan was dismissed from class because they called the homosexual lifestyle offensive. A family bakery in Indianapolis was investigated by the city government because it declined to bake cupcakes for the National Coming Out Day.\footnote{Starnes, Todd, \textit{God Less America: Real Stories From the Front Lines of the Attack on Traditional Values}. Front Line Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group.; Lake Mary, FL. 2014.} Starnes goes on to document many more cases of Christians suffering legal and government actions for not supporting homosexuality and/or same-sex weddings and marriages.

\textit{The Queen James Bible}, Queen James, 2012. The anonymous editor, known only as Queen James, explains the reasoning behind the Queen James Bible. The editor admits that the Queen James Bible is essentially a King James Bible translation that they have intentionally revised to be gay-friendly. He then explains how he chose to “edit” or reinterpret eight specific scripture passages to “prevent homophobic interpretations”. The eight passages are Genesis 19:5, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:26 and 27, I Corinthians 6:9 and 10, I Timothy 1:10, and Jude 7. The editor also explains in detail why he finds it necessary to translate the term “abomination” as merely “ritually unclean” or “taboo”. The editor leads his readers to the conclusion that the Bible does not condemn homosexual relationships if they are consensual, loving and committed. He prefers to believe that the Bible only condemns lustful and criminal sexual acts as in violence or associated with idolatry.\footnote{Queen James, \textit{The Queen James Bible}, San Francisco, 2012.}

Stephen H. Black is a former homosexual who has found salvation and freedom in Jesus Christ. His ministry and calling for almost 30 years, has been to help thousands of other people struggling with sexual confusion and sin to find the same salvation and healing as he. “In the middle of the 1990s, I was hoping to compile a practical ministry guide for overcoming
homosexuality and staying free. This occurred after my radical salvation experience with Jesus Christ in February of 1983 and was followed by eight years of preparation.” The author’s hope is fulfilled by having written such a guide for others. The book is an integral part of a comprehensive counseling and ministry support program. This work is interesting in that it refutes the popular culture narrative that sexual orientation and transgender identity are innate and immutable. Not only does the personal testimony of the author refute that notion, but his ministry has conducted a long-term longitudinal survey with their clients. The results of the survey show that a clear majority of their clients found freedom and healing from homosexuality and other sexual sins. The focus group cited consists of one year-group of clients from 2015-2016. “They had participated in the ministry for a minimum of one year…The majority of those who took the survey rightfully define homosexual behavior as sin, especially since most of the people who come to our ministry are Christians. Of this focus group, at least 72 percent have found lasting freedom from sinful behavior.” The survey the author cites is a lengthy and detailed self-report instrument. A 72% success rate for this type of counseling and support ministry is significant.

Joe Dallas is another self-identified former homosexual. He writes in direct refutation of those who try to use the Bible to support homosexuality. In recounting his testimony, Dallas writes of his own personal struggle. He listened to a gay affirming pastor but did not find true peace. “All my Christian life I had known the importance of judging everything by Scripture, not feelings. Not once, I noted, did this man back his assertion with any biblical support – because,


36 Black p 265.
of course, there was none.”³⁷ Dallas further elaborates on his personal conflict and its resolution. “And if there was none, the argument was settled. No matter how peaceful, exhilarated, or relieved I had felt earlier, exuberant feelings would not and could not make something wrong into something right.”³⁸ His section on “Issues with the Bible” is direct and well-written. His chapter on “Jesus and Homosexuality” is particularly interesting as he examines and refutes in detail various arguments that Jesus approved of homosexuality.

Journals

One article entitled, “The Church and Civil Marriage”, is from the journal, “First Things”. This article is a compilation of eight different writers and thinkers in the field of religion. They wrote about the Church and same-sex marriage as a civil/legal ceremony. The writers come from a variety of religious and/or denominational backgrounds. The common question they each address is “With the legal affirmation of same-sex marriage in some states, should churches, synagogues, and mosques stop performing civil marriages?” Their answers are both similar and varied.³⁹

Evan Wolfson authored the article, “Marriage is an Engine of Advancement”. This article is basically a transcript of an interview conducted by Tim Miller of the Review, with Evan Wolfson, the founder of the organization known as Freedom to Marry. In this interview, Wolfson recounts a thirty-year history of legal cases that all worked toward the legal right for same-sex marriage. In 2000, Wolfson himself argued before the US Supreme Court in the case of Boy Scouts of America v. Dale. Freedom to Marry is an organization whose purpose it is to advance


³⁸ Dallas, ibid p 19.

the marriage equality agenda in each of the fifty states. Mr. Wolfson cites the overturning of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 2013 as a milestone in the campaign for same-sex marriage.  

Carole L. Jurkiewicz, wrote “The State of Gay”. This article is focused on the real and potential legal and societal impacts of the so-called “Rainbow Rulings” in America. These court rulings are The United States v. Windsor (570 US 2013) and Hollingsworth et al., v, Krisitin M. Perry (570 US 2013). The court decision in Windsor and Hollingsworth had the effect of striking down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA 1996). This Clinton-era law defined marriage in federal law as being only the union between a man and a woman. In addition to erasing the historical definition of marriage from federal law, Windsor established federal benefits for same-sex married persons and went on to provide other federal legal protections for spouses regardless of gender. 

David Masci’s, “Where Christian churches, other religions stand on gay marriage”, is part of an ongoing series of reports by the Pew Research Center on “Religion and Public Life”. This particular study examines the beliefs and policies of various religious organizations in the U.S. on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. One of the questions the project seeks to answer is “Where major religions stand on same-sex marriage?” Among the religious groups that sanction same-sex marriage were found: Conservative Jewish Movement, Reform Jewish Movement, Society of Friends (Quaker), Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches, United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. (There was noted a caveat to

---


the ELCA position. The ELCA allows individual ministers in each congregation to decide this issue for themselves.)

In the category of religious groups which sanction the blessing of same-sex unions are the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Specific to the PCUSA, the report noted in an update stating, "On June 19, the church’s General Assembly voted to sanction same-sex marriages, a decision that will take effect only if a majority of the church’s 172 regional presbyteries approve it over the next year.” The report cites that some of these denominations, while not allowing same-sex marriages, do welcome LGBT people to become full church members and even ordain gay clergy. In the category of religious groups, which prohibit same-sex marriage, are the following: American Baptist Churches; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint; Islam; Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; Orthodox Jewish Movement; Roman Catholic Church; Southern Baptist Convention; and the United Methodist Church. The report does note that the United Methodist Church has been officially debating this issue for over a year. Some UMC ministers have performed same-sex weddings contrary to the denominational teachings. These ministers have met with varying levels of church discipline. In the category of religious groups, which profess to hold no clear position on the issue, are Buddhism, and Hinduism. The project made no effort to survey independent or non-denominational Christian churches. The conclusion to be drawn from the data in this report is that there exists an entire spectrum of religious beliefs on this issue. Many denominations seem to be evolving their positions and seeking to define or redefine their positions. It appears form this report that this will be an ongoing issue in many religious groups for the foreseeable future.\footnote{Masci, David. “Where Christian churches, other religions stand on gay marriage.” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project.}
Australians, David van Gend and Tim Wilson co-authored “The Gay Marriage Debate.” They make references and allusions to the state of this issue in the United States. David van Gend is a GP and a spokesman for the Family Council of Queensland, Australia. Tim Wilson is the Director of the IP and Free Trade Unit and Carnate Change Policy at the Institute of Public Affairs in Melbourne, Australia. The issue the authors focus upon in this article is how redefining marriage affect children. The article begins with a very direct and unambiguous quote from David van Gend stating, “Marriage must remain a heterosexual institution to protect the rights of children”. The authors also cite David Blankenhorn whom they call “a high-profile supporter of gay rights in the US.” Blankenhorn is quoted as saying, “Marriage is fundamentally about the needs of children.”

The authors profess their support for equality for homosexual couples in every possible aspect of life except for marriage. The institution of marriage is one that must be reserved for heterosexual couples only because of the natural issues arising from the biological foundation of the family. They make a very concise statement that really cuts to the irrefutable truth of the matter. “Marriage is not a political or social invention, but a social reinforcement of biological reality; male, female, offspring.” They continue their discussion of the issue by arguing that children represent the only facet of sexual relations that is worthy of a public/societal concern. They expound on this by taking the position that children have a fundamental right to have both a father and a mother. So serious are they about this point that they describe the possibility of children growing up without the possibility of having both a father and a mother as “tragic situations” and “that is not a situation that any government should

---


The authors agree that religious institutions have a legitimate cultural and historical claim to marriage. They respectfully add though that marriage is also a very public institution. They advocate that civil unions legally be kept separate from religious marriage ceremonies. The two should not be the same nor be treated as the same. The two things must be separate in both religious and legal status. The authors also commend the example of what in the US are called “covent marriages”. The marriages have stricter requirements and rules and preparation for the marriages. These concepts are based on the associated religious values. These covent marriages also have stricter requirements for dissolution or divorce. These covent marriages would not be applicable to same-sex civil unions, in the author’s opinions because of the religious values involved that seem to conflict with homosexuality. According to the author’s, their solution to the issue of gay marriage vs. traditional/historic marriage would be what we in the United States used to call (in another context) “separate but equal”. In this scenario all couples would be treated equally for public purposes, but not for private religious ones.” This in their minds seems to satisfy both sides of the debate. In my mind I’m not so sure that it would satisfy either side.46

_The Economist_ published an article about churches and involvement in political issues. The article uses statistical analysis and opinion data from various research polls. The article illuminates the divide in the country on how much influence religion should have on our politics and culture. “Overall, 49% of Americans think churches should speak out about political matters, while 48% disagree. That has changed remarkably since 2010, when 52% wanted preachers to

---


keep their noses out of politics and only 43% didn’t.”47 The cites a number of religious political conflicts in several states across the country. Notably, the article mentions the Houston pastors that received subpoenas from the Houston mayor.48

Deondra Rose wrote a concise history of Title IX, the law from 1972 requiring equality of educational opportunities for women. Rose documents the successes of Title IX in using government authority to address the previous inequalities for women and girls in schools across the country. “As a result, this landmark higher education policy significantly increased women’s access to college and paved the way for dramatic increases in women’s higher educational attainment.”49 This article is relevant to the topic of this paper for what it does not say. The article is contemporary in that it was written in 2015. The article details the history of Title IX and the monumental changes it has made to educational opportunities for women. The article is lengthy and throughout the entire article, Title IX is only mentioned in terms of women. The author makes no mention at all of Title IX in respect to transgender persons or their participation in women’s programs.

Eric J. Krueger supplies an analysis marriage as an institution of government or of God. “This comment insists that marriage, at its core, has an absolute, immutable identity – it is the holy union of a man and a woman. Nevertheless, this comment also adopts the position that the State enjoys rightful jurisdiction over marriage. Between these competing ideas, this Comment


48 Ibid.

seeks to draw out how the State can best respond to the same-sex marriage movement.”50 This article speaks to the core of the legal side of the same-sex marriage issue for churches. The article examines the dichotomy between the spiritual kingdom of the church, and the secular kingdom of government.51

Todd Daly explores the ethics of gender reassignment surgery. Daly acknowledges the conflict between Christianity and transgenerism. “The prospect of transsexual surgery challenges Christian ethics, which affirms the goodness of the human body, not by directly questioning the goodness of embodiment as such, but by challenging the goodness of this particular body…”52 Daly examines the medical ethics of such surgeries as measured against the Hippocratic Oath and other ethical standards. Then Daly considers gender reassignment in contrast to Biblical doctrine. “From a Christian perspective, gender reassignment surgery appears to be a rejection of the Christian doctrine that we are created in God’s image (imago Dei) – male and female, body and soul.”53 The author gives a detailed discussion of the classical ethics involved in this debate.

John Wirenius contrasts the Anglican Church’s prohibition of same-sex marriage with their acceptance of usury. He considers the acceptance of usury to be Biblically hypocritical by comparison to the condemnation of homosexuality. “The Traditionalists demonstrate a much greater willingness to put aside scripture, reason, and tradition in the case of usury, which is


51 Krueger, ibid, p237.


53 Daly, ibid, p 41.
endemic in the culture at large, while holding fast to the prohibition against same-sex marriage, which is much less strongly rooted in each category.\textsuperscript{54} Wirenius is in favor of the Anglican Church approving same-sex marriages and blessing them.

Rena Lindevaldsen explores the issue of sex education in schools and the real or potential conflicts with religious values. “Many of those disputes involve controversies surrounding moral issues – how much religion can be discussed in the classroom, what types of religious beliefs should be discussed, should children be taught an abstinence-based curriculum, a comprehensive sex education, or anything at all by our schools concerning sexuality, and what should children be taught concerning same-sex attractions and gender identity issues.”\textsuperscript{55} The author also demonstrates that LGBTQ issues are being taught to school children through more ways than just textbooks and classroom instruction. “Schools also expose students to issues concerning same-sex attractions through extracurricular activities. For example, in October 2008, a number of first graders took a field trip to San Francisco City Hall for the ‘wedding’ of their teacher and her lesbian partner; administrators called the field trip a ‘teachable moment’.”\textsuperscript{56} The author goes on to document many similar incidents in many states across the country. The point of the article is that many of these morality education programs are being taught in schools without the knowledge or the approval of parents or the community.


\textsuperscript{56} Lindevaldsen, ibid, p 472.
Lynn Wardle wrote an article in 2010 that all but predicted the Supreme Court Obergefell decision and the later repeal of DOMA.\(^57\) The author wrote with legal logic and clarity. The article is filled with legislative and political realities. Wardle uses the analogy of a ‘House Divided’, reaching back to the Civil War era, to illustrate the current divide in our nation on the 21\(^{st}\) Century sexual revolution. “Part III argues that the ‘house-divided’ metaphor is aptly applicable to the situation that the United States currently faces, where some states have narrowly defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman while others have more broadly defined marriage as the union of any two people, including those of the same gender.”\(^58\)

Rena Lindevaldsen wrote another article in 2010 that highlights the ideological and moral divide over LGBTQ issues in America. She believed that it is impossible for Christians to be neutral on these issues. “On issues related to homosexuality, the Bible accurately portrays current efforts to gain rights based on homosexual conduct: there are those who seek to call evil good and good evil…Christians must realize that neutrality is impossible in the battle between religious liberties and rights based on homosexual conduct.”\(^59\) The author gives numerous examples of the impossibility of divorcing morality from any academic subject or legislation. She contends and demonstrates that some form of morality, Biblical or otherwise, permeates all these endeavors.

Charles Kindregan gives a historical and very secular assessment of the institution of marriage and how he believes it has changed over time. The concept of marriage has been influenced by Judeo-Christian theology in the Western world. Over centuries, however, the legal

\(^{57}\) Wardle, p 537.

\(^{58}\) Wardle, p 538.

construct of state-defined civil marriage has changed in significant ways and does not always conform to its early religious origins. Kindregan takes a world history viewpoint of how cultures have recognized marriages and families. He then focuses his examination on the current changing secular culture and how the culture is changing marriage.

Lynne Marie Kohm wrote a very interesting article on the changing use and meanings of words and language around LGBTQ issues. Terms are being redefined. Kohm sees this trend as a deliberate tactic that threatens freedom of speech and religious liberty. “This Article asserts that a special type of Family Newspeak appears to be a highly effective tactic used to destroy any distinction between marital families and homosexual partnerships. Although marriage is a central target of homosexual rights litigation, there are other related areas where Family Newspeak is appearing.” The author sees a definite purpose and intentional goal behind this change of language by LGBTQ advocates. “Attempts to alter the nature of marriage itself, by deconstruction and reconstruction, are changing the culture of marriage and sexuality, expanding it beyond previously imagined relationship notions. These efforts toward redefinition and expansion are designed to affect the truth of marriage, to alter it permanently.” Kohm examines in detail numerous laws and statutes concerning marriage, parenting, and families in general. She illustrates on how changes in language can change these laws and thus change even family relationships.

---


62 Kohm, p 601.
Government Documents

Walsh vs. Georgia Department of Public Health, United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia, filed 20 April 2016. Dr. Walsh has filed an employment discrimination lawsuit against the Georgia Department of Public Health. Dr. Walsh is a renowned and highly qualified physician. The state of Georgia offered him employment and he accepted. Following his acceptance of employment, his supervisors discovered he also preaches at his local churches. Department staff reviewed several of Dr. Walsh’s sermons on YouTube. Shortly thereafter the department rescinded their offer of employment. Dr. Walsh alleges that he was fired because of his religious speech.

Matthew Barrett vs. Fontbonne Academy, Norfolk Superior Court, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, December 1, 2015. This memorandum is a court decision in the case. In this case Matthew Barrett was hired by a Catholic prep school, Fontbonne Academy. He was hired for the position of Food Service Director. Mr. Barrett listed his “husband” as his emergency contact. The Catholic school then rescinded their offer of employment because of Mr. Barrett’s same-sex relationship. The court ruled that Fontbonne Academy had illegally discriminated against Mr. Barrett. This court ruled that it was illegal for a Catholic school to fire an employee or withhold employment based upon a conflict with Catholic religious doctrine.

Another interesting case is Colleen Simon v. Robert W. Finn, Jackson County Circuit Court, Independence, Missouri; January 22, 2016. This court ruling is another employment discrimination complaint with exactly the opposite ruling from the Barrett ruling. Colleen

63Walsh vs. Georgia Department of Public Health, District of Northern Georgia. Filed 20 April 2016. p1.

64 Matthew Barrett vs. Fontbonne Academy. Norfolk Superior Court, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, December 1, 2015.
Simon was hired as a ministry worker for the Catholic diocese of Kansas City, Missouri. The Diocese later discovered that Colleen Simon was married to another woman and fired her for violating Catholic doctrine and the diocese Policy on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry. Simon sued the diocese for discrimination. The Circuit Court rendered a Summary Judgment for the Diocese. The court ruled that it had no jurisdiction because the issue was a purely religious matter. “Lest we dash our foot against the obdurate edifice of reversible error in stumbling to address what are here essentially religious questions, this Court shall instead rely on the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to deprive it of subject-matter jurisdiction.” The ruling of this court was that the church organization is the only one that has jurisdiction to decide such an issue.

Hitching Post Weddings, LLC. v. City of Coeur D’Alene: US District Court District of Idaho, Plaintiffs’ Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order and/or Preliminary Injunction. This document demonstrates a current case of a local government threatening ordained ministers with fines and jail time if they do not perform a same-sex wedding. Donald and Evelyn Knapp are married and are both ordained ministers. They operate the Hitching Post Wedding Chapel in Couer D’ Alene, Idaho. Shortly after same-sex marriage became legal in Idaho a same-sex couple called the Knapps and enquired about having a wedding at their facility. The Knapps declined based upon their Christian faith. The Knapps were soon contacted by the City and threatened with legal penalties if they did not accommodate the same-sex wedding. The penalties under the law for noncompliance are up to six months in jail and up to $1,000 both per day for each day they do not comply. This would be a devastating burden. The Knapps immediately retained legal counsel and filed with the US District Court

---

for relief. That relief was granted by the Court and the Knapps are in the process of filing to be recognized as a religious organization so that they will be permanently exempt from the penalties. This case is still one of a private business. Yet it does involve ordained ministers performing wedding ceremonies as ordained Christian ministers and being threatened by the power of government to perform same-sex weddings. This case could indeed be a prologue of what churches and ministers may face in the future.

North Carolina’s H.B. 2 was very controversial at the time of its passage. H.B. 2 was written as statewide bathroom bill to require persons to use the designated public bathroom facilities that matched their biological sex. The bill legally defined a person’s sex as their biological sex at birth. “Biological sex – The physical condition of being male or female, which is stated on a person’s birth certificate.” This bill aligned the state government of North Carolina with identifying a person by their biological sex at birth. This bill would not allow for using public bathroom facilities based upon a transgender identification or a self-identification as being a different gender than the biological sex at birth.

Florida’s H.B. 43 was a pre-emptive bill designed to protect churches and pastors from lawsuits and discrimination complaints for not performing same-sex weddings. “This bill has been referred to as the ‘Pastor Protection Act.’ It provides that certain individuals and entities may not be required to solemnize a marriage or provide marriage-related goods, services, or accommodations if doing so would violate their sincerely held religious beliefs.”

---

66 Donald Knapp; Evelyn Knapp; Hitching Post Weddings, LLC. v City of Coeur D’Alene. US District Court, District of Idaho filed 10/17/14 Case No. 2:14-cv-441-REB.


shields pastors, ministers, churches, and even church employees from civil lawsuits or even from adverse government actions if these person decline to perform same-sex weddings. This bill is evidence that many constituents and politicians in Florida believed such lawsuits were a realistic possibility.

Mississippi’s H.B. 1523 is very similar to Florida’s H.B. 43 but is much broader in scope. It prohibits the state government from taking actions against a person or organization because of their religious beliefs. It covers some very specific religious beliefs. “The sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions protected by this act are the belief or conviction that: (a) Marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman; (b) Sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage; and (c) Male (man) or female (woman) refer to an individual’s immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at the time of birth.” These religious beliefs are not imposed upon anyone. But the law provides legal protections for persons and organizations that choose to live and act upon these beliefs.

Tennessee H. B. 1840 is a bill that protects counselors who refer clients to other counselors if the goals of the client’s conflict with the religious beliefs of the counselor. “No counselor or therapist providing counseling or therapy services shall be required to counsel or serve a client as to goals, outcomes, or behaviors that conflict with a sincerely held religious belief of the counselor or therapist; provided, that the counselor or therapist coordinates a referral of the client to another counselor or therapist who will provide the counseling or therapy.” Under this law, a Christian counselor could not be required to provide pre-marital counseling to a

---


same-sex couple. A Christian counselor could not be required to provide counseling to assist a client in gender transition. If a counselor provides a client with a referral to another counselor or therapist to provide the services the clients request, the counselor would be legally protected under this law.

**Letters**

The letter from Peter Kirsanow of the United States Commission on Civil Rights to Mayor Annise D. Parker of the City of Houston Texas dated October 22, 2014 is very relevant to our topic. Commissioner Kirsanow writes to Mayor Parker in his official capacity as a U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner to warn her that her recent actions place her in violation of federal statues and even the U.S. Constitution. Mayor Parker had issued subpoenas to five pastors in Houston to turn over to her all types of communications, including sermons, regarding gender identity, homosexuality, equal rights, civil rights, the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, restroom access, among other issues. Mayor Parker and the City Council had recently passed an ordinance for equal access for all its citizens to all facilities, to include restrooms, regardless of gender or gender identity. Many citizens including Christians opposed this ordinance. Mayor Parker chose to subpoena five specific pastors for all their communications on the subject and any related subjects, including their sermons. This issue is relevant to our topic because these are not private businesses but churches and specifically pastors of churches. Commissioner Kirsanow precisely delineates for the Mayor her multiple violations of U.S. law and the civil rights of the pastors and churches in question. He blatantly refers to her actions as “an abuse of government power”.

The letter shows a neutral party, another government official no less, officially accusing a mayor

---

71 Commissioner Peter Kirsanow, letter by the author to Mayor Annise D. Parker, October 22, 2014. United States Commission on Civil Rights; 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington D.C.
of a major US city of persecuting pastors because she disagrees with their public expression of
their religious faith on homosexuality and transgender issues.

**Scripture Passages**

Genesis 1:27-28 states, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God
created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto
them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it…”’ This passage
indicates the prototype and model for marriage as intended by God was one man and one
woman. Biological procreation is also explicit in this union. Biological procreation is a
consistent theme throughout Genesis chapter one. Verses 11 and 12 speak of the grass, herb,
and fruit trees yielding fruit. Verses 22 and 24 cite God commanding creatures to “be fruitful
and multiply”. The intent of God is clear and repeated in this chapter. God created two
genders, male and female, so that they can mate and reproduce. In verse two, the earth is
empty and void of life forms. By the end of chapter one, earth is abundant with life and
creatures are mated males to females in order to biologically reproduce and fill the earth.

Genesis 2:18-25 emphasizes the male and female together as God’s design for marriage.
In chapter two, the reference to God changes from “God” to “LORD GOD” (Elohim Jehovah)
which is more personal. God’s personal involvement with the first human couple. Here we have
the account of God making man by hand and personally breathing life into him. God personally
creates a mate fit for Adam. Here in Genesis, the beginning of everything in the creation, in the
perfect environment and before there was any sin in the world, marriage was between one man
and one woman. No other model for marriage is given or even implied or hinted at anywhere in
the Bible. Verses 24 uses the future tense “shall”, three times, to specifically summarize this
specific marriage as the model for future marriages. “Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

Genesis 5:1-32 gives a genealogy from Adam to Noah and his three sons. In verses 1-2, the narrator repeats the phrases from Genesis 1:27 “…In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them: …” Then in verse 3, the genealogy begins by naming offspring and their offspring, and so forth. This passage reinforces the two genders ordained by God. The passage goes on to clearly imply that an important function of a marriage is to biologically procreate and produce more human beings. This genealogy also records the inevitable deaths of all but Enoch as a notable exception.

Genesis 19:4-5 states, “But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.” These verses demonstrate the depravity of a mob of men in Sodom. The mob mistook the angels in Lot’s home as mere human visitors; strangers in town. The mob of men apparently wanted to gang rape them. Verse four implies that these men were representative of male citizens of Sodom from all ages and localities in the city.

Leviticus 18:22 states, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” This is an explicit condemnation of homosexuality. The meaning is very plain as it is written. The context for this verse is its placement in the chapter. It sits in a laundry list of abominable sexual practices and worship practices. Verses 6-18 deal with various forms of incest. Verse 19 prohibits sex with a woman during her period. Verse 20 prohibits adultery with a neighbor. Verse 21 forbids human sacrifice of children by fire to Molech. Verse 23 forbids bestiality. Verses 24-30 describe all the behaviors as defilements and abominations. Verse 1 of
the chapter defines the speaker throughout this chapter as God Himself. God declares His
disapproval of all the behaviors in this list. Homosexuality is on the list between sacrificing
children by fire to a false god and bestiality. The plain text and the context of the verse show
God disapproves of homosexuality and considers it to be sin.

Leviticus 20:13 states, “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of
them have committed an abomination: They shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be
upon them.” The text of this verse condemns homosexuality as a sin worthy of the death penalty
under the Mosaic laws. That both parties are held responsible implies the act was consensual by
both parties. The chapter context of this verse places it in a list of sexual sins worthy of the death
penalty. Verse 10 condemns adultery, verses 11 and 12 describe and condemn incest. Verse 14 is
another form of incest. Verses 15 and 16 describe and condemn bestiality. Verse 13 clearly sits
in the context of a list of behaviors worthy of the death penalty. Verse one of this chapter
establishes God Himself as the speaker. Therefore, the judgments and condemnations are directly
from God Himself.

Deuteronomy 23:17 states, “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a
sodomite of the sons of Israel.” The term “sodomite” in this verse does not refer to a citizen of
the city of Sodom. Sodom as a city had long been destroyed before this book had been written.
The term “sodomite” here refers to a male prostitute used for homosexual male sex. The male
equivalent of the female term “whore” used earlier in the verse. Both forms of sexual behavior
are condemned by God and unfit for His people Israel.

I Kings 14:24 states, “And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according
to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.” In
this verse, the term “sodomites” refers to male prostitutes used for homosexual sex. The male
prostitutes engaged in this behavior voluntarily as part of pagan worship of false gods. Verses 22 and 23 establish that the context involving false worship and places of false worship which had been established in Israel. These practices were contrary to God’s law for Israel.

I Kings 15:11-12 states, “And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father, and he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.” The term “sodomites” refers to male prostitutes who engaged in homosexual sex, usually in connection to worship of false gods. The narrator of the passage commends Asa for removing the Sodomites from the land. The verse explicitly states that removing the sodomites was clearly “right in the eyes of the LORD”.

I Kings 22:46 states, “And the remnant of the Sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.” The term “Sodomites” refers to male prostitutes who engaged in homosexual sex, usually as part of false worship. The passage refers to King Jehoshaphat, the son of King Asa. In verse 43, Jehoshaphat is described. “And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.” The context clearly implies that getting rid of the sodomites was “right in the eyes of the LORD.”

Daniel 3:1-30 describes in detail a situation in which a new civil law placed Hebrew believers in God at odds with the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and his government. The King Nebuchadnezzar had built a great statue and made a law that required everyone to bow down and worship the statute when the royal musicians played. As King, Nebuchadnezzar had the legal right to make such a law. As Israelites, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not comply with the new law because it conflicted with their Jewish faith to only worship their God, Jehovah. The three Hebrews were brought to trial before the King. Nebuchadnezzar gave them
another opportunity to worship the statute. They refused even though they were threatened with
death. Their decision is recorded in verses 16-18. “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered
and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be
so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will
deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not
serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” These three Hebrews were
willing to accept the consequences for violating this new civil law rather than compromise their
religious faith. Consequently, they were condemned and thrown into a furnace. God chose to
rescue them, and the king was so impressed that he promoted the three Hebrews.

Daniel 6:1-28 describes in detail a political conspiracy to enact a civil law primarily for
the purpose of persecuting and prosecuting a Hebrew believer in Jehovah. The first three verses
in the chapter depict Daniel as a highly regarded and trusted advisor to the King Darius. Lesser
ranking government leaders were jealous of Daniel and sought to remove him. Verse five records
their decision to attack Daniel based upon his religious faith. In verses 6-9, these rivals
convinced Darius to enact a new law declaring it to be illegal for anyone to pray to anyone
except King Darius for the next thirty days. The penalty for breaking the new law was death by
lions. In verses 10-11 Daniel, fully aware of the new civil law, is found continuing to visibly
pray to his own God Jehovah, in violation of the new law. In verses 12-17, Daniel is brought to
trial before the king. King Darius reluctantly orders Daniel’s execution. In verses 18-23, God
chose to protect Daniel. In verses 24-28 King Darius restores Daniel and executes Daniel’s
accusers.

Matthew 19:3-6 is a passage in which Jesus Himself defines gender and marriage as
designed by God. In verse 3, the Pharisees ask Jesus a question regarding the lawful grounds for
divorce. First, Jesus lays the foundation for His divorce answer by establishing God’s original design and intent for marriage. In verse 4, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees having “not read” the Scriptures on marriage. Then Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27 stating that “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.” In verse 5, Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24, “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” The question mark at the end of verse 5 indicates the ending of the question Jesus began in verse 4 by asking “Have ye not read…” In verse 6, Jesus adds His own statement regarding God’s original design and intent for marriage. “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder.” Jesus Himself validates the Genesis scriptures as stating His Father’s intent for marriage. He declares that God has ordained and designed marriage to be between one man/male and one woman/female for their lifetime. Jesus is placing Himself in complete agreement with the Genesis passages on marriage. Having thus established the correct understanding of marriage, Jesus goes on and answers the question regarding acceptable grounds for divorce and remarriage in verses 7-9.

Matthew 22:21 is a verse in which Jesus defines the relationship between faith and government. “They say unto him, ‘Ceasar’s.’ Then he saith unto them, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” The context of this quote involves a question asked by the Pharisees and Herodians regarding taxes. The discussion begins at verse 15 as a political question designed to trick Jesus into rendering an offensive answer. In verse 17, they ask Jesus a question regarding the Jewish law versus the civil law. “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?” After examining a coin in verse 19, Jesus uses verses 20-21 to confirm the image on the coin and thus, the ultimate ownership of the coin both belonged to Caesar. This explains Jesus’ answer regarding taxes in verse 21. This passage can be interpreted
narrowly as only having to do with civil taxes. But it may also be interpreted more broadly as commanding obedience to human, civil governments.

Mark 10:2-9 is a parallel passage to Matthew 19:3-6. Jesus gives the same explanation almost verbatim. The only significant difference in this text is that in verse 5, Jesus explains that stubborn disobedience is the reason why Moses allowed for written bills of divorce. Jesus’ explanation of marriage is the same as in Matthew 19:3-6.

Mark 12:17 is a parallel passage to Matthew 22:21 regarding paying tribute to Caesar. From verses 13-17, the wording of the text is almost identical to Matthew 22:15-21. There are no significant differences in the texts.

Luke 20:25 is another parallel passage to Matthew 22 and Mark 10 regarding paying tribute to Caesar. From verses 20-26, the passage is almost identical to those in Matthew and Mark. There are no significant differences in the texts.

Acts 5:29 states, “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” The context of this verse begins in verse 17. The apostles had been arrested for preaching and for healing people in Jerusalem. In verses 19-20, an angel of the Lord released the apostles from prison and commanded the apostles to “Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” In verses 21-27, the apostles are discovered preaching in the Temple. They are arrested again and brought before the high priest for trial. In verse 28, the High Priest charges them with violating a command to not teach in the name of Jesus anymore. Verse 29 is Peter’s response to that charge, that the apostles ought to obey God rather than men. Peter continues his defense in verses 30-31 by explaining it the duty of the apostles to be witnesses to God. In verses 34-40, the ruling council deliberates about killing the apostles. They decide to beat them and again order them not to preach in the name of Jesus. In
verses 41-42, the apostles are released but go and continue to preach in the name of Jesus anyway. The apostles disobeyed the civil Jewish government of Jerusalem and the Temple. They suffered the consequences for that disobedience and then continued to disobey that government. They did so in obedience to God.

Acts 25:11-12 are verses which recount Paul saying, “I appeal unto Caesar”. Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, and he had a legal right to have any legal charges against him be heard by Caesar. In order to save his life from local persecution and local prosecution, Paul exercised his legal right to appear before Caesar.

Romans 1:26-27 states, “For this cause God gave them up unto their vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” Here, Paul declares homosexuality to be “unnatural” and “unseemly”. The Greek word for “unseemly” is aschemosune, also translated as indecent or shameful.

Romans 13:1-7 clearly states a duty for Christians to submit themselves to human government. Verses 1-2 state that human government is ordained of God and that resisting human laws is also resisting God. Verses 4-5 explain that the human government exercises a useful function in deterring evil. Verses 5-6 go on to explain that believers are also to subject themselves to human government for sake of their conscience. In verse 7, Paul paraphrases Jesus from Matthew 22:21 and then expands upon Jesus’ explanation by adding fear and honor towards human authorities.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 places homosexuality in a list of other sins. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor
idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” All the sexual behaviors cited in verse 9 are voluntary and consensual behaviors. Paul condemns all these sexual behaviors and places them in the morally equivalent level of the sins in verse 10. In verse 11, Paul acknowledges that some of the Corinthian Christians previously indulged in these sins but are now saved from them. Paul uses the past tense “And such were some of you.” Then Paul contrasts their past with the present tense and states “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul is clearly explaining that these past sins are unacceptable and completely incompatible with their present life in Christ and their eternal life in the “kingdom of God.”

In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul again exclusively describes marriage as a union of one male with one female. Paul uses the terms “husband” and “wife” at least eight times in this passage and he describes no other model for marriage. Paul imitates Jesus in verse 31 by quoting Genesis 2:24 as the God-intended model for marriage.

Colossians 3:18-19 is another passage mentioning marriage and Paul again uses exclusively male and female terms. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” Paul entertains her no other model for marriage before going on to describe parent-child relationships.

I Timothy 1:9-10 states, “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;” Again God places homosexuality in a group
of condemned sinful activities. Paul clearly separates this entire list of sins from the “righteous man”. Homosexuality ranks right along murdering parents, kidnapping, lying under oath, adultery, and it is clearly declared to be “contrary to sound doctrine.”

Hebrews 13:4 states, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” The writer here declares that sexual relations within the bounds of marriage are regarded by God as honorable. Such sexual relations are contrasted by God’s disapproval for sexual relations outside of a marriage relationship.

Jude 7 declares, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Jude states that Sodom and Gomorrha were explicitly destroyed because of their sexual sins, which included homosexuality, as an example to future generations. To this day, the term “sodomite” can still be found as a reference to one who practices homosexuality. Jude speaks of the vengeance of God for their sins. One cannot condemn a sin in more unequivocal terms than by the destruction of the sinners and their cities.

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the foundation and background for this study. The conflicts between religious freedom and sexual freedom in America are real. The literature provides explanations and confirmations of the beliefs on both sides. The next chapter will lay the foundation for the practical research interviews with pastors and ministers who have experienced such conflicts.
Chapter Three

INTRODUCTION

The research for this project is intended to reveal at least two categories of information. First, what is the level of preparedness, if any, of churches and ministers today to confront the issues of the 21st Century sexual revolution? Second, what are the lessons to be learned from those who have already endured confrontations regarding those issues?

PREPAREDNESS FOR POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

Gaining some understanding of the current level of preparedness is important. In the 21st Century, sexual revolution activists for same-sex marriage, transgender rights, gender fluidity, etc. are aggressively pursuing broad societal changes at a rapid pace. Churches, outreach ministries, and individual ministers have found themselves playing defense against these changes. Some of those who object to these societal changes because of sincerely held religious beliefs, have found themselves in legal difficulties. Dr. Eric J. Walsh is one such example.72 Former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran is another example of the same conflict.73 Are Bible-believing churches and pastors paying attention to these conflicts? Have they given any thought to how sexual lifestyle issues might impact their own churches or communities? Might church-related ministries run afoul of new government regulations or policies simply by being unaware of them? Societal changes are indeed coming, and many are already here. Are churches and ministers ready for them or are they not?

---

72 Walsh v Georgia Department of Public Health, District of Northern Georgia. Filed 20 April 2016. pp 2-3.

73 Kelvin J. Cochran v City of Atlanta and Mayor Kasim Reed, United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. Filed 2/18/2015. pp 1-3.
LESSONS LEARNED FROM CONFLICTS

Many ministers have already become engaged in such conflicts. How did those conflicts come about? What were the specific issues involved? Could the conflicts have been avoided? This writer would like answers to those questions. Personal interviews with ministers who have been involved with these issues will reveal how some confrontations with these issues have thus far manifested themselves.

A review of contemporary legal cases will reveal legal trends and precedents concerning these and similar issues. In 2007, the state of Iowa Civil Rights Commission published a pamphlet of non-discrimination rules on sexual orientation and gender identity. The pamphlet specifically stated that these rules also applied to churches.\(^{74}\) This set of guidelines was quickly challenged by churches in Iowa. How did that case turn out? What did those Iowa churches and ministers learn from that experience? Were there similar cases in other states? This study will result in a collection of strategies and actions churches and ministers should consider for these rapid and far-reaching societal changes.

TARGET POPULATION

The subjects for this research are self-identified Christian pastors and ministries involved in self-identified Christian churches/ministries. They can include both pastors employed in full-time ministries as well as part-time and bi-vocational pastors/ministers. They may also include chaplains, Christian school administrators, pastoral counselors, rescue mission and homeless shelter administrators, etc. These are the persons who will be faced with making choices and decisions as to how they will address these sexual lifestyle issues in their churches/ministries, if at all.

The interviews should demonstrate what these ministers think about these LGBTQI issues? Are they aware of these issues or not? How informed are they, if at all? Have these issues touched their ministries or not? In what ways might these issues touch their ministries or not? Do they have any level of anxiety or concern over these issues or not? Are they concerned at all about exposure to legal risks? Are they concerned at all about financial liabilities and risks? Are they concerned at all about government regulations or oversight of their events and activities? Are LGBTQI issues topics which they ever address in their teaching/preaching ministries or not?

It will be valuable to get information from pastors/ministers who have already encountered some level of conflict with these 21st Century Sexual Revolution issues. How did the conflicts come about? Did the ministers go looking for the fight or did the fight come looking for them, so to speak? Was the conflict anticipated or was it a total surprise to the ministers involved? Did the issues result in a legal court case? Did these issues involve any other government entities? Did the conflict involve individual persons, advocacy groups, or any combination thereof? Did the ministers involved face any personal risk, either legal or financial? Did the churches/ministries involved face any risk, legal or financial? Did the pastors/ministers base their positions on these LGBTQI issues on any Biblical or denominational doctrines? Did they have any policies in place prior to encountering these sexual lifestyle issues? Did theses churches/ministries seek any legal counsel or representation? Do they believe legal counsel or representation to be necessary? Has the conflict finally been resolved? If so, what was the outcome? What has been the impact of that outcome on the pastor/minister personally and on the church/ministry, if any?
DATA COLLECTION

Data will consist of the advice the pastors/ministers who have experienced such conflicts may have to share with others. For example, what do they want other pastors/ministers to know about these issues, if anything at all? Overall, the witness of personal experience is always valuable.

Research will consist of two aspects. First, it will consist of interviews with self-identified pastors and/or ministers who have been involved in some legal manner with these issues of same-sex marriage, transgenderism, gender fluidity, etc. Secondly, the research will continuously integrate a review of the facts involving contemporary legal cases regarding these issues.

This research was chosen because these types of cases are already happening and have been happening for some time now. There has been a marriage equality movement in the United States for decades. Since the Obergfell decision,75 there has been a new genesis of marriage-related cases and issues. Some of these cases indeed involve churches and/or ministries. In addition to same-sex marriage cases, transgenderism and gender identity has rushed to the forefront of cultural change. Issues as basic to humanity as which bathroom should a person or child use, are now front and center in some communities. Pastors and churches have been legally dragged into these conflicts.76

Personal interviews are a way of getting specific information from persons, who aren’t dealing with these issues in a theoretical or potential manner, but who are involved in these

75 Obergfell v Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health Et Al. Supreme Court of the United States. October Term 2014.

conflicts in a very real and personal manner. Personal interviews also involve persons who may think and reason differently from the researcher. In that way, the researcher may be exposed to ideas and understandings, previously unknown to them. Perhaps there will emerge trends or points of commonality between actual cases that will be informative. Perhaps practical advice will be gleaned that could be useful to others in the future. First-hand knowledge and experience are generally more helpful than the mere academic or theoretical knowledge. Although, each case will usually be somewhat different, any and all cases can be informative.

These interviews can also provide some general impressions as to the level of awareness of these issues among churches and ministers. The interview responses may provide some sense of how much thought and preparedness, if any, have churches and ministers put into facing these issues.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interview questions are specifically designed to encourage answers unique to each respondent and their individual experiences. Most of these questions are open questions, which allow for more than a simple “yes” or “no”. The intent is for the respondents to tell their stories and fill in the details as they see fit to do so. They have lived stories and the details of their stories contain valuable information. These questions are designed to allow the respondents to tell their stories. The questions are not judgmental in any way. They merely ask for factual responses about situations, events, policies, decisions, implications, outcomes, and recommendations. The questions are not designed to lead the respondent in any way or to any desired response. For the entire interview, the respondents will be free to answer the questions in as much or as little detail as they desire. The best responses will be the sincere and factual
answers of the individual respondents. The only “right” answers will be the genuine and historically accurate answers, according to the respondents’ individual experiences.

The questions all address thoughts or actions and not feelings. The questions are not designed to elicit emotional responses. The respondents will certainly be free to give their emotional responses should they choose to do so. But the primary intent of the questions is to elicit the facts of these issues. The interviews should get at the points of reason, beliefs and doctrines that have resulted in conflicts with the values and beliefs of the LGBTQI community, as well as any current or emerging laws or government policies.

**How long have you served in your current ministry position?**

This question addresses the level of experience and familiarity the respondent has in their current ministry position. This information can be useful in assessing the amount of knowledge a pastor/minister has with their specific church/ministry. One could easily understand that a pastor who is new to their church could be surprised by a sexual lifestyle issue. Whereas one could assume that an experienced pastor/minister might have had reason to anticipate such issues. If an experienced pastor has also been surprised, one might conclude that other pastors may not be aware of the breadth, scope, and speed of the LGBTQI issues sweeping the country today. An inexperienced minister being surprised by an issue happens in churches every day. It happens on any number of issues that normally arise in churches. However, if experienced pastors are surprised by these sexual lifestyle issues, other pastors may also be surprised by these same issues in the future.

This question might also indicate generational differences between older ministers and younger ministers. Philosophies of pastoral leadership and Biblical interpretation/applications can vary between some generations. Church History and the various doctrinal and
denominational creeds demonstrate that many issues are indeed linked to certain generations or eras of time.

**Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?**

This question goes directly to the important experiential issues. Has the respondent has personally faced any of these sexual lifestyle issues in their church/ministry? If so, then their answers to the other interview questions will all be experiential in nature. First hand involvement can be seen as more concrete and practical experience. That experiential information will be most valuable. It may also give an impression of which issue or issues, if any, churches and ministers in general are encountering.

The question is not judgmental in any way. It merely asks from a factual standpoint if the respondents have in fact, encountered these issues. Lessons learned from actual historical accounts can be two-fold. One can learn what to do, as well as what not to do. Both sets of lessons can be useful.

This question also differentiates between interview participants who have had actual experience with these issues and those participants who have not. If the respondent has not personally been involved in any conflict regarding sexual lifestyle issues, their answers will still address their level of forethought and preparedness for these issues, if any. They will be addressing these issues from a hypothetical or potential perspective. It may be quite informative to compare the answers and advice from those respondents with personal experience in these conflicts with those respondents which have no such experience. Will the first-hand knowledge of some respondents differ significantly from the academic or hypothetical understanding of other respondents? It will be interesting and important to determine these things.
How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?

This question enquires as to how the church/ministry or the pastor/minister became involved in a conflict over these sexual lifestyle issues. Did they see this conflict coming ahead of time? Did the pastor/minister instigate the conflict? Did the church/ministry intentionally look for a fight? Did they take a public position on any of these issues that generated a response by other interested parties? Did the fight come looking for them? In the case of some Houston churches, the Mayor of Houston, Texas subpoenaed some pastors for copies of their sermons.77 Did an individual or an advocacy group make a request or take an action that started a conflict? Did a government entity of some sort generate an action that required a reaction by the church/ministry? This question gets down to the specifics of actual cases and how they began.

Lessons which might be learned from this question could be possible ways to avoid such conflicts. Perhaps there are acceptable compromises to be developed. Some churches may choose to preemptively lobby for legislation or adopt new polices to head off such conflicts. Would a dialogue with the local LGBTQI community make a difference ahead of time in reducing possible conflicts with churches/ministries? Lessons learned from this question might indeed be completely opposite of those previously mentioned. The collective answers to this question might lead one to conclude that such conflicts in our time may be completely and eventually unavoidable.

Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?

This question asks if the specific church/ministry had a Biblical viewpoint in considering how to address these sexual lifestyle issues. The question is not judgmental, but it can divide respondents into two categories. Many lessons may be learned from the responses to this

question. The question presents an opportunity to explain or interpret their particular “Biblical viewpoint”, if any, should they choose to do so. Some ministers and/or churches choose not to address such issues in a Biblical context. Was the church/ministry in question addressing these LGBTQI issues in a secular manner? If so, what guiding principles informed their decisions? Was it simply a matter of civil law? Did they address them from the foundation of a Biblical doctrine or teaching? Was such a Biblical doctrine or teaching the basis for their decision-making process in addressing these LGBTQI issues? Was their response possibly a compromise or a combination of secular and religious views? This question could lead to a broad range of responses.

This question deals with foundational, self-stated philosophies of faith and practice. Rather than inquire as to denominational labels or policies for churches or ministries, this question is more basic. The viewpoint of many churches and denominations differ greatly on these sexual lifestyle issues. There is an entire spectrum of positions and official beliefs on these topics in churches and denominations across the country. Some churches are in complete agreement with their denominations. Some churches are in outright rebellion against their denominations on these issues. Other churches are completely independent and make their own decisions based upon whatever reasoning they choose.

**Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?**

This question addresses the aspect of specific policies regarding LGBTQI issues as they effect the specific church and/or ministry. Information to be gleaned from this question could be vital to understanding the current situation. The question goes to the issue of formally and officially codifying whatever policies the church/ministry may have. Unwritten policies can be judged as arbitrary. Written policies are usually the result of some level of forethought and serve
as a notice to all concerned. If a church/ministry had policies in place prior to experiencing a conflict over sexual lifestyle issues, that implies some level of awareness and preparedness. If they had some policies in place, were these policies adequate to address the conflict they experienced? Were these policies well known and understood? Were these policies targeted by an individual or advocacy group and thus the policy became the genesis for the conflict? Were the policies in place for a long period of time before the conflict or were they recent policies?

Answers to this question may also indicate the level of concern, if any, over future/potential legal conflicts over these sexual lifestyle issues before such a conflict became a reality. Did the respondents previously regard these issues as real or merely academic, or as someone else’s problem?

Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?

This question goes to the very premise of this entire thesis. It potentially opens a virtual Pandora’s box of legal issues. This question addresses the huge and central issue of legal implications and legal risk. The cases of conflicts between Christian values and sexual lifestyle issues in recent years have often ended up in the courts or in front of some other government entity. When private businesses have been involved in these types of conflicts they have been at risk of legal penalties or court orders. Some have faced the threats of jail time. Some have faced fines. Some have faced government sanctions or court ordered requirements. Churches and Christian ministries are not private businesses. But it is logical to assume that if churches and ministries become involved in similar conflicts that they might face similar legal risks and/or
penalties. This writer has previously cited the case of several pastors in Houston, Texas who had their sermons subpoenaed by the Houston Mayor.\textsuperscript{78}

Former Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran sued the city of Atlanta. He claims that the city of Atlanta fired him from his secular job as a fire chief because of his religious views on marriage and homosexuality. Cochran is a deacon in his local church. As part of a Bible study he led in his church, Cochran wrote and taught these religious views in his Sunday School class. After doing so, the city of Atlanta fired him.\textsuperscript{79}

This question goes to the matter of real or potential government involvement in churches/ministries. Government entities are interpreting and reinterpreting existing laws and/or regulations as well as writing new laws and regulations applying to sexual lifestyle matters. Churches and ministries may be subject to emerging regulations. Many ministries operate under some level of government regulations from safety and fire codes to non-discrimination laws. This may involve church daycare/childcare centers, Rescue Missions/homeless shelters, Christian and/or parochial schools, Christian colleges and universities, etc., etc.

Many churches/ministries offer formal and/or informal counseling services. The secular counseling community in most states operate under the auspices of state regulations, accrediting agencies, licensing commissions, and professional counseling associations. Many of these entities prohibit condemnation of sexual lifestyle behaviors or discussions of them that may in any way be considered judgmental. Churches and related ministries are often not under such


\textsuperscript{79} Kelvin J. Cochran v. City of Atlanta, Georgia and Mayor Kasim Reed, United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. Filed 02/18/2015.
oversight. There can be a broad spectrum of beliefs and philosophies under the umbrella of Christian counseling.

In 2012, the state of California banned what is commonly referred to as “Conversion Therapy” for clients under 18 years old.\textsuperscript{80} Conversion therapy is counseling, therapy, or interventions aimed at changing the sexual orientation of the client. Most states license secular counselors. States have standards and requirements for such licenses. Some churches/ministries that provide counseling services have their counselors licensed by their state. States can also revoke said licenses over public complaints or non-compliance with state government standards.

Church and ministry facilities may sometimes be used for what either the church, ministry, or others would identify as non-religious events. In the mind of the pastor/minister, does their church or ministry ever host non-religious events? If so, the church or ministry may be setting a precedent for hosting non-religious events. Does some government entity or members of the LGBTQI community consider some of the church and ministry events to be non-religious? Who decides what events are religious and what events are non-religious?

Fort Des Moines Church of Christ in Des Moines, Iowa preemptively sued the Iowa Civil Rights Commission when it published a pamphlet implying that churches could be considered as public accommodations under the non-discrimination laws regarding bathrooms. The ICRC was claiming that it had authority to determine what church activities on church premises were religious and which were non-religious. The US District Court ruled that churches

were not public accommodations and as such were not subject to the specific rules cited by the ICRC.  

Weddings and wedding receptions may become critical issues for churches and ministries. Same-sex weddings are a very pertinent issue. The Obergefell decision from the United States Supreme Court settled the question of same-sex marriage as a legal right in the United States. It also spawned other actions by advocates against Christians operating wedding-related private businesses across the country. Church buildings host a vast number of wedding ceremonies and receptions across the United States every year. Is it possible that churches and ministries may be sued if they refuse to host same-sex weddings and/or receptions? Do churches and ministries have any policies and standards regarding weddings and receptions? If so, are they written or unwritten? Are they applied objectively or subjectively? As many denominations across the country are considering same-sex marriage, some support it, some prohibit it, other denominations and independent churches are evolving and developing their positions on the subject. Could such policies be considered as unlawful discrimination?

The General Assembly of the State of Ohio is currently considering a bill, H.B. 36, called the Pastor Protection Act. This bill is intended to protect pastors from being forced to perform wedding ceremonies with which they may disagree on religious grounds. The bill is seen as a preemptive measure.

---

81 Fort Des Moines Church of Christ v. Jackson., United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa Central Division, filed October 14, 2016.

82 Obergefell v Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health Et Al. Supreme Court of the United States. October Term 2014.


Legal implications could be potentially encountered by churches/ministries based upon hiring practices. Churches/ministries often have behavior and personal conduct expectations of their employees. Is there a philosophical basis or foundation for such hiring practices or personal conduct standards? Are such practices and/or standards directly related to the Bible or church doctrines? Are they not? Do any employee conduct standards prohibit LGBTQI lifestyle behaviors or practices? In secular employment, these practices and expectations would be considered discriminatory and subject to lawsuits and/or government sanctions. Some of these policies may be challenged legally despite the religious nature of the employing entity.

**Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?**

This question enquires as to financial implications of the conflict over sexual lifestyle issues. Lawsuits require money for court filings. They require money for lawyers. Plaintiffs often sue for monetary damages and punitive fines. Some government regulations include fines and other financial penalties. Churches and Christian ministries all operate on budgets. None of them have unlimited funds. If churches and/or ministries are being sued by a government entity, those proceedings often stretch out over years. The legal fees for lawyers alone can be prohibitive. Do the churches/ministries involved have any kind of insurance against such lawsuits? Would real or potential financial losses force a church or ministry to lay off staff or even close their doors? These financial issues are realistic concerns.

If pastors/ministers are sued personally how does that impact them and their families? Do they have to spend their savings to pay legal fees? Do church insurance policies cover the pastors personally? In the cases of some of the Christian business owners being sued, some of them had to close their businesses and sell their homes. Would pastors be forced to take similar actions if faced with financial losses due to conflicts over sexual lifestyle issues?
Some ministries exist in partnerships with government entities and thus receive some level of government financial support. Some ministries such as homeless shelters, counseling services, Christian colleges directly or indirectly receive government funding. With government funding often comes government regulations and requirements. If such ministries enforce policies or positions opposed to some of these 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues, will that put their funding at risk?

How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?

This question truly invites the respondents to tell their stories about the conflicts over LGBTQI issues. How did they handle the issues? Did they pray? Did they settle? Did they change their policies? Did they change their ministry in any meaningful or substantive way? Did they compromise their values or their beliefs? Did they fire anyone? Did they hire anyone?

Did the course of action come up to a vote of the church leadership? Did the course of action come up to a vote of the entire church congregation? Did the church/ministry follow the advice of a lawyer? Did the church do any special fundraising to support their efforts? Did the church/ministry seek in any way to develop community support for their position? Did the church/ministry seek any denominational support for their position?

Did the church/ministry seek any political support? Did they seek any government intervention? How did they choose to handle the specific issues they themselves faced?

Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?

This question seems very straightforward. It seems to be a logical step. The question may also seem obvious. Most of these cases seem to involve courts or government agencies. That almost always requires some type of legal counsel or legal representation. Large churches/ministries often have the resources to pay for a lawyer or keep one on retainer. Many
churches have lawyers as members of their churches. Those members may even provide their services to their on a pro bono basis. Smaller churches or ministries often lack such resources or membership. They may have to seek legal aid elsewhere. They may try to handle the issue without legal counsel. Perhaps the nature of the issue seemed trivial. Perhaps the respondent pastor/minister believed that legal advice was completely unnecessary.

If the attorneys gave advice, church leaders may or may not have decided to follow said advice. The church or ministry may not have agreed with the advice of legal counsel on a Biblical basis. The lawyer may have advised the church to fight the case in court, but the church declined to do so. This question gives the respondent the opportunity to explain if there was any internal conflict between legal advice, if there was any, and the preferences of the client church/ministry or pastor/minister.

**What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?**

This is the penultimate question, not just in order of the interview, but in importance. What happened? Results matter. The question is not hypothetical. It is not theoretical nor is it theological. The question is not judgmental. The question is merely and most importantly factual and focused on results. The question invites the respondents to complete telling their tale. Did they win? Did they lose? Is the conflict finished or is it still unresolved? Are they awaiting a decision? Are they awaiting an appeal? What were the consequences of their decisions regarding sexual lifestyle issues? What are the second and third order effects of this conflict? Did the pastor/minister leave their position? Did the church/ministry accommodate the requirements or requests of an individual or advocacy group or of a court or government agency? Did the church/ministry pay a fine? Did anyone go to jail? The outcome and final disposition of such a case could involve any of these things. It could also involve any combination or any number of
these things. This question invites the respondents to finish the story. They may elaborate as little or as much as they choose. The ultimate outcomes of these conflicts and cases involving sexual lifestyle issues will set precedents and policies for churches/ministries and pastors/ministers for years to come. The ultimate outcomes of these cases will be informative not just for Christians. The outcomes of these cases and conflicts may even be predictive of what to expect from politicians, courts, bureaucrats, and political activists in the future.

**What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?**

This question, in the opinion of this writer, is the most valuable question in the entire interview. What advice or lessons learned would the respondents pass on to other churches/ministries and pastors/ministers for future reference? This question really addresses the purpose of the entire thesis. What do churches/ministries and pastors/ministers need to know? What do they need to consider? What do they need to be prepared against, if anything? What do they need to be prepared to do, if anything? This question is an opportunity for respondents to explain what they believe they did right, and perhaps what they believe they did wrong. What would the respondents advise others to do should they be found in their shoes?

The second prong of this research will be the review of contemporary and ongoing cases involving churches/ministries and pastors/ministers in conflicts over sexual lifestyle issues. Examination of these cases will be integrated throughout this thesis. The premise Of Erickson and Blankenschaen is that such conflicts are going to be unavoidable. It is their belief that advocates for an LGBTQI agenda will intentionally force churches and ministries to care about these issues and address them. “What we are finding out from the controversy over legislation to protect religious freedom is this: you will be made to care. There will be no middle ground. Many people would like to find a middle ground. Many churches would like to find a middle
ground. But there will be none, because homosexuals and their culture warriors on the Left are unwilling to have a middle ground.\footnote{Erickson, Erick and Blankenschaen, Bill. You Will Be Made to Care: The War on Faith, Family and Your Freedom to Believe. Regenery Publishing: Washington, D.C. 2016. Pg. 252.}

The review of contemporary and ongoing cases will complete the scope of research by complementing both the anonymous surveys which will provide a broad impression regarding these cases, and the interviews which supply information narrow and the specific views and information from persons inside these cases. The review of cases will involve hard, factual documents and studies from persons and groups on all sides of these issues.

CONCLUSION

The design and intent of the surveys, interviews and case studies are important. Much more important will be the results of all this research. What will the responses and the analysis of the responses reveal? Are churches and ministers at risk? Do LGBTQI advocacy groups have an actual agenda that endangers religious freedoms for Christian churches and ministries? These questions and many more should be answered by reviewing the research data in Chapter Three.
Chapter Four

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes each of the individual interviews. The respondents represent a variety of Christian churches and ministries, a variety of denominations, and a variety of geographic locations. They also represent a variety of encounters with sexual lifestyle issues, and a variety of outcomes.

INTERVIEW ONE

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent stated that he has been simultaneously pastoring two churches for the past 20 years. Both congregations are largely Hispanic. They are both Spanish speaking congregations.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent acknowledged that members of their youth groups often have questions about these subjects. What they are taught in their schools often conflicts with Biblical teachings. The church seeks to answer the questions from these young people with the Word of God. The respondent went on to add that they sometimes also have adults who struggle with these issues. The church then seeks to love these individuals and share with them the truth of the Bible and the love of Jesus Christ. The respondent recounted that many of these adults have found clarity from their confusion and been freed from their former lifestyles. Some others have not. The respondent and his churches believe in the power of God and His Word to make truly transformational changes in people’s lives.
“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that this involvement begins with preaching and teaching God’s Word rather than personal opinions or societal trends. He added that the Bible addresses these sexual lifestyle issues. As he and his churches preach the Biblical teachings on marriage, sexuality, and personal identity, people react to these teachings. People either agree, or have questions, or they disagree. The respondent added that Biblical teachings are to be understood and obeyed.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent affirmed that he and his churches do indeed have a Biblical viewpoint on these matters. He affirmed the authority and inerrancy of the Bible. He affirmed the inspiration of the Bible by God and that the Bible teachings on any and every subject are to be obeyed.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

Respondent stated that 20 years ago, his churches had no policies in place regarding these sexual lifestyle issues. But over time they saw the need to establish policies regarding how the churches would address these issues. One of the comprehensive policies the churches have is that persons seeking to be members of the churches attend a new members class. This class informs people of the Biblical standards and beliefs of the churches concerning a wide range of issues. These issues include Biblical teachings about sexuality, marriage, and identity. Prospective members are required to sign a membership statement and agree to abide by these Biblical teachings. These articles of faith and agreement were written with advice and involvement of legal counsel. The membership agreement is not necessary to merely attend the churches services. But to become a member of the churches and to be more involved in the various ministries of the churches, membership is required.
“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent began to immediately recount an episode in which during a worship service, he was served with a Government subpoena. The respondent was one of a group of pastors in his area served with such subpoenas. The subpoena required the respondent to turn over to the local Court House, all his sermons, text messages, emails, phone messages, etc. The local Mayor had ordered these subpoenas for these pastors. The respondent and others viewed these subpoenas as an intimidation tactic by the Mayor. The respondent and other pastors had been preaching against homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism. The Mayor had been promoting a city ordinance defining and prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ persons, to include public restrooms, school restrooms and showers. The respondent and the other pastors chose to resist these subpoenas and challenge them on Constitutional grounds.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

Respondent reported that there was potential for severe financial implications. He and the other churches were spared a great portion of the financial impact. They received donations from Christians and from churches all around the country. They did incur expenses for daily food and travel. For over two months, the respondent’s churches and other churches would travel to the local Court House daily to protest the subpoenas and the legal tactics of the Mayor. They simultaneously protested the new city ordinance at open hearings. The churches also gathered signatures on petitions opposing the Mayor’s ordinance. But these expenses were minor compared to the potential court costs and legal fees, or even fines and financial penalties. The respondent also stated that he believed potential new members avoided the churches because of the controversy at that time.
“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

Respondents stated that they handled the legal conflict in several ways. They continued to preach God’s Word. They called the congregations to prayer over these issues. They emphasized peace during this time. The respondent and other pastors maintained ongoing conversations with church leaders and church members about the status of the legal conflict. They also emphasized the need to trust God and His will. They emphasized the need for Christians to be faithful to God.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

Respondent stated that once he received his subpoena, the churches retained legal counsel. They also sought the help of their U.S. Senator. Respondent gave the name of the legal firm that handled their case and represented the churches.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent reported that after about 12 months of legal conflict and protests, the new ordinance was defeated. Approximately 67% of the people voted against the city ordinance. Moreover, the subpoenas had been rescinded within thirty days of being issued. The public pressure on the Mayor was substantial. Thousands of Bibles had been sent to City Hall. Other Government officials at various levels advised the Mayor to rescind the subpoenas for both political and legal reasons.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent advised others to not be afraid, but rather be courageous. He went on to encourage others to be faithful in preaching the Bible. He encouraged others to remember their calling by God to His service, regardless of consequences. He emphasized the transformational
power of the Bible to bring repentance, truth, and spiritual growth to individuals and to large groups.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

The respondent repeatedly emphasized the need for prayer and for faithfulness to God in dealing with these issues. He also spoke often of the need for competent and committed legal counsel and representation. The advice of their legal firm allowed them to make full use of their Constitutional religious rights. The respondent continuously sought to inform his congregations as well as other churches and Christians at large. In this case, public opinion was very helpful in their cause. The potential for legal and financial penalties were substantial.

**INTERVIEW TWO**

**“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”**

Respondent stated that he has been in his current ministry position for six years as an Elder/Minister in his church, and as an Administrator in a Bible College.

**“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”**

Respondent stated that his church had not encountered such issues. But in his role as a Bible College administrator he had encountered a student struggling with homosexuality. He stated that this individual expressed a willingness to be celibate and to seriously study God’s Word. Respondent stated that the student also confessed to problems with pornography. The student professed to have remained celibate for about two years, then returned to the gay lifestyle. Respondent said that the student now hates the Church, despite the Church trying to help the student in any way that they could.
“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

Respondent stated that his involvement with the student was through counseling, encouragement, spending time with the student. There was no negative impact on the church or the school until the student decided to return to homosexuality. Then there were broken hearts for the student. The church/school had committed to being encouraging and loving to this student.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

Respondent stated that the first thing to do in anything is to see that God is glorified. He went on to discuss spiritual growth, sanctification, and God’s original design for marriage being between one man and one woman throughout their lives. Respondent stated that God has never deviated from that design and intent, though man certainly has. He went on to state that mankind exists in a sinful state due to The Fall. Therefore, sinful attractions do exist. Therefore, compassion is part of presenting the Gospel.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

Respondent stated that both his church and the college are part of the PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) denomination. As such, they subscribe to and comply with the PCA policy that marriage is between one man and one woman.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

Respondent stated that he believes the potential does exist for lawsuits. He stated that at least theoretically, the PCA policy should provide some legal protection, but it may not prevent a lawsuit from being filed.
“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

Respondent stated that his counseling ministry could potentially put him at risk of financial loss through lawsuits, if a counselee took offense at his Biblical standards and approach. The respondent works as a counselor and administrator for a small Bible college.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

Respondent stated that within his church an episode concerning these issues has not yet arisen. If or when it does, the church would handle it according to PCA policy. He went on to state that all persons are welcome to attend the church. However, church membership requires a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and a life that reflects such a profession.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

Respondent stated that neither his church nor the college sought out any legal advice or counsel. They did seek insurance coverage against counseling malpractice lawsuits and coverage against potential victimization crimes in the church. Many churches and ministries protect themselves with insurance in case they are held liable for the negligence or actions of staff members.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

Respondent reiterated that neither the church nor the college ministry has not yet encountered such issues. Meaning that they had not encountered any real conflicts involving these issues.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

Respondent proceeded to reject approval, apathy, and pure condemnation regarding these issues and the people involved in them. He went on to summarize his approach to these issues as; study the Scriptures and love people. He emphasized that Believers cannot
compromise on God’s standards but at the same time, we must demonstrate the love and concern of Christ. Respondent refers to First Corinthians chapter 6, its list of sins, and the reminder that Believers also used to be sinners. He emphasized the available forgiveness through Christ available to all people.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

This respondent constantly emphasized the need for compassion and personal relationships in dealing with persons concerning LGBTQ issues. The respondent was adamant about his understanding of the Biblical standards for marriage and sexuality. He was equally plain spoken about the need to show personal kindness in explaining these things to persons involved with these issues.

**INTERVIEW THREE**

This respondent gave very short and carefully worded responses because he had just recently been cleared of legal charges.

“**How long have you served in your current ministry position?**”

This respondent has been serving as a U.S. military chaplain for the past 14 years at the time of the interview.

“**Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?**”

The respondent replied that he had indeed encountered the issue of same-sex marriage in his ministry.

“**How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?**”

The respondent recounted that he became involved with the issue of same-sex marriage because of a chaplain led program of marriage enrichment retreats. A same-sex couple requested to attend one of these marriage enrichment retreats led by the respondent.
“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

Having been endorsed by the Southern Baptist Convention, the respondent was required to adhere to the doctrinal positions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

Respondent affirmed that both the Southern Baptist Convention and the United States Army both had policies regarding this issue.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

Respondent answered in the affirmative. In fact, he had legal charges filed against him and went through legal proceedings.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

Respondent answered in the affirmative. He could have lost his military career, along with all pay and benefits.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

Respondent stated that he adhered to both the U.S Army policies regarding these specific marriage enrichment programs, while simultaneously complying with the requirements of his endorsing denomination.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

Respondent sought legal advice and was fully represented by legal counsel in all the related proceedings.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

Respondent stated that the entire situation was resolved favorably to him. He was not required to compromise his faith, nor his endorser requirements, nor the policy requirements of the U.S. Army. Legal charges against the respondent were dismissed.
“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

Respondent advised that other churches/ministries and pastors/ministers should hold firm to Biblical truth and teaching while trusting the outcome to God.

Practical Applications for Ministry

Respondent was well versed in his personal beliefs, the doctrinal requirements of his denomination, and the written policy requirements of the U.S. Army. Respondent retained legal counsel early in the encounter. The same-sex couple that brought the complaint believed that the respondent had discriminated against them. The respondent had referred the couple to another similar event led by a different chaplain. Although initially charged with violations of military law, all charges were eventually dismissed because it was found that the respondent had indeed followed the letter of the law and Army policies. Obviously, it is important to know the applicable laws that may pertain to such issues and to rely upon legal counsel.

INTERVIEW FOUR

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

Respondent stated that he has served as for the past six years, of an endorsing board for military chaplains. This board endorses chaplains from fundamental, evangelical Christian churches.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

Respondent stated that many of their chaplains either are currently dealing with such issues, or they have dealt with these issues in the past. An endorser is often called upon to advise their chaplains or to assist their chaplains in dealing with conflicts.
“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent replied that their chaplains work in a secular institution. He stated that the secular world has legalized these sinful behaviors. Therefore, his chaplains frequently encounter these issues.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that their ministry indeed has specific, mandated policies regarding sexuality and associated lifestyle issues. These policies reflect their Biblical and traditional evangelical beliefs regarding human sexuality, marriage, gender, etc. Those policies are written and posted on their ministry’s website. Their chaplains are obliged to comply with those policies in their military ministry.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

Respondent referred me to his answer to the previous question. Respondent repeated his referral to the ministry’s website for specific details of their written policies.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

Respondent stated that these issues have potential administrative career implications for his chaplains. Meaning that chaplains could potentially be discharged from the military, be denied promotions, be officially reprimanded, etc., as a result of conflicts over these issues.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

Respondent stated that the endorsing board may often assume the financial cost of legal representation for their chaplains involved in conflicts over these issues.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

Respondent replied that their ministry has an attorney that specializes in military and Christian issues. Their attorney is highly dedicated to defending issues of religious freedom.
They frequently engage his counsel. They have used this attorney for such issues of religious freedom for decades.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent replied in the affirmative and gave the name of their attorney. They have used his services for decades. He is highly experienced and dedicated to religious freedom.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

Respondent stated that to date, any of his chaplains that have been accused of violations or conflicts have all been exonerated. Respondent went on to state that although exonerated of wrongdoing, some chaplains have received non-punitive letters of caution.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

Responded stated that he would advise people to be prepared. By that, he means that what he sees happening in the military, with government encroachment on religious freedom because of changing sexual morals in our society, is coming to local churches. He was insistent that what the government can get away with in the military, will absolutely come to civilian churches and ministries. Respondent completed his answer by requesting prayers for military chaplains providing Christian ministry.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

The respondent repeatedly emphasized the need for experienced legal counsel and representation. Military chaplains serve in locations all over the United States and in many foreign countries. The military draws its personnel from citizens all over our country. These citizens bring their personal lives and sexuality with them when they join the military. As a result, military chaplains encounter a sampling of American society and sexual lifestyle issues in almost every military unit and assignment. Federal law also becomes military law. Military
chaplains need to be well informed on legal changes and policy changes, and how those changes may impact their military ministries. Civilian ministers would be well advised to do the same.

INTERVIEW FIVE

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent stated that he has been the Director of Operations for a Christian school for the past two years. Concurrently, he has been a pastor for 39 years, with 21 years at his current church.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent stated that he has not encountered any gender identity issues, but that he has encountered issues with same-sex marriage.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that he had encountered persons through the church ministry or friends of church members. These persons were struggling with homosexuality. Some persons also desired counseling regarding the homosexual lifestyle.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent replied in the affirmative. He went on to emphasize that his counseling ministry is always based upon Biblical principles. This is the same for both the church counseling ministry and the Christian school counseling.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent began his reply by stated that the Christian school has a very detailed policy regarding homosexuality, marriage and gender identity. He went on to state that his church has similar policies in place regarding marriage, homosexuality, and gender identity.
“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent answered that that he has not encountered and real or potential legal conflicts. regarding these sexuality issues. He stated that this was the same for both his church ministry and for the Christian school ministry, which he directs.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent stated that all their encounters with sexual lifestyle issues thus far have been persons voluntarily seeking counseling. Consequently, they have not experienced any lawsuits or threats of legal and/or financial actions. This he said was true of both the church and of the Christian school ministry he directs.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that they always take a Biblical approach to these issues. They maintain Biblical authority in all life situations. They observe and practice Biblical principles in all they do. He emphasized that the Bible does not change and that they take the Bible as the final authority regarding these issues.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent initially stated that they did not seek legal advice or counsel. However, then went on to explain that they did seek legal advice when preparing to establish relevant policies. He went on to specifically name two law firms that specialized in assisting Christian churches and ministries. He added that they also consulted a couple of other law firms that he did not name. They did consult multiple law firms for legal advice on policies regarding sexual lifestyle issues.
“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that for the individuals who requested counseling about homosexuality, he was able to establish a helpful conversation. He was able to clearly explain that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sin and that the church cannot approve of homosexuality. However, the church and its members can still love persons involved in homosexuality. The church can be caring and compassionate towards these individuals.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent began by advising others to establish policies that are Biblically based. He went on to relate an anecdote of an episode where a retired, secular psychiatrist observed one of his Biblical counseling sessions. He recounted how the psychiatrist was amazed at the counseling session and what he had observed be accomplished. The respondent emphasized the scripture, John 8:32 which states, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” The respondent emphasized his belief in the truth and accuracy of the Bible, and that acting upon that truth sets people free from their issues. He went on to advise pastors and ministers to form Biblically based policies rather than popular opinions. He explained his reason being that opinions change, but the Bible does not change. He also explained that he was advised that judges find it difficult to rule against policies that are tightly linked to Biblical texts and principles.

Practical Applications for Ministry

This respondent repeatedly emphasized the wisdom of getting legal advice from multiple trusted sources. He also emphasized the importance of specifically integrating policies into a thoroughly Biblical foundation. Such policies must be carefully considered. Such policies must naturally proceed from specific Biblical origins. The respondent also emphasized telling people
struggling with sexual sins, what the church can do for them. He did not leave it at just what the church could not do for these people.

INTERVIEW SIX

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent has served as Senior Pastor for 20 years.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent had not encountered such issues as of this time. But the respondent and his church had been aware of these issues in the news.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent and his church had not personally encountered these issues to date. However, they had been following such cases in the news.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that he and his church will not perform a same-sex marriage.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent repeated that neither he nor the church would perform a same-sex marriage.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent stated that he believed the potential exists for lawsuits over same-sex marriages.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

This respondent stated that local society as well as society at large is ever more accepting of homosexuality and similar lifestyles. He believes the potential exists for financial loss due to lawsuits.
“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

This respondent stated that he handles these issues through his preaching ministry. From time to time, he will preach upon this subject using Romans chapter one. He teaches that that homosexuality and other sexual deviance is morally wrong and violates God’s Word. Respondent also noted a same-sex wedding had recently been performed in a neighboring town. Respondent also divulged that a distant relative male had married another man.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent replied that neither he nor his church had sought any legal advice or counsel.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent reiterated that neither he nor the church had experienced any encounters with these issues to date.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent suggested that churches establish applicable policies in their church by-laws, long before they encounter such issues first hand. Respondent also added that pastors and churches should be aware of these issues in their local communities.

Practical Applications for Ministry

The practical application from this interview is to be aware of these issues in your local community. The respondent and their church had not personally encountered any of these issues in their church, to date. Yet the respondent knew of a same-sex wedding in a neighboring town and he knew of a same-sex marriage by a distant relative. Being aware of these issues both nationally and locally, the respondent and their church added policies into their church by-laws regarding these issues.
INTERVIEW SEVEN

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

This respondent stated that he has served in his position as Director of Operations for his church for three years. He is also a deacon and Sunday School teacher for his church.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent stated that these issues of sexuality and marriage have been encountered on a small scale at various times in their church. They come up in Sunday School classes, small group meetings and even in staff meetings. He went to say that these issues are dealt with through the Word of God. The respondent explained one episode of an email inquiry. A same-sex couple had visited the church and liked the church. The email inquiry by the couple was asking if the church was an “affirming church”, meaning affirming and supportive of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. The respondent answered the couple by explaining that they would be very welcome to attend all services of the church. He went on to say that the church teaches and adheres to Biblical teachings on marriage and sexuality. He invited the couple to further attend the church and judge for themselves if they could be comfortable in the church.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent noted that these issues seem to be both ongoing and growing in America. He observed that there seems to be a trend of affirming sexuality and relationships that are clearly outside of Scripture. He noted that this trend is observable in politics, in entertainment, in education, and even in churches. As such, these sexual lifestyle issues are becoming unavoidable. He stated that the only acceptable response to this trend for the Church is to stand by the Word of God and not fear earthly consequences for doing so.
“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent answered in the affirmative. He also referred this writer to his previous responses wherein he stated the Biblical viewpoint of his church.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent explained that the church did not have specific policies as such. They did however have published core values regarding the subjects of sexuality, marriage, etc. based upon the Bible. He explained that God had created humans in His image, and that we are created only male and female.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

This respondent gave the example of potential lawsuits for refusing to perform a same-sex wedding or for refusing to allow the church facilities to be used for such an event. The respondent did state that his church believes under current laws, they would ultimately be safe from legal harm in maintaining their religious freedoms and maintaining their religious standards.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent explained that just the cost of legal defense against potential actions for refusing to affirm or participate in such issues could be a considerable financial expense. The respondent believes that his church would ultimately win such a legal dispute, but the cost of the legal proceedings could still be substantial.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent recounted his church ministry and beliefs were called into question by his secular employers. He had written a book for his Sunday School class. In some sections, his book addressed Biblical marriage and sexuality, and the Biblical definitions of those things.
His secular employment was in municipal government public service. His secular employer heard about the respondent’s beliefs and support for Biblical marriage and sexuality, and he was dismissed from his job. An exemplary and nationally recognized 34-year career in public service was ended, even though his personal religious beliefs had absolutely nothing to do with his secular position or his work performance. The respondent was fired solely for his Biblical teachings and his personal religious beliefs.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent admitted that he did not seek legal counsel until after his termination from Government employment. He found it quite surprising and never imagined that he might need legal representation or advice for simply writing Biblical teachings in a book for his Sunday School class. Particularly since this was totally unrelated to his secular career field and work performance. After his termination from his secular job, the respondent did seek legal representation with a Christian law firm. This law firm specialized in religious liberty legal issues.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent recounted that following a three year long legal battle, a judge ruled that his termination had been unconstitutional, and that the city government had wrongfully terminated the respondent. An additional year later, the city government chose to settle their case with the respondent an awarded him a financial settlement. The court ruling also set a legal precedent that can be used to protect other persons in similar jeopardy. Government employees should be free to live out their faith without fear of retribution or termination of employment, particularly if there is no discernable conflict with their jobs.
“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent listed five things he has learned from his personal experience. First, God prepares His sons and daughters for persecution. God sovereignly chooses some of His believers to go through persecution. Secondly, there are worldly consequences for standing for Biblical truth and for standing for Christ. In other countries, Christians have been killed, in recent years for standing for Christ. Thirdly, there are kingdom consequences for standing for Biblical truth and standing for Jesus Christ. Fourthly, those kingdom consequences will always outweigh the worldly consequences. But American Christians are so fearful of worldly consequences, they don’t speak the truth. Fourthly, God will be glorified when people stand for the Biblical truth. He then cited the examples of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. After their deliverance, even Nebuchadnezzar glorified their God as the true God. Fifthly, for the sons or daughters of God who are not afraid to stand for Biblical truth, their blessings will be increased. He cited the examples of Job, Daniel, Joseph, and Esther. He then cited himself also as living proof and that God has greatly increased his blessings.

Practical Applications for Ministry

The respondent repeatedly emphasized the necessity and the spiritual benefits of standing true to the Word of God, particularly during persecution. He also learned it was very important to have legal advice and counsel when practicing your religious faith in America. He was totally blindsided by his termination. He never thought that in America, anyone could be fired from their job for what they taught in a Sunday School class.
“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

This respondent answered that he has been the Director of Communications for his denomination’s local conference of the United Methodist Church for the past six months. But the respondent also has a much longer history of ministry experience in other positions. He has experience as a pastor in the United Methodist Church for eleven years. Prior, he was a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene denomination for twelve years.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent began by discussing the experience of his denomination with these issues. He stated that the United Methodist Church has been engaging with the issues of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, etc., since 1972. Respondent went on to give a history of the official debates within the United Methodist Church reference revising their Book of Discipline and Social Principles. The official statements and revisions over time did two things. First, they stated the traditional, historical Biblical understanding of marriage, identity, and sexuality. Second, they affirmed the value and worth of homosexual persons. More recent discussions and debates among the denominational leadership have focused on maintaining the unity of the United Methodist Church, even with the growing doctrinal divisions over these issues.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent cited over 800 churches in their specific regional conference. Their conference will send delegates to the national general conference to address these issues. Then depending upon the outcome of the general conference meeting, local conferences will implement any changes or policies. He further stated that Progressives believe that the Scriptures were written for a historical culture or society. They would cite societal changes such as
women’s rights and the abolition of slavery and relate those societal changes to present day homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent commented that both sides of these issues, the Conservatives and the Progressives believe they have Biblical authority for their positions. Conservatives cite the traditional Biblical textual understanding that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sin.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent answered that this question was addressed by his remarks on the Book of Discipline and the historical, traditional teaching of Biblical marriage and sexuality.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

At the time of the interview, the respondent related this question to the upcoming vote in the general conference meeting to revise or amend the Book of Discipline regarding these sexual lifestyle issues. The respondent explained three basic plans being debated and discussed that would either maintain current denominational disciplinary and legal standards, increase those disciplinary and legal standards, or decrease and possibly eliminate those nationwide denominational disciplinary and legal standards.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent mentioned the very likely possibility that some churches and individuals will not be happy with the whatever decisions are made at the general conference meeting. Consequently, he expects some churches and individuals to leave the denomination and take their financial support with them.
“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent in fulfilling his responsibilities as a Communications Director has tried to keep all his churches informed about all the issues, plans, and implications. While doing so, the respondent has tried to maintain an official neutrality as he seeks to serve all congregations within his regional conference.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent explained that the various pending plans have been reviewed by legal counsel. That was to eliminate any conflicts with the denominational constitution and by-laws. The intent is that whatever plan is adopted by the general conference can be implemented immediately.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

Here the respondent explained a local incident within his local conference. An Associate Pastor had performed a same-sex wedding ceremony in violation of the Book of Discipline. Therefore, the local conference refused to recognize the wedding union of that couple. The Associate Pastor who performed the ceremony had their credentials revoked and was removed from the pulpit.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent advised other first to pray and seek God about these matters. Next, he encouraged others to read through Scripture as to how to lead your life. He supplemented this with teachings from John Wesley. Thirdly, he urged people to try to understand the opposing points of view without being hurtful to others. He believes this will result in peaceful and loving resolutions. He emphasized treating all Believers as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ.
Practical Applications for Ministry

The respondent repeatedly sought to bring a historical perspective to the issues. He cited both historical Biblical positions, historical societal challenges, as well as denominational historical roots and development. The respondent also emphasized a civility and a desire for unity among fellow Christians when trying to resolve conflicts.

INTERVIEW NINE

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

This respondent stated that he has served in the Christian ministry for at least 50 years. The respondent is recently retired from full-time ministry. He does continue to preach and teach as a guest preacher on a part-time capacity.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent simply replied with “Yes”.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent recounted the experience of two gay men who were living together. They had joined the church unbeknownst to the respondent. They had come from another church and their testimony had been accepted. When the respondent was made aware of their homosexuality, he had a conversation with the two men. The respondent informed them that they were welcome to attend any and all the church services. But singing in the choir or representing the church in any way would not to be allowed while they continued in a homosexual lifestyle.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that following the experience of the two gay men, the church codified their Biblical viewpoint. The church sought legal counsel and amended the church by-
laws to reflect issues of marriage and sexuality would be handled in accordance with Biblical teachings on those matters.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

This respondent explained that at the time of the experience with the two gay men, the church had no such policies in place. But afterwards, the church wrote such specific and applicable policies. Those policies have been in place and are still in place at the time of this interview.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent simply answered, “Yes”.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent simply answered, “Yes”.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

This respondent stated that the church sought legal counsel regarding these issues. Upon advice of counsel, the church established written policies that they believe will protect them from potential lawsuits associated with these sexual lifestyle issues.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent simply answered, “Yes”.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that the issue with the two gay men was the only such issue the church had experienced. The two men eventually left the church. The church has not experienced and other conflicts with sexual lifestyle issues as of the time of this interview.
“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent advised for every church and every pastor to seek legal advice from Christian attorneys. Then churches should use that legal advice to write a policy document explaining that the church believes biblical marriage is between a man and a woman. This document should be attached to the church by-laws. The policy and by-laws should be written in such a way as to try to protect the church from any legal consequences of following the Bible.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

The major repeated lesson learned from this respondent is that churches must seek legal counsel regarding these sexual lifestyle issues. Churches should use that counsel to formulate Bible-based policies as part of their church by-laws. Then these policies should be followed, in order to protect the church from potential lawsuits.

INTERVIEW TEN

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent answered that he had been Director of the Rescue Mission for the past two years. He had worked at this Rescue Mission for a total of three years.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent stated that he had encountered all those sexual lifestyle issues during his tenure at the Rescue Mission. He has encountered same sex couples. He had encountered a transgender man who identified as a woman and wanted to live in the women’s dormitory. He has encountered a couple of persons whose gender identities often change back and forth.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained the unique situation of their homeless shelter ministry. They had a transgender man identifying as a woman come to the shelter. They could not board this
person with the women because the person was not a woman. They decided not to board the person with the men because they feared the men might be offended and harm the transgender person. Because the homeless shelter only has a men’s dormitory and a women’s dormitory, they cannot house persons who don’t fit into one category or the other. The respondent went on to recount an episode with a same sex couple. He suspected that the same sex couple might have been seeking to file a lawsuit. They were two gay men and they wanted to stay as a couple in the men’s dormitory. The respondent explained that the homeless shelter has housing for men, housing for women, and housing for families with children. They did not have housing just for married couples. Their policy at that time was to allow member of the couple to stay at their homeless shelter and the other member of the couple would stay nearby at the Salvation Army. The shelter had followed this policy with heterosexual couples long before a same sex couple ever came to them. The gay couple was upset. They argued that they should be allowed to stay together in the men’s dormitory. The respondent informed them that they were being treated the same as any married couple. The gay couple went to the local newspaper. They wanted to use public opinion to shame the Rescue Mission or perhaps use law enforcement to get their way. Nothing came of their efforts. The gay couple never returned to the Rescue Mission.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent replied that the Board of Directors had previously adopted an official policy that biblical marriage was between only a man and a woman. The ministry was to operate accordingly with that guidance as a principle to be followed. The board had put that policy in place as a precaution for these types of sexual lifestyle issues.
“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent noted that the Rescue Mission does not have a policy against homosexuals. As a rescue Mission and Homeless Shelter, they believe it is part of their ministry to provide “radical hospitality”. The ministry chooses to receive all people, provide all people with hospitality, and have all people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Problems only arise when the ministry does not have an appropriate place to house some persons, such as has been previously discussed. Now the ministry has appropriate policies in place for those situations as well.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent acknowledged that the only incident thus far that had the potential for a lawsuit was the experience of the gay couple. He commented that there was not much support for LGBT persons in the town where the ministry is located. By contrast, a neighboring town has a very public LGBT community that enjoys strong public support. Following the incident of the gay couple, the ministry did follow up by consulting their local Board of Directors and their national Board. The ministry also sought legal counsel in drafting policies to protect the ministry from possible legal conflicts in the future.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent stated that there were no financial implications from their encounter with the gay couple. He went on to mention that another Rescue Mission in another State was having legal and financial difficulties because of their hiring policies as a Christian ministry. Their employees are expected to live according to Biblical moral standards of human sexuality and Biblical marriage. Because of that policy, the ministry has lost some funding grants and other
donations. The respondent stated that he expects to face the same challenges at some point in the future. He emphasized that these are choices that Christian ministries need to be prepared to face.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent repeated that the ministry has adhered to policies supporting the Biblical view of marriage. These policies were drafted with the approval and consultation of their Board of Directors.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent answered that as part of a national organization, the national leadership stays abreast of changing laws and is fully supportive of the local ministries. The ministry also has ready access to Christian legal counsel and makes full use of that resource. The respondent was pleased that his ministries and others like his, are still able to be faithful to their Biblical standards and beliefs.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent replied that they are experiencing no conflicts at this time. The local LGBT community is not hostile towards the ministry because they recognize that the ministry also helps LGBT persons in need. The respondent repeated the ministry’s doctrine of “radical hospitality” and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone they can.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent that the most important encouragement he could offer to others would be to stand firmly by their convictions. God has never promised His Believers an easy path. There will come a time when the world calls what is good, bad and what is bad, good. That time may be approaching or is already here. He emphasized that Christian leaders are called for exactly such times to represent Jesus Christ well.
Practical Applications for Ministry

The respondent had a couple practical applications that he repeated numerous times. First was the need to have Biblical policies for a ministry that make sense both practically and legally. The housing policies of the homeless shelter were based upon the practical limitations of their facilities. Those practical policies also complied with their Biblical beliefs on marriage and sexuality. This still allowed them to conduct their ministries of “radical hospitality” and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The second practical consideration was a warning that challenging trials often come to God’s servants. Ministers should prepare themselves to stand faithfully for their beliefs and for Jesus Christ, come what may.

INTERVIEW 11

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent stated that he has been pastor of his church for 24 years.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

This respondent simply answered, “Yes we have.”

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent replied that the first such involvement came back in 2004. The state was considering legalizing same sex marriage. The respondent was moved to rent a large facility and sponsor a large prayer gathering to pray against legalizing same sex marriage. The prayer gathering facility was filled. The prayer gathering was also broadcast around the region. The respondent and other ministers were very concerned at that time about the future of religious liberty in our country. The respondent then mentioned another involvement in 2016. The state passed a transgender identity bathroom accommodation law. This law as written also required churches to allow transgender persons to use the bathrooms of their choosing, regardless of their
birth gender or biological identity. The law allowed for financial penalties and even imprisonment for non-compliance. The respondent’s church and four other churches joined together in a pre-emptive lawsuit against the state to change this law. As a result, the state changed the wording of the law and exempted churches, one week before the case got to court.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent immediately cited his belief in the Genesis chapters 1 and 2 accounts of human creation and marriage. He believes that the church is obligated to uphold the Biblical standards stated there.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent said that over several years, the church has added some policies to their by-laws. The by-laws now define Biblical marriage in the church. More recent policies address gender identity as being biological. The policies also address use of the church bathrooms in accordance with Biblical gender identity.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent again cited the 2016 legal conflict as significant. He mentioned that many other churches in the state were afraid to join them in the lawsuit. In the respondent’s own church, a board member and an elder both stepped down over the issue. The legal jeopardy, in the opinion of the respondent, was substantial.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent explained that any violation of the 2016 Bathroom law was considered equivalent to a hate crime. The monetary fines for violations were to be substantial. Punishments under that law also included prison time.
“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent began by recounting discussions he had with other pastors and churches. He said that in 2016, many other churches were trying to figure out ways they could accommodate and comply with the new law. Some of these ideas included having ushers stand guard outside bathroom doors while a transgender person would use the facilities. By contrast, the respondent believed that the state had threatened religious liberty. He felt obligated to speak out and be a voice. He repeatedly stated that he had a burden from the Lord to speak out against this situation. He quoted, “The zeal of my father’s house hath consumed me.” The respondent stated that he prayed and fasted for 3 days. Then he was called by a legal firm and asked if his church would challenge the new law. The respondent recalled that he had been reading the passage in Esther concerning her prayer and fasting. The respondent said that he felt called by God to take the legal action.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent cited the name of the law firm they retained. He praised them for their work and commitment to religious liberty. He stated that the law firm kept the argument focused on the constitutional aspects of religious liberty, the separation of church and state.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that he believes the 2004 prayer gathering was used to encourage churches in the region. Same sex marriage still became law in the state, but churches were encouraged to speak out. In the 2016 conflict over the Bathroom Law, the issue was resolved favorably to the churches. The week before the case was to go to court, the state Attorney General changed the wording of the law and exempted places of worship. The churches then dropped their lawsuit.
“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent spoke of his burden that churches seem to be going along with secularism and social liberalism. He believes that the Biblical perspective is being lost. He urges churches to stand faithful to the Bible and to God. He cites the Biblical example of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, he found a very secularized society that was spiritually dead. The things of God had been ignored.

Practical Applications for Ministry

Although the conflicts that this respondent experienced were primarily legal, he repeatedly emphasized the spiritual aspects of the conflicts. He emphasized prayer and fasting. He repeatedly quoted and cited Scripture. He repeatedly mentioned his burden and call from God to speak out or to act. In the case of this respondent, legal actions, policy changes, etc., were a natural product of the spiritual actions. He put prayer, fasting, Scripture, and seeking the will of God first. Then came legal decisions and activities.

INTERVIEW 12

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondents stated that he was the founding pastor of the church 18 years ago. He is still the current pastor of the church.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent was a bit emotional. He responded that their experiences with all these issues has been “off the charts”. He went on to say that his church has always tried to minister to the gay community in some way. Then he described a conflict that began in 2018. The church offered workshops for teenage girls struggling with sexuality and gender identity. The church began to advertise these workshops on social media. The gay community noticed these
What followed was a national media campaign by the LGBT community to demand that the church immediately shut down these workshops. In a matter of 2-3 weeks, the church received tens of thousands of emails, social media messages, and phone messages from across the country demanding that the church end these workshops. The church was literally threatened with violence. The pastor and his family received death threats. One of the threats lead to an arrest of a man whom the police found was armed and prepared to carry out his threat. Ironically, many of the messages accused the church of being evil and unloving. The church and the pastor were repeatedly accused of hating gay people. The respondent summarized most of the complaints as accusations that the church was trying to convert gay people to be Christians and/or to be straight people and no longer gay. The respondent readily admitted that if people voluntarily came to his church asking for help with these issues, the church would share the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The respondent went on to say that he believes in the transformative power of God’s Word in the lives of people. The respondent did dispute the claims that their workshops were conversion therapy or some form of torture.

The respondent then remarked that he knows the gay community understands conversion works. He stated that gay clubs, bars, gay pornography and gatherings are often successful in seducing straight people and converting them to be gay. But gay people refuse to believe that once someone is gay, they can turn back the other way. The respondent refuted that belief by saying he personally knows dozens of people who have left the gay lifestyle and give testimony that it is possible to do so. He noted that there is one person on their church staff who was formerly homosexual. Now that person is married, has children, and is happily living a heterosexual life.
The respondent then went on to say that most people believe in the power of conversion. He cited that Weight Watchers help people convert from being fat people to healthy people. Financial classes help to convert poor people into wealthy people. Gymnasiums help to convert physically weak people into physically strong people. People are engaged in conversions all the time. The respondent added that people often change their minds and change their sexual behaviors. He cited that some people have affairs, then feel guilty and remoroseful, so they end the affairs and return to their spouse and family. Some people get addicted to pornography. Then they realize that pornography is unhealthy. They turn away from it and return to a moral and healthy sexual lifestyle. These are all conversions.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent referred to his previous answer. The respondent then expanded his response. During the conflict campaign by the gay community, his church experienced eight weeks of sidewalk protests. Protesters wore vulgar costumes and accused the church of hate.

The respondent then went on to elaborate on their history of outreach to the gay community. The respondent has visited 75-100 gay bars. He has done several interviews with gay publications and gay reporters. They all initially assume that he is hateful towards gay people. But the respondent explains that he is inviting, welcoming, and loving towards gay people. He often apologizes for the shameful treatment of gay people by many churches. The interviewers are often surprised. He wants to reach them with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent cited that the church believes the Biblical teachings that marriage is between one man and one woman. Human sexuality is intended to be enjoyed in the context of Biblical marriage.
“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent stated that the church does have a policy of not performing same sex weddings.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent related an experience in which a state legislator filed charges against him for child abuse. The complaint alleged that the Biblical counseling amounted to child abuse. The pastor had been counseling a 10-year old girl that she was not a lesbian she was only 10 years old. But that when she got older, she would have affections for a young man and a young man would have affections for her. The state Attorney General eventually dismissed those charges.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent was certain that the church lost some people during the 2018 conflict. Some people were afraid because of the sidewalk protesters and the violent threats. Other people left the church because they disagreed with what the church was doing. When people leave a church, the offering contributions are reduced. That is a financial reality.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent replied that they handled these issues “straight on”. He reported that during the LGBT campaign against the church, that on one day, the church was receiving 40 negative messages per minute. He was astounded at the organization and coordination of the campaign. The respondent elaborated on the church response to the protests. He spoke about these issues in the preaching ministry. The church chose not to engage the protesters outside the church building if they stayed on public property. The situation was tense but not violent. In a period of 2-3 weeks, the respondent did about 60 media interviews explaining the position and beliefs of the church. The respondent even posted an interview to YouTube.
“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

Here the respondent named the legal firm that represented the church. The church did not require any legal action be taken, but they did closely consult with the law firm. The respondent recited that this law firm handled 600 LGBT related cases in the previous year.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that the “outcome” of these issues currently is and always will be ongoing. The church will continue to reach out to the LGBT community. The church will continue to help those who are struggling with these sexual lifestyle issues. The church will continue to stand faithfully for the Word of God. He noted that the protest campaign eventually faded after 2-3 months. He said this happens when another church somewhere else in the country becomes the new target.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent said, “Love God. Hate sin. Love people. Stand up.” It’s that simple. Churches must obey the Scripture and be smart about how you reach out. He said that style and language matters. Do not be afraid of controversy. The gospel brings controversy.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

This respondent repeatedly emphasized the need to not be afraid when addressing issues. Do not be surprised by dramatic responses to the church. Do not be afraid to face issues “straight on”. He also emphasized being wise and loving. The church should get their message out to the public. That message must not compromise your faith. But that message must be kind, gentle and reasonable. “Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” The church must continue to reach outward to people with the gospel.
“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent explained that his total military time as a Chaplain Assistant was 34 years. The last 5 of those years he served as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Army Chief of Chaplains and the Army Chaplain Corps as a whole. The Sergeant Major has now been retired almost five years from active duty. He currently still serves as an adviser to the Military Chaplains Association.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent began to explain the onset and the impact of the 1993 Department of Defense policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”. Then in 2010, that policy was repealed. That same decision allowed for same sex marriages within the military. These policy changes presented potential challenges for the military Chaplain ministry. Military Chaplains are required to adhere to the doctrines of their endorsing denominations and their ordaining churches. Some Chaplains are allowed by their denominations to perform same sex weddings. Some denominations do not allow their Chaplains to perform same sex weddings.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent mentioned that he encountered some military Chaplain Assistants who were gay. He also encountered some who eventually had gay marriages. To his knowledge, these persons all complied with applicable military policies and regulations.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that there was a difference between his personal religious beliefs and the military policies. He personally came from a Pentecostal church that considers homosexuality to be a sin. But Chaplain Assistants are not bound by denominational church rules...
as the Chaplains are. Chaplain Assistants are only required to comply with the military regulations and policies.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent referred to his answer to the previous question.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent referred to situations involving Chaplain marriage workshops and retreats. These ministry events were organized and led by Chaplains and Chaplain Assistants. When same sex couples began to request inclusion in these ministry programs, it raised legal and doctrinal challenges for some Chaplains. Same sex couples could claim that their rights against non-discrimination were being violated. Chaplains with a traditional Biblical view of marriage were not allowed to recognize a same sex couple as a married couple before God. The Army challenge was to accommodate both sides within the laws and regulations. The respondent said that in most cases, Chaplains were able to provide an alternate event for same sex couples or to provide a Chaplain who was not doctrinally restricted from treated same sex couples as married couples.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent stated that he was not aware of any real financial implications in these types of situations within the Army.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that his role as the Senior Enlisted Adviser was to advise the Army Chief of Chaplains as to how these issues impact individual soldiers and their families. The respondent also consulted Army legal staff for their applicable information and opinions. The respondent also advised the Army Chief of Chaplains that an alternative solution could be to
allow Chaplain Assistants to facilitate these workshops and retreats for same sex couples if some Chaplains could not do so.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent repeated that advice from the Army Judge Advocate General Corps was incorporated. Consulting with the JAG Corps is routine in these matters. Commanders and units in the Army must always comply with the law.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that there were no impacts upon him personally because his duty position was one of a neutral, advisor to upper level leaders. The outcome of any individual incidents worked out within the law and Army regulations. Chaplains have been allowed to conduct ministry without being forced to compromise their religious convictions. Same sex couples have been provided ministry events in these marriage enrichment programs without discrimination.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent stated that he would advise ministers to stick to their personal values and beliefs. He went on to advise ministers to maintain clear communications to everyone involved in such experiences, including same sex couples. Ministers should not only state what ministry they cannot perform, but they must also clearly state what ministry they can provide.

Practical Applications for Ministry

This respondent provided a unique perspective as that of a neutral advisor. He had the role and the duty to see both sides of these conflicts over sexual lifestyle issues. He also had the responsibility to advise how to accommodate both sides. The respondent repeatedly emphasized knowing and understanding the applicable laws. He emphasized that ministers should know,
understand, and be faithful to their own beliefs. He finally emphasized that ministers should be willing to communicate what ministry they can do for same sex couples. They should not just communicate what ministry they cannot provide for same sex couples.

INTERVIEW 14

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent stated that he had been the pastor of his church for the past seven years.

“How has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent answered that the church had not encountered any real experiences with these issues. He said the closest encounter they had experienced was he characterized as an unsolicited response to a college paper. They received a phone call asking if the church would perform a gay wedding. The respondent told the caller that the church would not perform a same sex wedding. The caller replied that they might be using that information in a college paper.

The respondent went on to state that following the Supreme Court ruling that legalized same sex marriage across the country, he preached a message from Ezekiel 33. That year the church also published a policy that the church would not recognize or accept same sex marriages, polyamorous marriages, or any other marriages outside the Biblical definition of marriage.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent referred to his previous answers. The church involvement in these issues was primarily a reaction to the 2015 Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage. The church also reacted to the growing pervasiveness and acceptance of homosexuality in American culture. The church reaction was manifested in the preaching ministry of the respondent.
“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent said that the Bible calls homosexuality a sin and an abomination. He cited Romans chapter one as calling homosexuality a judgment from God against a culture given to idolatry. The respondent said he rejected the notion that people are born to be homosexuals or pedophiles, or polyamorous, etc. He contended that sexual sins are a choice.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent repeated his comment about the church policy prohibiting gay marriages or other non-biblical marriages.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent stated that he had not experienced any legal implications.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent explained that he had recently been fired from the church for taking a stand against homosexuality. The recent conflict involved a message the respondent put on the church sign that called homosexuality sin. The local LGBT community protested the church. Some members left the church. The elders of the church decided the pastor should go. He lost his employment and his income.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent remarked that he handled these issues through his preaching ministry. He would preach about homosexuality or other sexual sins as these subjects came up in the Biblical texts through which he was teaching. He also worked with the church to form an official church statement condemning same sex marriage, following the Supreme Court ruling.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

Respondent stated that he did not seek any legal advice or legal counsel representation.
“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that at the time of this interview, the outcome was not completely resolved. The church had fired him, but the Presbytery had not approved that action. He was still waiting for a ruling by the Presbytery. He further stated he believes the ultimate outcome will be that he moves on to serve some other church. If he does not serve another church, he said he would be preaching on the street corner “boldly and loudly proclaiming the truth of God’s Word.”

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent’s advice is to remember that the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth”. He commented that Jesus said the church is to “salt and light in the world”. If the church fails to do so, it is nothing. The church is called to stand for righteousness in a world that is growing ever darker. The respondent went on to cite the Great Commission from Matthew 28:19-20. He then cited the need for Christians to act as “watchmen” in Ezekiel 33. They must see the “sword coming” and then warn others of the danger. Not warning people of the danger is to not love those people.

Practical Applications for Ministry

The major emphasis of this respondent was to “boldly and loudly proclaim the truth of God’s Word”. He repeatedly cited and referenced Scriptures supporting his positions. He said those Scripture impressed upon him the responsibility to speak out. It is also noteworthy that the respondent never sought any legal advice or counsel.
INTERVIEW 15

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent described himself as a Christian called by God into the practice of law. The respondent has been focused on issues of religious liberty since 1999. His work as an attorney representing Christians has spanned 20 years.

“How has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent answered that his ministry is to confront those issues on behalf of his clients. He went on to explain that church by-laws are to be clear on these issues. He stated that court decisions on these sexual lifestyle issues run contrary to and have no basis in the U.S. Constitution. He then explained Federalism and the differences between state authorities and Federal Government authorities. The Federal Government is constitutionally have only limited and enumerated authorities. He cited the example of abortion being a common law crime that somehow became a constitutional right. He said the same thing applies to same sex marriage. The respondent believes that judges do not have constitutional authority to declare these sexual issues as constitutional rights. The responded went further to focus on the phrase in the Preamble of the Constitution, “to ensure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity”. He explained the meaning of “blessings” as being a religious and spiritual word, not a legal term. Blessings come from God. He stated that the Founding Fathers believed liberty came from God as stated in the Declaration of Independence.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent repeated that he encounters these issues in legal cases on behalf of his clients. He has had many experiences in handling the legal aspects of these issues since 1999.
“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent declared his personal viewpoint as the traditional Biblical understanding that marriage is between one man and one woman. Sexual relationship outside of Biblical marriage are declared to be sin.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent stated that he has advised many churches and ministers, to write policies that clearly state the Biblical standards for sexuality and marriage adopted by their churches. These policies should be made known to everyone and enforced within the churches.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent firmly believes these issues have legal implications for churches and ministers. He has been legally engaged as an attorney representing Christians over these issues since 1999. He emphasized that these legal cases also have constitutional implications for government and for our society. The respondent explained the importance of the First Amendment Free Exercise of Religion clause in addition to the Freedom of Speech clause. The respondent said that he has represented many military Chaplains involved in these sexual lifestyle issues. These Chaplains have often been at risk of losing their military careers.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent explained that these cases often put churches and ministers at financial risk. They may lose employment and income. They may accrue monetary fines and court costs.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained how he handled many cases on their own individual merits while emphasizing religious liberty and freedom of speech. The respondent discussed the
historical understanding by the Founding Fathers in rejecting the doctrine of “religious
toleration” in favor of the doctrine of “religious liberty”.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent himself is in the practice of law. His Christian service and ministry are
legal advice, counsel and representation to churches and ministers. He stated that he has been
practicing law and handling religious liberty cases since 1999.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

Each of the respondent’s cases have had individual outcomes.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent explained that the “blessings of liberty” is also a responsibility for every
American. The blessings of liberty must be defended. He stated that Christians are called to
honor God and defend what God has given them. He went on to recount some of the history of
American preachers exhorting citizens to Biblical righteousness and engaging the social issues of
their day.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

This respondent emphasized the need to engage competent legal counsel and
representation in order to defend religious liberty. He repeated multiple times that it is necessary
to proclaim the truth of God’s Word. He regarded it as a sacred obligation for Christians to do so.
This respondent also emphasized the importance of both knowing and defending the
Constitutional rights as understood and intended by the Founders in their historical context.
“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent answered that he has served as a pastor in Christian ministry for 60 years. He has retired from pastoring but still preaches as a guest preacher.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent stated that during all his years as a pastor he had never personally faced any of these issues. They never came up.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent said that these issues never involved any of his churches. He went on to say that near the end of his tenure, his church was advised by legal counsel to develop some policies regarding these sexual lifestyle issues. The purpose of the policies was to provide the church with some legal protections. The respondent acknowledged that near the end of his tenure these issues were becoming problems for some churches.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent said that he and his church absolutely had a Biblical viewpoint on these issues. The respondent stated that he expounded the Biblical teachings about these issues in his preaching ministry many times. The respondent added that he did the same biblical teaching in his preaching ministry on abortion. He went to say that a woman who had had an abortion later thanked him for his preaching on abortion. She told him that women needed to be warned about the realities through which she had lived.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent admitted that his church had no written or formal policies in place for these issues. He had personal and written policies about requirements for any marriage that he
would perform. Those personal policies were such that they would have excluded same sex marriages anyway. When any couple would request the respondent to perform their wedding ceremony, the respondent would give the couple a copy of his marriage policy. The couple would be required to agree and sign his policy statement before the respondent would consider performing their wedding ceremony. The respondent relayed that he had turned away some couples because he believed their marriage would be “a sham” and he did not want to be associated with it. The respondent stated that the pastor who succeeded him had a different policy for weddings. That policy decided to avoid conflicts and controversies altogether. He refused to perform any church wedding ceremonies for anyone.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent commented that everything a pastor does can potentially have legal implications. He recalled experiences where he had dealt with local zoning rules, property line disputes with neighbors, building inspectors, etc. He explained that pastors and churches often encounter more legal implications in their daily ministries than they expect. These sexual lifestyle issues could easily involve legal implications. He went on to explain that it is important for churches and pastors to get competent legal advice and counsel. The respondent added that it is also important to interact with people in a positive and loving way. Personal attitude and conduct can go a long way towards achieving a positive outcome.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent explained that there are always potential financial implications when handling any conflict. Lawsuits present substantial financial burdens.
“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that these issues should be handled carefully. He emphasized that any interactions involving government officials should be done in a forthright manner. A positive, warm attitude can be very helpful.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent stated that he often sought legal advice and counsel on many issues. It is good to always consult competent legal counsel. He regarded legal counsel as essential in dealing with any government issues.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issue for your church/ministry?”

The respondent answered that since had not personally encountered any of these sexual lifestyle issues, there were no conflict outcomes.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent stated that he would advise pastors and churches to handle these sexual lifestyle issues forthrightly and honestly. Churches should handle such conflicts openly and keep everyone informed. No church business should be done in secret. He went on to state that churches and ministers should be as positive and loving as they can but refuse to compromise on God’s word.

**Practical Applications for Ministry**

This respondent repeatedly emphasized two personal practices that were helpful to him. He encouraged churches and ministers to always seek competent legal advice and counsel. The respondent also urged others to be warm, kind, and loving in their interactions with others. This respondent always found a way to do that without compromising his Biblical convictions.
INTERVIEW 17

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent answered that he started serving as pastor for his church in 1998. He has been serving as pastor now for over 20 years.

“How have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent began by saying that the church was protested by the LGBT community in 2012 because of a sign he had posted in front of the church. The sign read “Gay is not OK” and it was the title of a message the pastor was going to be preaching. Then in 2017, the church retained legal counsel for another conflict. The church filed a pre-emptive lawsuit against their State Civil Rights Commission. The Commission had issued guidelines that required churches to accommodate transgender persons to use the bathrooms of those person’s choosing at church events. The lawsuit went to Federal Court and the church won their case. The Commission guidelines were overturned.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent recounted the actions the church took before filing the lawsuit against the State Commission. The church leadership began to pray and fast to seek God’s will on the matter. The church leadership discussed the issue with the congregation. Once the church decided to go ahead with the lawsuit, they took precautions. They increased security before they announced the lawsuit.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that the church affirmed the traditional Biblical teachings on gender identity, marriage, and human sexuality. The church wrote those views into the church by-laws as an official policy. The respondent preached an entire message on the Biblical truth of
gender identity. That sermon was later submitted into evidence and became an integral part of the trial.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent admitted that the church originally did not have such policies. When the church was considering the lawsuit, they were advised by legal counsel to adopt specific policies on these issues. The legal counsel also assisted the church in drafting their policies. The church followed that legal advice and adopted their policies prior to initiating the lawsuit.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent said that these issues did have substantial legal implications. The church believed that the commission guidelines were morally and constitutionally wrong, and the church need to oppose them.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent stated that this conflict had great potential financial implications. Sometimes churches split over big issues. Sometimes members leave the church. This would result in the church losing offering income. The respondent added that the opposite happened in this case. Other people began coming to their church. The church also received donations from around the country. People sent the church messages of support and encouragement.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent repeated that the church elders and deacons spent time praying and fasting over this issue. They sincerely sought God’s call about what the church should do. The church leaders then presented the issue to the congregation for a decision and moved forward with the lawsuit.
“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent answered that they did seek legal counsel and representation. He then named the law firm. He said the church and the law firm would have conference calls on their case at least once every week.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that the case went to Federal Court and the Church won their case. The guidelines of the Commission were struck down.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent explained that pastors and churches should first carefully consider the potential costs before engaging in such a conflict. The church should be certain that God is calling them to take a stand. Then once the church makes the decision to fight for their beliefs, they must remain committed to see it through completely. The church should prepare for the “fight”. There may be security threats. The church should take realistic precautions. The respondent emphasized that the church leaders should be unified during such a conflict.

Practical Applications for Ministry

This respondent emphasized several things. First, he emphasized the need for spiritual preparation before undertaking a major legal challenge. He repeatedly spoke of prayer and fasting, both individually and collectively. He added that it was important to preach on these subjects in preparation for such a challenge. The respondent went on to also emphasize the importance of legal counsel and representation from beginning to end. Finally, the respondent was adamant about the need for total commitment and unity of the church to see any challenge through to its conclusion.
INTERVIEW 18

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent stated that she had worked in her current ministry position for the last seven years. She is the CEO/Director of Charities of her Diocese. Her organization provides charitable and social services throughout 8 counties in her state. They are also under contract with the state government to provide many of these services and receive significant state funding. The entire operation is a Church-Government partnership. The respondent is now 70 years old and has served in various ministry positions for most of her adult life.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent explained that her organization is not technically a church. They are a not-for-profit ministry that is both sponsored by the church and under contract to state government. They are required to abide by all state laws, including non-discrimination laws. The charities do not inquire as to the sexual orientation or lifestyle of any clients of their services.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The charities ran a foster care and child adoption service up until last 2018. The sexual lifestyle that impacted the foster care and adoption services was a gay couple seeking to adopt a child from the charities. The respondent met with the gay couple and explained to them the conflict with the religious beliefs of the charities. The church sponsoring the charities does not believe in gay marriage. Nor does it believe that same sex couple should be parents. The respondent explained that the gay couple could go to any other adoption service that was not church sponsored. But the gay couple insisted on adopting a child from the charities. The respondent insisted that she believed the gay couple sincerely wanted to adopt a child because
they wanted to have a child and be a family. She also believed that the gay couple simultaneously wanted to make a legal point about gay adoption.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent repeated the church beliefs and their Biblical viewpoint expressed in the previous answer. She also stated that the church Bishop in the Diocese had no flexibility in these doctrines whatsoever.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent took the issue to their Bishop. The respondent advocated on behalf of the gay couple. The respondent presented the Bishop with numerous statistics and data demonstrating that gay couples can be competent parents. But the Bishop was bound by the doctrines and policies of the church. The church does not recognize any same sex marriage. The church cannot sanction any same sex marriage or place children with same sex couples.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent explained that the legal implications were very real. If the charities refused to adopt children to gay couples, the charities would be in violation of their contracts with the state. They would also be in violation of anti-discrimination laws. To avoid these legal conflicts the charities closed their foster care and adoption services completely. That solution also avoided any religious compromise of their church doctrines and policies.

The respondent went on to explain that the other social services provided by the charities have no policy of refusing gay people, transgender people, etc. When providing food, shelter or other services, those sexual lifestyle issues are not a consideration.
“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent explained that the financial impact of this conflict on the charities was neutral. The charities lost the contract funds that were given for the foster care and adoption services. But the charities spent all those funds only and completely on those services. The net financial result was neither a loss nor a gain. It was zero impact financially on any other part of the charities.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that the church received much negative publicity in the media over this issue. Some staff members left the charities. Some board members also left the charities over this issue. In order to comply with state laws, the charities closed its foster care and adoption services. They transitioned their children and foster parents to other agencies in the state. The children and foster parents suffered no disruptions. None of them had to move. They just changed who was supervising and supporting them. They all no longer had any official relationship with the charities. Many members in the area churches were upset over the church decisions. The charities received negative feedback from many people within the church community.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent stated that they absolutely sought legal advice and counsel. Some of the trustees for the charities inquired if they could change the by-laws of the charities. They found that the charities could not legally change the policies of the church. Nor could the charities legally exempt themselves from the policies of the church. The by-laws were written such that any changes required approval by the church.
“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent referred to her previous answer explaining that the charities closed their foster care and adoption services. The children and the foster parents experienced no disruptions. The respondent did add that she believed the charities lost a measure of good will in the local community because of this conflict.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent explained that other dioceses later withdrew from some of their social service ministries or decided never to begin some of these social service ministries. That was a result of the conflict over gay parent adoptions. Church doctrines are largely non-negotiable. Government contracts are largely non-negotiable once they are signed. The respondent sadly remarked that this situation had no room for negotiation. Pastors and ministers should consider these circumstances.

Practical Applications for Ministry

This respondent emphasized the friction and contradictions that can potentially exist between church doctrines and policies, and government contracts and laws. If churches and/or ministries partner with Government, there is the potential for either forced compromise or a parting of the ways.

INTERVIEW 19

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent answered that has been the pastor of his current church for four years. He added that his total ministry experience spans 30 years.
“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent replied that his church has not experienced any of these sexual lifestyle issues directly. He explained that the church is a small rural church. The congregation is middle-aged. The respondent implied that these issues may be more prevalent in urban communities.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent stated that in 2004 through 2006, a young man continually debated with him whether a person could be both a Christian and a homosexual. He believed the young man was struggling with homosexuality in his life. The young man argued with the respondent over the possibility of genetic predisposition to homosexuality. The respondent explained that potential genetic predispositions towards homosexuality, or heterosexual fornication, or alcoholism, or gambling, etc., might explain behaviors but it does not excuse sin.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that he and his church believe the traditional biblical teachings on human sexuality, gender identity and Biblical marriage. The respondent went on to say that just because people have sinful desires, they are not excused by God from committing sinful acts.

The respondent also emphasized the need to preach the Biblical viewpoint and teachings on these sexual lifestyle issues. He added that the Bible is the authority for his church on all life issues. If society or our lifestyle conflicts with the Bible, we are to conform to the Bible. The respondent stated that because he preaches on these issues and teaches a Biblical understanding, the church has not fostered an environment that encourages these sexual lifestyle issues.
“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent stated that the church has not published any written policies regarding these sexual lifestyle issues. He went on to state that he and the church have allowed the preaching ministry to be the medium for communicating the church beliefs and policies. He also admitted that strong preaching on these subjects is not a guarantee that the church will not be challenged by these issues.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent answered that he believes these issues do come with potential legal implications. He admitted that his church has not experienced these issues. He went on to add that small churches may not consider the potential for legal implications. Many small churches may think of such issues as problems for big churches. Small churches may be caught off guard and unprepared for potential legal implications.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent mentioned that churches should consider insurance protection for some of these issues. Just because a church has not experienced these issues, doesn’t mean they might not experience them in the future. The respondent also acknowledged that pastors could potentially be fired over these issues and lose income for their families.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent repeated that he chooses to handle such issues “head on with the truth” in his ministry. He referred again to the young man with questions about homosexuality and the Bible. The respondent chose to answer the young man with the Bible. The respondent believes in addressing directly and early to keep them from going very far. By stating direct opposition to
the sins, it seems to shut down any argument for justification of the sins. There is no support or excuse given in the Bible for any sin.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent admitted that neither he nor the church ever sought any legal advice or counsel. He also admitted that perhaps God had protected the church in spite not having any legal advice.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent replied that he believed the debate with the young man made he and the church stronger. He went on to say that the encounter gave him a better understanding of the struggle people have with these sexual lifestyle sins. The respondent described the struggle as a daily war with the flesh. The experience also made the respondent more sensitive to the idea that all people struggle with some type of sin every day. The respondent compared these sexual sins to the temptations for over eating.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent advised others to be very cautious in offering authority to other people in your ministry. The respondent explained that he meant pastors are responsible for the actions of people they place in positions to serve in the church. Pastors should pray and spend time with people before they hire people or allow them to serve in the church. Pastors should reserve the authority to fire people if need be. He said that pastors have a responsibility and a right to preserve the testimony of the church. He went on to admit that he has not experienced such an incident himself. He has heard of such incidents in other churches.
Practical Applications for Ministry

Although this respondent admitted multiple times that he had not experienced any real conflicts over these issues, he did acknowledge the need to be prepared for such things. He emphasized the spiritual preparation of prayer and Bible preaching regarding these sexual lifestyle issues in our culture. He also acknowledged the need for legal preparation. The respondent cautioned small and/or rural churches to not be caught unprepared for such conflicts. The respondent also acknowledged the reality that people struggle with all kinds of sins in their lives. These people need the transformative help of Jesus Christ and His Word in their daily lives.

INTERVIEW 20

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent stated that they have been the pastor of their current church for about two and a half years. They went on to add that they have served in the pastoral ministry for about twenty years total.

“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent explained that in the mid-1990s, the church congregation made an intentional decision to become an “affirming” and “inclusive” church for the LGBT community. This local congregation decision was at that time, in direct contradiction to the stated policies of their national denomination. This local congregation ordained LGBTQ person to the clergy. In 2001, the national policy for their denomination changed and more closely matched that of the local congregation. The respondent went on to estimate that 25-30% of their congregation identifies as LGBTQ persons. The respondent himself stated that he himself had officiated about a half dozen same sex wedding ceremonies.
“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent referred again to the decision of the congregation, in the 1990s, to become an “affirming” and “inclusive” church for LGBTQ persons. He noted that many people since then, have come to the church specifically because of their public inclusivity of LGBTQ persons. This has become the identity of the church.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent affirmed that the Bible is one of the influences of the congregation for their policies on LGBTQ issues. He stated that he and the congregation have examined the scripture passages that seem to prohibit LGBTQ relationships. He also stated that Jesus had crossed the social boundaries of His day by dining with prostitutes, tax collectors and other sinners. The respondent remarked that if their church is going to err in their understanding and application of Scripture, they would rather err on the side of including people, rather than excluding people.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent cited the national denomination Book of Order as the official polices of the denomination. The respondent also admitted that many member churches do not necessarily abide by all the policies in the Book of Order. The respondent went on to explain that their local congregation has a handbook with instructions and guidelines for performing weddings, including same sex weddings, in this local church. This handbook, and the church mission statement, identify the church officially as “affirming” and “inclusive” for LGBTQ persons.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent noted that prior to 2011, the congregation could have faced sanctions in the denominational Ecclesiastical Court for failing to comply with the Book of Order. But in
2011 the denomination changed the Book of Order. The denomination now allows churches to choose to be “affirming” and “inclusive” of LGBTQ persons in their churches. This includes ordination of LGBTQ persons into the clergy. The respondent also explained that prior to the Supreme Court ruling that legalized same sex marriage across the nation, the church would perform “Blessing Ceremonies” for same sex couples. This would be a church recognition of the union of the couple. But the church did not participate in any legal marriage documentation or filings until after the Supreme Court ruling.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent noted that the congregation lost some church members back in the 1990s because of the decision to be “affirming” and “inclusive” of LGBTQ person as an official church policy. When those members left the church, there was a financial decrease of offerings and contributions. He also noted a contrast from the negative financial impact in the past, to a positive financial impact in the present. The respondent attributes a good percentage of the current church growth to LGBTQ persons and those sympathetic to the LGBTQ community.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that the policies of the church were already in agreement with his own personal theology on LGBTQ issues. He had no disagreements to reconcile. He experienced no issues that needed to be “handled”.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent admitted that he was not aware of any time the local congregation had sought legal advice or counsel regarding LGBTQ issues.
“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that the “outcome” has been that inclusivity for LGBTQ persons has become part of the core identity of the church. He repeated that in 2011, the national denomination had lifted their previous prohibition against ordination of LGBTQ person. In 2015, the denomination expanded their definition of marriage to include and allow same sex marriage in their churches.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent began by advising others to continue to study the Bible on these matters. He went on to emphasize that our interpretations of the Bible are imperfect. He stated that he advises people to follow the model of Jesus in that Jesus welcomed people and invited people. The respondent emphasized that if He were to get scripture wrong, he wanted to get it wrong, on the side of including people rather than excluding people. The respondent even stated, “If I’m wrong, I’m wrong. That’s kind of how I landed on it.” The respondent added that he encourages churches to engage in dialogue regarding the subjects of LGBTQ persons and issues.

Practical Applications for Ministry

The respondent emphasized at least two practical applications. One was a risk. If a church congregation chooses to contradict denominational policies regarding LGBTQ issues, that church does risk the potential for legal conflicts with the denomination. That church may also risk financial implications from an initial loss of some membership.

The other practical application noted repeatedly by the respondent was that, if a church congregation is publicly “affirming” and “inclusive” of LGBTQ persons, that church will attract LGBTQ persons into their congregation. This may result in an overall increase in the congregation membership.
“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent answered that he had served as the pastor of his current church for about five and a half years. He had been serving in Christian ministry for about 37 years.

“How has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent stated that neither he nor his church had experienced any of these issues as of this time.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that his church has not had any requests for same sex weddings, or any similar events. His church has not encountered any of these LGBTQ issues.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent answered in the affirmative that the church has a definite, Biblical viewpoint on these issues. He went on to say that the Bible solely defines marriage as a union of a man and a woman. He then cited the following Bible passages: Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-9; Genesis 1:27-28; Genesis 2:20-24; and Ephesians 5:28-32. The respondent then cited passages that prohibit same sex marriage: Romans 1; 1 Corinthians 6; 1 Timothy 1; Leviticus chapters 18,19 and 20.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent explained that the denomination and the church congregation adhere to the Bible as their guide for daily faith and practice. The denomination has an official statement of fundamental truths. These truths regard the Bible as inspired by God and authoritative in daily life conduct. The respondent elaborated in saying that scripture describes homosexuality as a
behavior rather than an orientation. Homosexuality is not a matter of discrimination but a matter of morality.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent stated that to date, the church has experienced no legal conflicts over these issues. He attributed that to having policies in place regarding LGBTQ issues in order to avoid any problems or conflicts.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent repeated that his church had not experienced any LGBTQ issues as of this time. He again attributed that to having policies in place designed to avoid any problems or conflicts.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

Here the respondent wanted to make three points. First, if the church is concerned about the moral drift of our culture, it should faithfully preach the gospel. The gospel will change hearts and minds. Second, American Christians are blessed to live here. We should speak the Biblical truth about morality and speak it in love. We should vote and support candidates who support Biblical morality. Thirdly, when legal rulings contradict Biblical morality, we should maintain perspective and remember the words of Christ.

“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent acknowledged that the church did seek the legal counsel of their denomination when writing their local policies regarding LGBTQ issues. The church has not had to invoke any of their policies on these issues. They have not had to act on those policies yet.
“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent repeated that his church has had no incidents involving LGBTQ persons or issues.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent advises others to differentiate between LGBTQ persons who want to join churches while maintaining their sinful behaviors, and those who wish to sincerely repent and change. Nothing is impossible with God. LGBTQ persons who sincerely repent can receive salvation and be delivered from their previous lifestyles. Those LGBTQ persons who do not repent and change, will not receive eternal salvation or earthly healing. The respondent went on to caution others to not allow LGBTQ recruitment in their churches.

Practical Applications for Ministry

This respondent emphasized two major applications. First, he emphasized the authority of the Bible as the standard for moral decisions and daily conduct. His denomination assisted his church in writing policies that directly apply specific Biblical passages to church conduct and personal conduct regarding LGBTQ issues. Second, the respondent emphasized speaking the biblical truth of forgiveness and salvation to LGBTQ persons, in a dignified and loving manner. This can and should be done without compromising Biblical standards.

INTERVIEW 22

“How long have you served in your current ministry position?”

The respondent answered that he has served continuously in his current ministry for 27 years.
“Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?”

The respondent stated that his ministry is a mission ministry that specifically reaches out to LGBTQ persons who seek and request help in leaving their lifestyles. This ministry also helps people addicted to pornography and victims of sexual assault or abuse. In the last 6-7 years, this ministry has been increasingly involved in helping persons suffering from gender confusion. This ministry also helps family members who are struggling with LGBTQ issues in their own homes. Since 1992, this minister and this ministry have been operating full-time in helping people who suffer from all sorts of sexual confusion, or sexual sins.

“How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that this ministry was specifically founded to help people find lasting freedom from homosexuality. It was also founded as a response to some Christian churches who refused to help people involved in sexual sin, but only condemned them.

“Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?”

The respondent stated that the ministry was founded upon an orthodox view of Biblical sexuality. The ministry began as a mission outreach to offer the gospel of salvation to homosexuals. It then expanded to offer Biblical counseling and support groups homosexuals and others involved with various sexual sins. The ministry emphasizes mercy and forgiveness over condemnation. The goal is to help sinners find lasting freedom.

“Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?”

The respondent explained that in the 1990s, it became apparent to the ministry that it needed clear and explicit policies in their work. The policies are implemented in their counseling intake procedures, in their pastoral training manuals, and in their operational policies. The ministry also has an important policy about record keeping. These policies are designed to
protect the ministry from potential legal issues. They are also designed to maintain quantitative and statistical evidence of their long-term success rates.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?”

The respondent explained that their policies have been developed because of the potential for serious legal issues. The ministry policies are in place to protect the ministry from unscrupulous or deceptive persons that might try to destroy the ministry. The intake procedure for LGBTQ person requesting counseling include: Informed Consent about the Christian beliefs and expectations of the ministry; a Release of Liability form; an Intent to Not Harm the Ministry or Others; etc. Persons requesting counseling from this ministry sign and acknowledge these understandings and conditions.

“Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?”

The respondent acknowledged that there are many financial implications. The ministry is funded through donations and offerings from churches, businesses, and people who have been helped. The ministry does not charge persons for the ministry services. The ministry policies and insurance are in places to prevent financial dangers from lawsuits designed to destroy the ministry.

“How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that involvement in the support groups may require some expense to pay for books and materials. The ministry is also registered as a non-profit organization. This non-profit status allows donors to receive a tax credit for their contributions to the ministry.
“Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?”

The respondent stated that the ministry even has lawyers on its board of directors. They also have several lawyers that are part of an advisory team to the ministry. The ministry informs and consults these groups on a regular and continuous basis. The ministry has always sought legal advice on the forms, organizations, and procedure of the ministry.

“What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?”

The respondent explained that the outcome for this ministry is ongoing. They have an educational outreach to churches on how to minister to LGBTQ persons with the gospel. The ministry is also able to give a report on the effectiveness of their ministry. They have kept at least 25 years of client surveys and can statistically demonstrate at least a 70% rate of success with their clients reporting long-term freedom from their sexual sins. With thousands of people helped by their services, this ministry can also refute claims that homosexuality and transgenderism are innate and immutable. This ministry believes the gospel of Christ and the Word of God can permanently change lives.

“What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?”

The respondent was emphatic that two concepts must be embraced by pastors and churches. First, pastors and churches need to be courageous in standing for the truth of the word of God. Secondly, they must not allow the truth of Biblical orthodoxy to be manipulated or diluted to encourage or support sexual sin. Churches must absolutely reject the notion that people are “born that way” or “cannot be changed” from their sexual sins. The respondent summarized these points as strong faith and courage. The respondent also warned others to prepare for persecution if they choose to stand for the Lord with strong faith and courage.
Practical Applications for Ministry

The respondent had several practical applications for ministry. First it was to minister to LGBTQ persons with compassion. Persons who are seeking help need no condemnation. If they are voluntarily seeking help, they should not be turned away, turned down, or turned off. Such people need love, compassion, mercy and grace; just like any other sinners. Secondly, this respondent emphasized the necessity to never compromise on Biblical standards and the traditional, orthodox understanding of Biblical sexuality and moral standards. It is the gospel of Christ and the Word of God that brings lasting freedom and healing to people. Compromising or diluting that in any way compromises and dilutes the potential for salvation and healing. Thirdly, the respondent emphasized the need for prudence and caution when ministering to LGBTQ persons in today’s culture. He has learned over time to protect the ministry legally and financially from potentially destructive attacks from advocates and supporters of the LGBTQ lifestyles. The respondent has learned to expect opposition in both open and covert forms.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarized each individual interview and the answers of the respondents to each question. The respondents represent varied backgrounds and beliefs. They each gave answers that had similarities as well as differences from other respondents. In the next chapter, this writer will examine the diverse characteristics of the respondents and the common trends from the interview comments collectively.
Chapter Five

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine two major aspects of the research interviews. First, this chapter will examine the demographics and the background of the group of interview respondents. In the small pool of interview respondents, there is a wide representation of denominations, ministries, experiences, ethnicity, and geographic locations. Secondly, this chapter will examine and expose trends in the respondent’s answers to the interview questions. These trends, or the lack thereof, should lead to lessons learned, and conclusions appropriate to be shared with others.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

During the research interviews, the confidentiality of the interview respondents was carefully maintained. While doing so, relevant demographic data on each of the interview respondents was collected.

The respondents served in churches or ministries from 14 different states. Those states included: Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, California, Florida, Iowa, New York, Oklahoma and Alabama. All fifty states were not represented in this pool. But the demographics suggest it is safe to believe that these 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues are not solely the concern of one state, or one coast, or one region of the country.

The respondents served in churches or ministries from at least 7 different Christian denominations. Those denominations included: Non-denominational, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Church of Christ, and United Methodist. The entire spectrum of Christian denominations is not fully or equally represented here. But these represented
denominations are diverse enough of a sampling to show that the 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues are not solely the concern of one denomination or one broad category of denominations.

The respondents served in at least 8 different types of Christian ministries. Those ministries included: churches, active duty military ministry, Christian legal defense ministry, charities and social service ministries, Christian college, endorsing board for military chaplains, LGBTQ counseling ministry, rescue mission and homeless shelter ministries. The respondent sampling included private sector ministries and more than one government-related ministry. This sampling does not represent the entire spectrum of all Christian ministries in the country. But this sampling does represent a very diverse array of Christian ministries. The sample demonstrates that 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues are not solely the concern of churches or just one type of Christian ministry.

The size and scope of the churches and ministries represented in the interviews varies. They include churches and ministries that are rural, urban, small congregations, large congregations, multi-campus churches, multi-county ministries, multi-church conflicts, statewide impacts, churches that are part of nation-wide denominations, and churches that are part of international denominations.

The respondents also represent a sampling of human demographics. The respondents included both males and females. The respondents included Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics. The respondent sampling does not represent the entire breadth of human ethnicity and experience. But the sampling does suggest that 21st Century Sexual lifestyle issues are not solely the concern of one human ethnicity or one gender group.

The respondents also represent a diversity of viewpoints on 21st Century Sexual lifestyle issues. Most of the respondents were not in favor of supporting these sexual behaviors. At least
one had a neutral viewpoint required by his specific position. Another respondent represented the totally “inclusive” and “affirming” viewpoint that welcomes, supports, and even ordains LGBTQ persons. Some others were supportive of providing certain ministries regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.

The total number of 22 respondents and interviews is a relatively small sample. Yet within this small sample, the broad range of 21st Century sexual lifestyle conflicts with churches and ministries is well represented. The important learning point from this small sample is that conflicts involving these issues were not hard to find.

INTERVIEW RESPONSES, TRENDS AND/OR SIMILARITIES

How long have you served in your current ministry position?

The respondent’s years of experience in their respective churches or Christian ministries ranged from 3 years to 60 years. The cumulative experience of the 22 respondents totaled 529 years. The average years of ministry experience was 24.04 years. This writer believes it is safe to conclude that 21st Century sexual lifestyle issue conflicts are not limited to Christians who are relatively new to the ministry. Nor do they seem to be restricted to ministers who are older, retired, or near retirement. On the contrary, the older or retired ministers seemed to have less personal experience or encounters with these issues. The interviews would suggest that church conflicts with LGBTQ issues are more of a contemporary and increasing phenomenon.

Has your church/ministry faced any sexual lifestyle issues such as but not limited to: same-sex marriage, gender fluidity, gender identity, etc.?

On this question, 19 of the 22 respondents answered in the affirmative. They had either personally or in their ministry encountered some or all these 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues. 6 respondents indicated they had encountered these issues through young people asking questions and/or personally struggling with these issues of sexual orientation or gender identity.
At least 10 of the respondents indicated they had encountered same sex couples. At least 12 of the respondents had experienced direct complaints or legal conflicts over their policies regarding same sex marriage. At least one respondent was fired from their church for publicly taking a stand against homosexuality and against transgenderism. Another respondent reported in a later question that he was fired from his secular job because of his Biblical teachings against homosexuality in his church Sunday School class. At least one respondent reported the firing of a pastor for supporting a same sex couple and performing a sex wedding ceremony. At least seven respondents stated that their churches had either lost or gained members, and lost or gained financial support, based upon their public stance on LGBTQ issues. Among the small pool of just 22 respondents, numerous effects and impacts of 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues were represented in one way or another.

**How did these issues come to involve your church/ministry?**

At least 10 respondents replied that they encountered these issues directly because of their preaching, teaching and/or counseling ministries. People came to them with sincere questions about sexuality, sexual orientation, marriage, transgenderism, etc. Other people came to these respondents because they were struggling with these issues and requested Biblical Christian spiritual help with their struggles. Another eight respondents reported that they had been drawn into conflicts related to complaints against them by same sex couples or transgender persons. Some of these complaints led to sidewalk protests. Some of these complaints resulted in formal legal disputes, legal charges, and/or court cases. At least five of the respondents would say that their conflicts were initiated by themselves or on behalf of other ministries. These conflicts were those in which the Christian minister or ministry believed that they had been threatened and took legal action to protect themselves or their ministries. At least eight of the
respondents would say that their ministry actions were a direct reaction to the changing and progressive culture that promotes and encourages what the Bible calls sexual sins.

**Did you or your church/ministry have a Biblical viewpoint regarding these issues?**

All respondents answered this question in the affirmative. They all said that they themselves and/or their churches/ ministries had Biblical beliefs, doctrines and viewpoints about homosexuality, same sex marriage, transgenderism, gender identity, etc. It is noteworthy that all the respondents answered in the affirmative, but not all their answers were the quite the same.

Some respondents answered by citing Genesis chapters one and two as being the positive definitions by God of gender and marriage. Other respondents gave Romans chapter one as the negative view, the Biblical condemnation of homosexuality. That homosexuality and same sex marriages are sins. Many respondents emphasized their beliefs in the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible. Other respondents cited the authority of their church official doctrinal statements on issues of daily life. These would be such teachings as: Assembly of God Statement of Fundamental Truths and the AG statement on Homosexuality, Marriage, and Sexual Identity, United Methodist Church Book of Discipline, Southern Baptist Convention Nashville Statement, or the Roman Catholic Church Magisterium. One respondent admitted that they tried to argue against their church doctrine to resolve their specific conflict and help a gay couple adopt a child. Another respondent stated that although he had personal religious convictions regarding homosexuality and same sex marriage, those beliefs were not relevant to his duty position. His duty position was that of a neutral adviser. Therefore, he was not personally challenged to compromise his beliefs, but rather advised others how to accommodate similar beliefs within the law. A different respondent specifically noted that both progressive and conservative Christians equally state that they are following Biblical teachings on these issues. Progressive Christians
believe they are being loving when they affirm LGBT persons and their lifestyles. Conservative Christians believe they are being faithful to God and to the Bible by condemning sexual sins and calling LGBT persons to repentance and salvation.

**Did your church/ministry have any policies in place regarding such issues?**

Only five of the respondents replied in the negative to this question. Of the 17 respondents that stated they did have polices in regarding sexual lifestyle issues, At least five respondents explained that they added their policies either immediately following a conflict, or just prior to joining a legal conflict. These policy additions can then be considered reactive rather than proactive. Two respondents stated that their churches have no written policies in place at all. These respondents explained that they were aware of these sexual lifestyle issues but had not installed any written policies. They did preach on the subjects: homosexuality, same sex marriage, gender identity, etc. One respondent stated that their church published a set of core values regarding marriage, gender, sexuality, etc., instead of specific policies. One respondent explained that their church had an official policy of total inclusivity of LGBTQ persons for marriage, membership, service positions and clergy positions. Of all the respondents, only two stated that they now have policies specifically defining the use of gender appropriate bathrooms.

**Did these issues have any actual or potential legal implications?**

Only two of the respondents stated that these issues had no legal implications to themselves or their ministries. 14 respondents acknowledged that these issues present the potential for significant legal impacts on themselves and/or their ministries. The most often mentioned potential impacts were the possibility of lawsuits for refusing to perform same sex weddings. Five respondents expressed concern over the potential for new legal precedents that may restrict or diminish constitutional rights. These respondents spoke of the possibilities that
governments could begin to change the founders’ concept of religious liberty to a more restrictive concept of religious tolerance. From freedom of religion to freedom of worship. One respondent expressed concern for the potential of these legal issues to alter or limit the freedom of ministries in their hiring of employees. Eight respondents stated that their involvements with these sexual lifestyle issues had real and actual legal implications. One respondent was served with a subpoena. Two respondents were legally charged with crimes. They could have faced prison sentences if convicted of these alleged crimes. But the charges were eventually dismissed. Eight respondents had their conflicts resolved by either state or federal government authorities.

**Did these issues have any actual or potential financial implications?**

21 of the 22 respondents answered in the affirmative. They believe that their involvements with sexual lifestyle issues had either real or potential financial impacts. At least six respondents replied that the financial impacts were both real and potential. They meant that they had real financial consequences, but that those consequences could have been even worse than what they were. Six respondents stated that they or their ministries suffered real financial impacts directly attributable to conflicts over these sexual lifestyle issues. Those reported actual financial impacts included such expenses as: daily food and travel expenses for large groups of supporters at the court house; legal expenses of legal defense; loss of church members and church donations income; loss of employment and personal income. One respondent accounted for the firing of one pastor. One respondent was himself fired from his pastorate and lost his personal income. One respondent was fired from a secular position of career Government employment. 13 of the respondents recognized the potential financial impacts of lawsuits, court fines, or loss of church members and donations as significant risks when handling these issues. The most common financial risk cited by the respondents was the financial risk from lawsuits.
How did you handle these issues in your church/ministry?

The response to this question were diverse but there were some similarities amongst some respondents. Almost all respondents said that their handling of these issues was a multifaceted response involving multiple types of actions in combinations. At least 15 of the respondents began their answers with verbs while at least four respondents began their answers with adverbs or adverbial phrases. The adverbial responses included: “biblically”, “straight on”, “carefully”, and “head on with truth”.

Nine of the respondents answered the question by indicating they sought legal counsel and/or legal representation. At least three of those respondents, initiated lawsuits on behalf of themselves or their churches. Five respondents emphasized their use of pre-existing policies. Five respondents emphasized prayer or prayer and fasting prior to making any decisions. Six respondents emphasized ongoing discussion and communications with their congregations and/or their leadership team. Seven respondents emphasized trusting God, being faithful to God, standing for God, and seeking God’s will. At least four respondents stated that it was important that they handled the issues with peace or warm and positive peaceful attitudes.

Did you seek any legal advice or counsel?

The responses to this question were remarkably more uniform. 17 of the 22 respondents replied that they did seek legal advice or counsel. 16 of the respondents explained that their legal counsel either provide direct representation, or consulting advice on policies, or both. Nine of the respondents retained legal representation for formal legal actions. At least four of the respondents belong to national organizations that have constant access to attorneys or maintain law firms on retainer. Only three respondents stated that they never sought legal advice or
counsel. One of those respondents did say that his ministry sought insurance protection against these specific issues.

**What was the outcome of the issue/issues for your church/ministry?**

Seven of the 22 respondents had outcomes to their conflicts that can be considered as clear legal victories. Court cases were won and or criminal charges were dismissed, and subpoenas were rescinded. State laws were struck down or changed to exempt churches. Local ordinances were repealed. At least one respondent was able to suggest accommodations to satisfy both sides in their conflict. At least six respondents added that their ministries received outcomes that could be characterized as spiritual victories. Churches were encouraged. Helpful conversations were established with communities and individuals. Outreach ministries to LGBT communities continue. Churches and individuals grew stronger.

Other respondents experienced outcomes that could be considered legal and/or personal losses to themselves and/or their ministries. Two pastors were reported as fired by their church or denomination. They lost their employment and their personal income. One ministry was completely closed. They saw no possible compromise or negotiation between church doctrine and policies, and state laws and government contracts.

**What advice would you give to other churches/ministries, pastors/ministers?**

Responses to this question were multi-faceted. Respondents included numerous suggestions and recommendations in their replies. Words and phrases to the effect of remaining steadfast and resolved appeared in the answers at least 15 times. This included words and phrases such as: courageous; not afraid; faithful; no compromise; hold firm; trust God; stand firm; stand for your values; stand up; be committed; etc. References to the Bible were included in the answers to this question at least 13 times. These references included words or phrases such as:
Power of the Bible; Biblical truth; Biblical text; Scriptures; biblical policies; faithful to the Bible; biblical righteousness; etc. At least eight times, the answers of the respondents included mentions that can be considered warnings about an antibiblical culture and worldview. These references included words and phrases such as: Sinful world; worldly consequences; secularism; liberalism; social issues; etc. The respondents also advised others to demonstrate the love of God. References to love included words and phrases such as: Love people; try understanding and do not hate; be positive and loving; be forthright and honest; etc. Other recommendations by the respondents included: have Biblical policies; seek legal advice; and even take security precautions.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the interview responses, it is logical to draw some conclusions. Since the respondents have spoken from their personal experiences, it is safe to conclude that their experiences represent events and consequences that can happen again to other churches and ministries.

Any type of Christian church, any Christian denomination, and any Christian ministry at any geographic location in the United States today can encounter LGBTQ issues. Churches and ministries on the east coast, west coast, north, south, west, mid-west, etc., have experienced LGBTQ issues. Churches, Christian colleges, rescue missions, Christian law firms, Christian adoption agencies, military chaplains, have encountered LGBTQ issues. Roman Catholic churches and protestant churches, mainline denominations and evangelical denominations, denominational churches and independent churches, conservative churches and progressive churches, rural churches and urban churches, white churches and black churches and Hispanic
churches, etc., have encountered LGBTQ issues. Any church or ministry can experience LGBTQ issues.

Church and ministry involvements with LGBTQ issues can have either positive or negative impacts on the church or ministry. Churches and ministries, pastors and ministers, have found themselves in courtrooms or answering to various government agencies. Conservative and progressive pastors alike have been fired. Conservative and progressive churches alike have lost membership and gained membership. Some churches and ministers have been sued. Some have been subpoenaed. Some ministers have been charged with crimes and some have been subjected to criminal investigations. Some churches or ministries have lost public support and public donations. Some churches or ministries gained public support and public donations. Any number of possible outcomes can happen to a church or ministry involved with LGBTQ issues.

Different churches and ministries can interpret and apply the Bible very differently to LGBTQ issues. Not only can they interpret and apply the Bible differently, they often do so. Whether they are conservative and evangelical, or whether they are progressive and affirming, both sides claim Biblical authority for their positions.

Legal advice can be helpful or even necessary for churches and ministries when dealing with LGBTQ issues. Legal advice may be needed for drafting policies regarding LGBTQ issues. Such things as weddings, bathrooms, holding church offices and leadership positions, even church membership can become LGBTQ issues for churches. Housing, bathrooms, access to services, public accommodations, marriage enrichment programs, and even counseling or support groups can become LGBTQ issues for Christian ministries. Legal advice can be needed to understand the implications of denominational policies; local, state, and federal regulations
and legislation; contracts; employment expectations; individual civil rights; etc., regarding LGBTQ issues.

These conclusions are logical and based upon the real experiences of churches, ministries, pastors, and ministers who have become involved, voluntarily or involuntarily with LGBTQ issues. The trends, similarities, and conclusions drawn from the research interviews can serve to inform others in how they can deal with LGBTQ issues. What actions, and decisions can be made to prepare churches and ministries for LGBTQ issues? Those will be the considerations of the next and final chapter.
Chapter Six

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter will summarize the major points made throughout this thesis. It will discuss these results in relation to the literature, the interviews, and the legal cases integrated throughout the thesis. This chapter will discuss the practical applications of these results for churches and ministries. The chapter will conclude with some recommendations for continuing research on these issues.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The previous chapters have provided evidence of the wide ranging and comprehensive nature of the interaction of Christian churches and ministries with 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues. These results can be summarized by the following: Sometimes there is no fight at all; sometimes you start a fight; sometimes the fight comes looking for you.

Sometimes There is No Fight at All

Eight of the 22 interview respondents reported having never encountered any significant conflicts regarding LGBTQ issues. Their involvements were limited to conversations or discussions with persons or groups who disagreed with their decisions to oppose or support LGBTQ issues. Their policies may have placed them at risk for potential conflicts, but not such conflicts occurred yet. There may be many reasons for the lack of conflicts. It may involve peaceful desires and attitudes on behalf of the respondents. Romans 12:18 reminds Christians, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” It may be that some of the churches or ministries did not have very large or active LGBTQ communities in their area. It may also be that activists, either for or against LGBTQ issues, had chosen to engage other churches or ministries in their areas instead of them. Although activists can be found anywhere,
they cannot be everywhere all at the same time. In some cases, it may be that the pastor or minister neared retirement before LGBTQ issues became as prevalent as they are today.

**Sometimes You Start the Fight**

In 2016, two different churches in two different states, self-identified their actions as pre-emptive because they were opposing new or pending regulations or legislation. In both cases, they were successful in repealing or revoking the legislation as it applied to churches. In the case of Horizon Christian Fellowship in Massachusetts, the state reworded their anti-discrimination law and admitted in court that the law did not apply to churches. The plaintiff church then voluntarily dismissed its pre-emptive lawsuit.\(^\text{86}\) In the case of Fort Des Moines Church of Christ, a sermon by the pastor was introduced into evidence by the plaintiff church.\(^\text{87}\) The Iowa Civil Rights Commission agreed to amend the language of guidelines that included churches as public accommodations. The plaintiff church then agreed to drop its lawsuit.

At least five of the 22 interview respondents would agree that their actions initiated a conflict. One respondent pastor took a public stand against transgenderism. The local LGBTQ community protested his church. Shortly thereafter, the church fired the pastor. Another respondent told of an associate pastor in their ecclesiastical jurisdiction who performed a same-sex wedding, in violation of the denominational policies. That associate pastor was fired. One respondent reported that their church congregation made an intentional decision to publicly proclaim themselves an inclusive and affirming church for LGBTQ person. That decision was in violation of their denominational policies at the time. The pastor was admonished by the presbytery for the decision of that congregation, but no further disciplinary actions were taken.

\(^{86}\) Massachusetts Case 1:16-cv-12034-PBS Document 32 Filed 12/12/16 p 3.

\(^{87}\) Fort Des Moines Church of Christ, p1.
That denomination later changed its own policies to allow its churches to be inclusive and affirming at their own discretion. When churches or ministries, pastors or ministers initiate a conflict over LGBTQ issues, the outcomes have two possibilities. They may win or they may lose.

**Sometimes the Fight Comes Looking for You**

In each of these cases, the pastors or ministers were neither looking for nor expecting a legal fight. The legal fight, or conflict, came looking for them. Each of these cases is very similar to an episode in Daniel 6:4-17. Daniel worshipped God by opening his windows and praying towards Jerusalem three times each day. Daniel did this openly. Daniel was not only a believer he was a very successful and trusted government adviser to King Darius. Some of Daniel’s rival government advisers were successful in changing the laws regarding religious freedom. Daniel’s daily prayers to his God were now illegal. Daniel continues to pray exactly as he had always prayed. Now Daniel would be arrested for his continued prayers and service to his God. God did not change His standards. Daniel did not change his worship or his service to God. Daniel did not go looking for a legal fight. The laws around Daniel changed. Daniel was arrested. The legal fight came looking for Daniel.

In 2 Kings 6:8-18, Elisha was a very effective adviser to the king of Israel. This frustrated the king of Syria who was trying to defeat the king of Israel. The king of Syria was so frustrated that he sent a large group of troops to arrest Elisha and bring him to Syria. God chose to protect Elisha. But the point of this example is that Elisha was merely performing his normal ministry in Israel when Syrian troops arrived at his doorstep with orders to arrest Elisha. The fight came looking for him.
In Acts 9:1-2, we see Saul of Tarsus actively seeking and receiving authority to search for an arrest Christians for no other crime than being Christians. Saul was given arrest warrants for any Christians he might find. Then Saul proceeded to Damascus, arrest Christians, and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.” The Christians in Damascus were not seeking any fight with Saul or anyone else. Saul was actively involved in bringing the legal fight to the Christians. Saul was actively looking to arrest any Christians he could find. 1 Peter 5:8 states, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;”.

Pastor Hernan Castano, in his book, recounted being served with a subpoena during a worship service. The process server showed up at the Church during a service. Explained to the pastor why they were there and had the pastor sign for the subpoena. It turned out that Pastor Castano was one of five pastors in the area served with subpoenas because the Mayor disagreed with their sermons against homosexuality and transgenderism.88

Interview Respondent Three was performing his normal duties as a military Chaplain. A same sex couple came to him. They requested to participate in the marriage workshop retreat which he was scheduled to facilitate. The Chaplain explained to the same sex couple that he personally could not do so. He did offer them an alternate marriage workshop retreat scheduled to be facilitated by another Chaplain, one who would be allowed to minister to them as a married

---

88 Castano p 30.
couple. The same sex couple made a formal complaint against Respondent Three. The respondent was then charged with a crime under military law.

The fight came looking for Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran. He was made to answer for teaching in his Church Sunday School class that homosexuality is a sin. He was then fired from his secular job. The issue was totally unrelated to his job or his job performance.\textsuperscript{89}

Respondent twelve recounted how a state legislator had criminal child abuse charges filed against him. The respondent had counseled a confused pre-teen girl and told her that she was not a lesbian, nor would she become a lesbian. Those charges were later dismissed. But in 2012, California passed a bill outlawing sexual orientation change efforts. S. B. 1172, “This bill would provide a mental health provider. As defined, from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts, as defined, with a patient under 18 years of age.”\textsuperscript{90} Will the definition of mental health provider be extended to pastoral counselors? Will other states pass similar laws?

Respondent Eighteen supervised a church sponsored foster care and adoption agency. A gay couple came to her adoption agency and formally requested to adopt one of their children. The respondent explained that the doctrines and policies of the Church did not allow her to facilitate any adoption to any same sex couples. She suggested that the couple adopt a child from another agency with no such religious restrictions. The gay couple insisted that they would adopt a child from the respondent’s agency. The gay couple then filed a complaint against the adoption agency with the State Government for discrimination.

\textsuperscript{89} Erickson pp 6-9.

Sometimes it doesn’t matter whether you want to have a legal fight or not. Sometimes the fight comes looking for you. A prudent pastor or minister should assume that LGBTQ issues can and may come to their church or ministry. A prudent pastor or minister would also make spiritual and legal preparations for such a probability.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS IN RELATION TO THE LITERATURE

Both Sides Argue for Legal Rights

It is interesting that in the legal cases, both sides frame their arguments in terms of legal rights. The case of the Houston pastors whose sermons were subpoenaed by the Mayor is such an example.\(^91\) The Mayor of Houston and self-identified lesbian, Annise Parker, was supporting and had passed an Equal Rights Ordinance in the city of Houston. The ordinance was designed to give transgender persons equal access to the bathrooms of their choice throughout the city. The pastors protested the city ordinance and the subpoenas citing their religious freedom rights. Many government officials supported the pastors including one of the United States Commissioners on Civil Rights, Peter Kirsanow. In an official letter to Mayor Parker, the Commissioner stated, “Thus, the discovery request appears instead to be a blatant attempt to punish these pastors for expressing their religiously-based political views. It punishes them by subjecting them to the stress of a subpoena (though they are not parties to the litigation), …thus chilling future religiously-informed speech.”\(^92\)

In May of 2016, the governor of North Carolina filed suit against the United States Attorney General and the Department of Justice. North Carolina had recently passed their statewide Bathroom Bill. This bill required persons to use the bathroom facilities designated for

\(^91\) Castano pp 95-96.
\(^92\) Kirsanow p 3.
their biological sex at birth.\textsuperscript{93} The U.S. Department of Justice responded to this bill by sending letters describing the new state law as illegal discrimination against transgender persons. “Nonetheless, on May 4, 2016, the Department asserted in letters to Governor McCrory and Secretary Perry that state law as outlined above constitutes a ‘pattern or practice’ of discriminating against transgender state employees by denying such employees access to the bathroom or other changing facilities of their chosen gender identity.”\textsuperscript{94} DOJ was basing their complaint on a new interpretation of Title VII that assumed the law also intended to cover gender identity when it was written to cover sex and sexual orientation. Governor McCrory disputed this new understanding of Title VII as legally inaccurate and not supported by court precedents on Title VII. “…for their radical reinterpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which would prevent plaintiffs from protecting the bodily privacy rights of state employees while accommodating the needs of transgendered state employees.”\textsuperscript{95} The Governor further alleged that the DOJ had exceeded its authority. He asserted that the DOJ had circumvented Congress by its unilateral reinterpretation of the law. “The overwhelming weight of legal authority recognizes that transgender status is not a protected class under Title VII. If the United States desires a new protected class under Title VII, it must seek such action by the United States Congress.”\textsuperscript{96} The North Carolina complaint went even further to demonstrate that numerous courts had already refused to interpret Title VII to cover transgender persons. “Moreover, the overwhelming weight of authority has refused to expand Title VII protections to

\textsuperscript{93} McCrory, Patrick L., and Frank Perry vs United States of America. United States Department of Justice, Loretta Lynch and Vanita Gupta. United States District Court, Eastern Division of North Carolina, Western Division. Filed 05/09/16. p 4.

\textsuperscript{94} McCrory p 5.

\textsuperscript{95} McCrory p 1.

\textsuperscript{96} McCrory p 2.
transgender status absent Congressional action. Courts consistently find that Title VII does not protect transgender or transsexuality per se.”" Then the court complaint goes on to list numerous court decisions that support the North Carolina assertion that Title VII does not apply to transgender person. This case illustrates that the legal conflicts over 21st Century sexual lifestyle issues involve conflicts between state and federal governments. It also involves state and federal courts. The legal battlefield is vast in scope.

Interview respondent three found himself facing criminal charges and the possibility of a military court martial. A lesbian couple claimed that he had violated their legal rights and had discriminated against them by not personally serving them in a marriage retreat. Respondent three had followed the religious requirements of his denomination. A lengthy legal investigation also determined that he had followed all the applicable military laws and regulations. All charges against him were then dismissed.

The Idaho case of Donald and Evelyn Knapp is a similar case. The Knapps are a married couple. They are both also ordained ministers. They operate a small wedding chapel business. In 2014, they declined to facilitate and perform a wedding for a same-sex couple. The Knapps declined based upon their religious faith. On behalf of the same-sex couple, the city government threatened the Knapps with monetary fines of up to $1,000 per day and up to six months of jail time, if they did not perform the wedding. The couple quickly retained legal representation. The Knapps took their case to US District Court and were granted relief, based upon their religious rights.98

97 McCrory p p 6.
98 Donald Knapp, ibid.
Knowing legal rights is important knowledge for Christian churches or ministries, pastors or ministers. Jesus Himself stated in Matthew 22:21, “…Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s. and unto God the things which be God’s.” In order to obtain Roman protection from an angry mob, Paul appealed his case to Caesar Himself. As a Roman citizen, Paul availed himself of that legal right. In Acts 25:11 Paul stated, “…I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.”

Churches on Both Sides Cite the Bible

David Masci, with Pew Research, noted that Quakers, Unitarians, United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutherans, Episcopalians, and the Presbyterian Church USA, by 2014 had all allowed the sanctioning of same-sex marriages. Progressive Christians self-identify as inclusive and affirming of the LGBTQ community, and claim they are following the Bible. They also admit they interpret the Bible differently from conservative and evangelical Christians.

There exists an entire denomination founded upon the doctrine of sexual freedom. The Metropolitan Community Churches is a denomination with headquarters in Canada, but it has many member churches in the United States. Part of the MCC Statement of Faith says, “We are people on a journey, learning to live into our spirituality, while affirming our bodies, our genders, our sexualities.” The MCC denomination was founded by the Reverend Troy D. Perry. He struggled with homosexuality. He was eventually defrocked as a Pentecostal

---

99 Masci, ibid.

clergyman. In 1968 he founded the Metropolitan Community Churches in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{101} The MCC was built on inclusivity. “We excluded no one. We welcomed everyone. We still do. Heterosexuals came to our first services. They do today. At least 20\% of our congregation is heterosexual. Their involvement is as great as anyone’s.”\textsuperscript{102} The founding congregation and the entire denomination is built upon homosexuality, transgenderism, etc.

Bryce Edward Hughes clues his readers to his beliefs with the title of his dissertation, “Who Am I to Judge?”. Hughes sees the Jesuit approach of welcoming the LGBT community and affirming them as the way to go. “Jesuit colleges and universities are offering an example to other Catholic and religiously affiliated institutions new ways to welcome the LGBT community on campus.”\textsuperscript{103}

Kirstin Sullivan’s research seems to indicate that familiarity with gay persons makes it easier for people to accept same-sex marriage. She believes this can be true even despite religious beliefs. “I found that increased familiarity does increase acceptability of same-sex marriage. I also found that evangelical religiosity and/or authoritarianism do lead to lower levels of acceptance. However, when a respondent knew someone who is gay, a higher level of religiosity or authoritarianism didn’t appear to affect acceptability.”\textsuperscript{104} Putting a face on an issue makes it more than academic. It makes it more than just a matter of doctrine to many people.


Eleanor Weiss goes so far as to say that orthodox Christians have “hijacked the Bible” from its true message and meaning on marriage. “Weighed against reliable scholarship and Scripture itself, a careful analysis of the Religious Right’s arguments against homosexuality and gay marriage will quickly prove it has hijacked the Bible in order to undermine an important civil right.”105 Part of Weiss’s hermeneutic principles are assumptions that many relevant Bible passages for over 2,000 years have possibly been translated or interpreted incorrectly. “In addition to ascertaining the literal ‘plain meaning’ of each controversial verse, this thesis will examine context to uncover the original purpose of each passage. Perhaps a verse has not been mistranslated but rather misunderstood over time.”106 In one such passage, Weiss refutes Jesus Himself and His teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:4-6, where Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24. Though Jesus is quoting from an account of the Creation, Weiss rejects the notion that since God created the relationship between Adam and Eve, that it was ideal. Weiss also rejects the conclusion that the union of Adam and Eve was a marriage, despite the citation by Jesus in His answer to a question about marriage and divorce. “There are a few flaws worth noting in this viewpoint. First, it presumes Adam and Eve’s union not only is but also exemplifies marriage. This perspective also relies on the assumption that because God fosters a relationship between the first man and woman, monogamy is ideal.”107 Some interesting assumptions are made by Weiss. Assumptions such as these allow for the exploration of more contemporary Biblical interpretations without any new manuscripts or other textual evidence.

106 Weiss, p 6.
107 Weiss, p 10.
Pastor Adam Hamilton says, “The Bible informs my relationship with my wife, and it should inform how two homosexuals share their life and love. And just as heterosexuals are called to fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness as the highest ideals, so too are homosexual Christians called to such ideals.” While Hamilton spends the very first chapter of his book explaining how the Bible is not to be used literally as an owner’s manual for human life, Lutzer titles his second chapter, “We Must Consult the Designer’s Manual”. Lutzer goes on to explain the Christian historical and orthodox Biblical interpretations regarding gender, marriage and sexuality. Lutzer insists, “To affirm same-sex marriages is to take one more step to cut sex off from its God blessed intention of mirroring plurality and unity. In short, to affirm same-sex marriages is to toss aside the Owners’ Manual, intent on finding our own way, at any cost.” Lutzer adheres to the traditional literary and grammatical-syntactical interpretations of Scripture.

Dr. Dan Olinger, the Chair of the Bible Division of the Bob Jones University School of Religion, observed the progressive’s tendency towards eisegesis as early as the 1980s. He wrote, “Since the homosexual movement rejects the authority of Scripture, it is no surprise that it eisegetes, or reads it own perverse ‘theology’ into, those biblical passages which condemn homosexuality.” Dr. Olinger never makes any conclusions that are a stretch to reach. He goes further and gives a specific example. “Homosexual apologists say that Sodom and Gomorrah

---

108 Hamilton p 276.
109 Hamilton pp 7-10.
110 Lutzer p 45.
111 Lutzer p 56.
were destroyed not for homosexuality but for inhospitality to their angelic visitors (Genesis 19). They do not mention, however, that God had determined to destroy the city before the angels even went there (18:20).”

Evangelical Christian churches and denominations are holding fast to the historical and orthodox Biblical beliefs. Michael Brown is the director of FIRE School of Ministry and of the Coalition of Conscience. He has written some very straightforward Biblical interpretations. He believes that the Bible forbids homosexual practice. He also believes that the gospel brings good news to homosexual men and women. He believes that homosexuals seeking Christ should focus on Christ and not their sexual orientation. Other denominations and groups seem to be adjusting to the changing culture in the country.

Christian Brugger gives a concise summary of the legal, psychological and medical issues of transgenderism in his article, “The New Pangenderism”. He concludes his article with some orthodox Roman Catholic beliefs. “St. Paul admonishes the church in Corinth to shun immorality in the body because our bodies – not just our souls – are temples of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:18-19). And Genesis 1 teaches that human persons proceed from the creative will of God as male and female.”

Stephen Black leads a Christian ministry to that reaches out to LGBTQ persons with counseling and support groups. This ministry offers LGBTQ persons the Christian gospel of salvation and freedom from besetting sexual sins. Stephen Black is a self-identified, freed and

---

113 Olingar, p 5.


former homosexual. He describes the apparent Christian dichotomy and contrasts the two types of Biblical interpretations regarding LGBTQ issues. “Several church leaders embrace the emergent, perverse grace message of ‘gay Christianity’ and present a ‘gay Gospel’. Their teachings are not based upon the sound doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ or New Testament biblical instruction. Instead, they choose to embrace a false social gospel of a more palatable feel-good god and a man-made theology while they do good things under the banner of Christianity.”

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

The first implication of the results is that agreement and compromise on these issues is probably not a realistic expectation. A compromise of legal rights and religious freedoms are seen by some as the path to avert future conflicts. Others believe no such compromise is possible or even desired. Gend and Wilson are Australians, but they put forth a compromise solution for both Australia and the United States. They propose civil unions be kept separate from religious wedding ceremonies and they be regarded as totally different things altogether. “In this scenario all couples would be treated equally for public purposes, but not for private religious ones.” They believe this should satisfy LGBTQ advocates and devout Christians alike. Robin Wilson believes that some legal compromises have been made. Writing prior to the Obergefell decision, Wilson also believes reasonable compromises can be made in the future. But Wilson does mention a concern that threatens compromise. “But bargains only go forward when both sides believe they will endure. However, some now advance a claim that strikes at the heart of the

---

116 Black pp 124-125.

117 Van Gend, ibid.
ability to reach compromise: any bargain will be accepted ‘temporarily ...[only to] be eroded and eventually removed.’”\textsuperscript{118}

Gabriele Kuby, a devout Roman Catholic, believes that no such compromise can be made by the Catholic Church to recognize same-sex marriages. “Throughout history, the magisterium of the Catholic Church has, in keeping with the Holy Scripture, taught that ‘Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered...They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved (Catechism of the Catholic, 2357).”\textsuperscript{119} Kuby sees Bible-believing Christianity and the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century sexual revolution as entities which are diametrically opposed. “The ideology of our era’s sexual revolution is targeting the very core of Christian belief, the question ‘What is man?’ Because ideologues of the sexual revolution deny God, human beings are degraded to a pure product of evolution who do not significantly differ from animals and are consequently delivered to manipulation by their own hand.”\textsuperscript{120}

Ryan T. Anderson believes that transgender advocates have no interest in compromise with anyone or for any reason. He contends that their ideology demands complete agreement and surrender by all who disagree with them. They can tolerate no dissent. “Trans ideologues ignore contrary evidence and competing interests; they disparage alternative practices; and they aim to muffle skeptical voices and shut down any disagreement.”\textsuperscript{121} Transgender advocates do not seem interested at all in compromise with Biblical Christians. As further evidence of this, Anderson

---

\textsuperscript{118} Wilson, Robin Fretwell. “BARGAINING FOR CIVIL RIGHTS: KESSONS FROM MRS. MURPHY FOR SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND LGBT RIGHTS.” Boston University Law Review 95, no. 3 (05, 2015): 951-93, p 954.

\textsuperscript{119} Kuby p 189.

\textsuperscript{120} Kuby p184.

\textsuperscript{121} Anderson, p 48.
also contends that transgender advocates even work to silence disagreement from medical experts, and even transgender persons themselves. “Activists claim to represent the best interests of all those with discordant gender identities, insisting that their policies and treatment protocols are the only ethical ones, and that other approaches lead to depression and suicide…We seldom hear the voices of people who discovered that hormones and surgery were not the answer but often the source of new problems.”

Anderson insists that transgender advocates seek to severely punish people who disagree with them. They push for politicians and government officials to use legal force to impose their agenda on others. “They see unlawful ‘discrimination’ in actions that do not treat people in accordance with their self-professed gender identity when it comes to sex-specific facilities they wish to use, the medical procedures they desire- such as removing a healthy uterus from a woman who wants to be a man – or the pronouns they want others to use in referring to them, which might be ‘ze’ or ‘ir’. In New York City, you can now be fined up to a quarter million dollars for intentionally ‘misgendering’ someone by using pronouns other than those the person prefers.”

Todd Starnes is of the opinion that LGBTQ advocates are not interested compromise. He believes they desire unconditional surrender by, and complete victory over Biblical Christianity. “I believe we are just a few years away from American pastors being brought up on charges of hate speech against homosexuals. I believe we will see attempts made to shut down churches and remove Bibles from public libraries – all because of what the Scriptures teach about homosexuality.”

Although many Americans may prefer tolerance and peaceful coexistence,
Starnes believes LGBTQ advocates have a much different agenda. “But the militant gay rights community believes otherwise. They not only expect you to accept their lifestyle, but they also want you to affirm it. They want your children exposed to it in their public classrooms. They want private business owners to endorse their court-sanctioned ‘marriages’. And woe be to any person who dares object.”

Erickson and Blankschaen titled their book “You Will Be Made to Care”. That should be a hint to readers that they believe compromise or at least apathy concerning LGBTQ advocates is not possible. “What we are finding out from the controversy over legislation to protect religious freedom is this: you will be made to care. There will be no middle ground. Many people would like to find middle ground. Many churches would like to find middle ground. But there will be none, because homosexuals and their culture war warriors on the Left are unwilling to have a middle ground.” The two authors go further and explain that it won’t matter how loving or gracious Christians may be. The LGBTQ advocates will still oppose the doctrines of the Bible concerning human sexuality. “I am not saying pastors and churches should rant, rave, and be rude. Jesus told us we are blessed when we are reviled for His name’s sake, not because we’re jerks. But understand that no matter how nice you appear, no matter how tolerant you sound, darkness hates the light. As you seek to live out the truth in love, evil will not surrender gracefully.”

The second implication of the results is that the Christian faith requires love and evangelism for LGBTQ persons. Olinger expresses a loving interpretation that because

125 Starnes, p 64.
126 Erickson, pp252-253.
127 Erickson, p 240.
homosexuality is sin, Christians are therefore obligated to reach out to homosexuals. He begins with something short, then he elaborates. “Homosexuality is sin. But we need to remember that homosexuality is like any other sin: it can be confessed and forsaken, and the church is responsible to bring that message of salvation to the homosexual.”128

Stephen Black has extensive personal life experience on both sides of the 21st Century sexual revolution. He has both personally lived and extensively studies the issues of sexual sins for decades. Black has also ministered to thousands of people and helped them achieve freedom from their besetting sexual sins, through the gospel of Jesus Christ. His ministry of counseling and support groups has a documented success rate by his clients themselves, of over 70%.129

Black’s opinion is that the LGBTQ advocates are deceptive and determined. They have no interest in compromising with Biblical Christianity. “Homosexual activism in psychology has legitimized more orientations. God gives us his only true intent for human sexuality. That is heterosexuality, a term also given to us by modern psychology. We are biologically and innately heterosexual by design.”130

Black goes further in his indictment of modern psychology to include its advocacy for transgenderism. “Modern psychology, at its very worst, gives us sexual orientation, as a way to legitimize sinful behavior. Under this diabolical plot, the orientation message can culminate the potential for mutilation of the body as we see in gender reassignment surgery. Of course, surgery never changes anyone’s gender. This evil is very deceptive and tormenting for people.”131

128 Olinger, p 10.
129 Black, p 265.
130 Black, p 135.
131 Black, p135.
The third implication of the results is that scientific and medical knowledge will not settle the debates. One of the preeminent psychiatrists in the country is Dr. Paul McHugh, a former psychiatrist-in-chief of Johns Hopkins Hospital. Dr. McHugh has been working in the field of transgenderism, gender dysphoria, and sex reassignment since the early 1970s. He is convinced that transgender advocates intentionally ignore scientific truth. “A practice that appears to give people what they want – and what some of them are prepared to clamor for – turns out to be difficult to combat with ordinary professional experience and wisdom. Even controlled trials or careful follow-up studies to ensure that the practice itself is not damaging are often resisted and the results rejected.”¹³² The inescapable practical truth is that the Christian conflicts in the 21st Century sexual revolution will continue to play out in two arenas; public opinion and government.

The fourth implication of the results is that both sides will seek to influence public opinion. The arena of public opinion will include subsets such as local church congregations, national and international church denominations, local communities, broadcast media, entertainment media, and social media. LGBTQ advocates and churches and ministries alike, will work hard to convince people they are correct in their views and convictions. Erica Cizek did study of LGBT advocacy and public outreach. She described LGBT activism as a two-pronged approach. “In the case of LGBT activism, the target of activist efforts includes supporting publics, which consist of allied individuals and organizations that support LGBT issues and communities. Secondly, the focus of efforts for LGBT activists include conservative institutions and organizations that oppose LGBT equality (e.g., the Tea Party, the Religious

Right).“ Just like churches, the LGBTQ community has their own form of evangelism, at least for public opinion and societal change.

Ashley Wiktorek explains that LGBT advocates have clear goals and a clear media strategy. “Since the homosexual community has the goal of total acceptance, they also want society to respond as preferring the homosexual movement and ideology. One way the Gay Rights movement can help try to achieve this response to meet their objective is through the use of media.” Wiktorek analyzed articles and coverage of LGBT issues. Typical of the coverage was an article from MSNBC. “The article selected by the researcher to be analyzed came from MSNBC and had the topic of religious liberty. The MSNBC article titled ‘5 ways the religious right is wrong again’, was written by Emma Margolin (2014a) and published on July 30, 2014 on MSNBC’s website.” Wiktorek further explored the article to show how the language aligned with the public opinion goal of LGBT advocates. “The conclusion of the article focuses on the general topic of the debate of religious liberty and the “national acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals” (Margolin, 2014a, sec. 5) and continues with discussing transgender individual’s roles in that they are also obtaining more acceptance as well.” This is one example of carefully crafted media messages intended to show and grow support for the LGBT community.

Local congregations will preach sermons on the Bible and LGBTQ issues. Advocates for both sides will try to organize and motivate public support for their positions. Those on both

---


135 Wiktorek, p 50.

136 Wiktorek, p 51.
sides who are media savvy will work to get their messages out to the public. Public support, political support, and prayer support will be requested.

The fifth and most troubling implication of the results is that the force of governments and laws will continue to be exerted on these issues. The arena of government will include subsets such as individual politicians and election issues; local, state, and federal government agencies; local, state, and federal legislative bodies; local, state, and federal courts. The sheer volume of lawsuits, legal proceedings, legislation, and court rulings is self-evident. The Obergfell decision by the US Supreme Court looms very large and decisive. The federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) has already been overturned in the Supreme Court. Erickson and Blankschaen quote Justice Antonin Scalia in his dissent in the Windsor case, “Lest you think evil is too strong of a word to describe the present wave of attacks on our freedom of conscience, consider this: if you believe, as all of humanity has done throughout history, that marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman, the Supreme Court has declared you to be, according to Justice Antonin Scalia, ’an enemy of the human race’.”

In 2008, writing for the Liberty Law Review, Matthew Staver saw the issue of transgenderism as equally chaotic to our legal system and to the institution of marriage. “The legal status of postoperative transsexuals for purposes of marriage is an important issue for both marriage and sex-based classifications. If sex can be changed like clothes, then law defining marriage or granting protected status on account of sex will become meaningless.” The federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and state RFRAs will be tested concerning religious freedom and LGBTQ issues. Douglas NeJaime

137 Obergfell, ibid.
138 Erickson, p 22.
believes laws that protect religious liberty are a threat to the LGBTQ community. He believes that laws protecting a religious view of marriage that is disapproving of LGBTQ relationships is contrary to the legal progress already made by the LGBTQ community. “By permitting religious organizations, as well as some employers, property owners, and small businesses, to discriminate against same-sex couples in situations far removed from marriage itself, the ‘marriage conscience protection’ would threaten substantial progress made in antidiscrimination law.”

NeJaime does not consider religious liberty protections or “marriage conscience protection” to be a compromise with religious people. He considers religious liberty protections to be a retreat from LGBTQ rights and LGBTQ protections. Writing in 2012, NeJaime believed that LGBTQ equality protection laws still had a long way to go and much more work to accomplish. He believed that religious liberty protections will hinder the LGBTQ community from achieving their legal goals. “Worse yet, using the term ‘marriage conscience protection’ to label instances of discrimination against same-sex relationships would hide an increasing amount of sexual orientation discrimination that antidiscrimination law is just beginning to adequately address.”

Legal challenges to religious liberty are far from over. The trend has been to have government agencies or even the courts to redefine or reinterpret laws. That seems to be faster and/or easier than to persuade voters and legislatures to repeal old laws or to pass new ones.

Christians may find themselves in violation of new or changing laws. If that happens, pastors or ministers, churches or ministries may be forced to choose whom they obey. The AACC Code of Ethics supplies guidance for its members for just such a scenario. “Christian

---


141 NeJaime, p 1170.
counselors are bound to honor the law in every way possible. However, when the law is in direct opposition to God, and if unable to harmonize the mandates of Scripture and the law, counselors support their right to elect nonadherence to those laws that offend the way of Christ.”142 The AACC Code of Ethics then goes on to give specific guidance on efforts to resolve legal conflicts if at all possible.

Christians may find themselves legally in the same position as Peter and the apostles in Acts chapter 5. They had been ordered by the local legal authorities to cease from preaching in the name of Jesus. They went right back to preaching in public the same as before. In verse 28, the local legal authority reminded them that they had been legally ordered to stop preaching his doctrine. In verse 29, Peter replied, “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” Church history may repeat itself.

As more and more churches and ministries, pastors and ministers find themselves in conflicts with the unsaved world and even with other churches they should remember Ephesians 6:12. Remembering Ephesians 6:12 will caution them against the temptation to be harsh with their human opposition and focus instead on their real enemy. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Satan is our real enemy. Other people are not our enemies. They are our ministry.

RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

We have not heard the last of churches and ministries encountering issues with the 21st Century sexual revolution. Continuing research in this area can be beneficial for churches and ministries in their continuing interactions with the LGBTQ community and their advocates.

Same-sex marriage is the law of the land. Transgenderism is gaining legal and public support. Can support to legalize other sexual behaviors be over the horizon? In 2014, R.R. Reno wrote about a recommendation in Germany to legalize incest. “The German Ethics Council has recommended the decriminalization of incest between a brother and sister. The recommendation came after German and E.U. courts rejected various lawsuits from a Leipzig couple claiming that anti-incest laws violate their human rights.”¹⁴³ A couple claimed that they had a human right to incest and argued for that right in a court of law.

Mainline protestant denominations continue to struggle and reexamine their doctrinal positions on LGBTQ issues. The worldwide Anglican Church faces pressure from the UK and the US to be even more affirming of LGBTQ persons than it already is. The Anglicans in Africa continue to hold out for an orthodox Biblical doctrine. This year the worldwide United Methodist Church voted to maintain a traditional and orthodox Biblical position for the denomination officially. US Methodist were disappointed. The changing or unchanging positions of many denominations will be worthy of notice.

Constitutional lawyers could shed light on future trends and upcoming court issues. It would be interesting to examine and analyze how these issues influence voters and candidates in upcoming local, state, and national elections. It will be interesting to continue to examine the trends for doctrinal changes, if any, among national and international Christian church denominations. Another interesting study would be to quantitatively measure the amount of legacy media exposure and the type of coverage given to LGBTQ and Biblical Christian stories and characters over time, as they relate to human sexuality. The same type of study could also be done for social media. Media does not merely reflect public opinion. It is often used to shape

public opinion. This legal and religious collision of LGBTQ lifestyle freedoms versus orthodox biblical, Christianity will not be ending anytime soon. It will instead increase and demand greater attention.

CONCLUSION

Human sexuality in the 21st Century has become the divisive and defining theological issue of our time. Is the Bible authoritative or suggestive? Is the meaning of Scripture passages inspired and immutable, or is it inspiring and malleable? Are pastors and ministers to use the hermeneutics of eisegesis or exegesis? Is understanding the Bible supposed to change how people live or is how people live supposed to change our understanding of the Bible? Are churches and ministries supposed to change the world one soul at a time, or are culture and society supposed to change the church?

American constitutional religious liberties are in direct conflict with new and legal sexual liberties. Pastors, ministers, churches and ministries who wish to support and affirm LGBTQ lifestyles should proceed with caution. They may encounter doctrinal conflicts within their ecclesiastical organizations or within their own local congregation. They should stay informed on changing laws at federal, state, and local levels. They should seek legal advice. They may encounter legal or financial implications for their decisions to be affirming and inclusive.

Pastors, ministers, churches and ministries who choose to publicly oppose LGBTQ sexual lifestyles and insist on their constitutional religious liberties, should also proceed with caution. They may also encounter doctrinal conflicts within their ecclesiastical organizations or within their own local congregation. They should also stay informed on changing laws at federal, state, and local levels. They should seek legal advice. The likelihood is growing that they may
also encounter legal or financial implications for their decisions to oppose LGBTQ lifestyles and behaviors.

There may be some pastors and ministers, churches and ministries who may believe they can ignore the issues of the 21st Century revolution. They may believe they can remain completely neutral and thus avoid any such conflicts. Maybe there are some who just think it won’t ever happen to them. Maybe it will and maybe it won’t. But for those who think that such conflicts just can’t happen to them, as has been shown in this study, they should think again.

Perhaps something as simple as a checklist would be helpful to suggest prudent preparations for the possibility of encountering LGBTQ issues. This checklist may not cover every possible preparation. Every encounter will be different and require different actions. But it is much easier to adjust a plan or adjust preparations than it is to adjust from nothing.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Fort Des Moines Church of Christ v. Jackson., United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa Central Division, filed October 14, 2016.


H.B. 36 State of Ohio 132d General Assembly Regular Session 2017-1018


Kelvin J. Cochran v. City of Atlanta, Georgia and Mayor Kasim Reed, United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division. Filed 02/18/2015.


Massachusetts Case 1:16-cv-12034-PBS Document 32 Filed 12/12/16 Page 3 of 5.

Matthew Barrett vs. Fontbonne Academy. Norfolk Superior Court, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, December 1, 2015.

Metropolitan Community Churches, History of MCC. Fall 2004.

Metropolitan Community Churches, MCC Statement of Faith, Adopted 5 July 2016.


Patrick L. McCrory and Frank Perry vs United States of America, United States Department of Justice, Lorette Lynch and Vanita Gupta. United States District Court, Eastern Division of North Carolina, Western Division. Filed 05/09/16.

Oberfell v Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health Et Al. Supreme Court of the United States. October Term 2014.


Reno, R R. WHILE WE'RE AT IT: A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE A ... Reno, R R First Things; Dec 2014; 248; ProQuest Central pg. 68. Accessed 10 May 2016.


Subpoena to Pastor Steve Riggle to Produce Documents or Tangible Evidence. District Court of Harris County, Texas 152d Judicial District. Jared Woodfill; Steven F. Hotze; F. N. Williams, Sr.; and Max Miller Plaintiffs, v. Annise D. Parker, Mayor; Anna Russell, City Secretary; and City of Houston Defendants. September 10, 2014.


Walsh vs. Georgia Department of Public Health, District of Northern Georgia. Filed 20 April 2016.


APPENDIX A

Checklist of Preparations for LGBTQ Issues

- Do I know my own doctrine and beliefs?
- Can I clearly explain my beliefs to others?
- Who are my congregation/ministry leaders, and have I discussed these issues with them?
- Do I thoroughly understand my denomination’s position on these issues?
- Have I communicated with my denomination/higher headquarters on these issues?
- Who is my attorney/legal advisor, and have I discussed these issues with them?
- Who is my CPA, and have I discussed these issues with them?
- Who is my insurance agent, and have I discussed these issues with them?
- Who are my Treasurer and financial advisors, and have I discussed these issues with them?
- What are the media outlets available to me, and can I lovingly communicate my position by using them?
- Who are the other Christian and community allies that I might ask for spiritual and public support?
- Who is my spiritual mentor, and have I discussed these issues with them?
- Have I discussed these issues with my spouse?
- Have I prayed, fasted, studied the Bible, and sought God’s will on these issues?
May 2, 2016

Samuel H. Murray, Sr. IRB Approval 2492.050216: Sexual Lifestyle Issues Facing Churches and Ministers

Dear Sam,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School
LIBERTY

1971 UNIVERSITY BLVD. LYNCHBURG, VA. 24515 IRB@LIBERTY.EDU FAX (434) 522-0506
WWW.LIBERTY.EDU