



FOCUS

- D. Hartig

SCOTUS DOMA Prop 8

What opportunities the June 26 decisions of the Supreme Court have set in front of the American Church! For those who mourn those decisions, here are some thoughts:

Some years ago, I engaged in conversation with a lesbian friend who was consumed by an intense struggle to forgive someone who had done her deep and extended harm. After my conversation with my friend, I was hit with the thought, "There are people in the Church who would determine her 'problem' to be that she is a lesbian, and she needs to 'fix' that. And yet God is clearly dealing with her about forgiveness." His heart, as expressed through everything she was saying and showing, was for her to step into a place of freedom from the bitterness and anger and pain that unforgiveness continued crippling her with. And that had nothing to do with her being a lesbian.

If we are going to maintain any humility, we have to acknowledge that there have been times, more than a few, in the history of the Church when we, as individuals and in groups, have directed our energy and efforts toward things that don't look all that much like Jesus. We've been guilty of making assumptions, of making judgments out of those assumptions, and of inflicting hurt on individuals and groups because of those assumptions. We've been guilty of territorialism, of basing our 'rightness' on how 'wrong' we can make someone else out to be, of identifying

**What opportunities the June 26
Supreme Court decisions have set
in front of the American Church!**



'enemies' from whom we then feel justified in withholding love.

And while we do have this history of getting things horribly wrong, we also have in our history times when we've embraced the life of Christ so fully that His life overflowed to others, and they could experience through us healing, and hope, and community, and love, and peace, and courage, and those things that do so much look like Jesus.

So now we have, in these moments of history, another opportunity. How do we respond to the Supreme Court's decisions?

I would like to suggest that what has been happening in parts of the American Church during the debate on gay marriage has been much like what I described regarding my friend. Many of us have acted as if this is top of God's list of priorities, and in doing so have not heard the hearts of those most deeply impacted. We have an opportunity now to shift our focus. And what might that look like?

Have you sat down with a person who is LGBT and really listened to why this matters so much to them? Have you had dinner with a gay Christian, and shared about your mutual love for the Lord? Have you been there for your neighbor, gay or straight, who is going through a difficult time? Have you assessed ways in which you, yourself, have made assumptions? Have you gone to those impacted by your assumptions and given them the opportunity to tell you their experiences and motivations? Would they describe what they experience from you as "love"?

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

- Genesis 1:2



“When all that’s left is wonder and no need to understand, well this cool, clear water running, will be all that I am”

- B. Raitt

Designed to Remind

- G. Gough

Sometimes we believe one step better than hate is tolerance, but I'd like to suggest that one's dignity can get tossed aside by another that simply tolerates them.

Recently, Alan Chambers, the former president of Exodus International, a Christian, ex-gay organization that has recently closed its doors, said a few things in the form of an apology to LGBT persons. For some time, various groups insisted that Exodus was not treating LGBT people with dignity. This always touched me personally, as an LGBT person, because I also felt that experience several times over the years. We may not always admit it, but it matters that others treat you with dignity.

In my experience, many LGBT people have endured a dynamic of continued attack on their dignity and while it's hard to express precisely, it is ever so oppressive. Finding its way, winding into the soul, creating breakdown, breakup and even complete divorce from communities and people they held, and may still hold, dearly.

In his apology, Alan created

opportunity for people to allow themselves to treat LGBT persons with dignity and with a strong sense that LGBT people matter.

In light of various perspectives and beliefs on Christian faith and sexuality, here a several questions you can ask yourself:

We may not always admit it, but it matters that others treat you with dignity.

- What does your space for creating dignity for the LGBT person look like?
- What answers might you get if you were to honestly ask LGBT people about space you create to show them they matter greatly?
- How have you fostered a sense of dignity for LGBT people in your life?
- What is your church community doing to help foster an environment in which the LGBT person can feel a sense of dignity?

For those who want things to be better.....

If you're reading this, you may have some interest in improving the conversation between the LGBT and Christian communities. In light of this interest, we'd like to ask you to contribute financially to Bridge Evidence Group's efforts to improve this conversation. Much of our work is dependent on contributions. We are able to do more or less according to the financial support we receive. If you would like to join in this effort, you can make contributions securely, online via Paypal, from our website.

Second Quarter 2013 Financial Statement

Previous balance	\$3372.20
Total gifts:	\$1320.00
Total expenses:	\$1776.24
<hr/>	
Fund Balance:	\$2915.96

Bridge Evidence Group is a 501(c)(3) organization that is committed to financial transparency and accountability.