

An open letter to the Church from a Gay Christian.

Dear Family,

I am the rebel son.

You have loved me ever since I was born and dedicated to God.

You loved me and raised me to know "Jesus loves me" because "the Bible tells me so."

You nurtured within me a love for God from the day I gave my life to Christ at a young age.

You helped me to develop and use my God-given gifts including the joy of music.

You encouraged me when I decided to attend Bible college to follow the calling of God to become a youth and music pastor.

You blessed and supported me when I married and raised my own family seeking for them to know how wonderful it is to be part of a family.

You have formed me and helped make me into the man I am today.

But something has happened recently and everything seems to have changed.

You taught me that I was created in the image and likeness of the Creator of all. A Creator who brought such diversity and uniqueness to everything that exists, everything having beauty and a divine purpose. Does it not then make sense that each of us is uniquely created beautiful and with a divine purpose?

Does it not make sense that we should be seeking out our uniqueness and how we complement each other in the beauty of God's creation?

Then answer me this. Why have you told me that I no longer reflect the image of God because I'm gay? Where has the image and likeness of God gone? Isn't it still here? Don't I still bear it? Doesn't God delight in me, just as I am as His creation?

Why is it that now when I feel most truly authentic and most truly connected to God, that you won't allow me to use my gifts in worship and praise and service? Why must who I am as a person cause you to fear me so much? Why must I redefine myself to be accepted? Since when did I become such a problem?

When I kept my sexuality hidden, you lauded me. You told me I was anointed of God. That I was going to be used by God to change the lives of others. Many times I was told you were so proud of me and knew that God's hand was on my life. Now I hear silence.

What's changed?

That I'm more honest? More authentic? More devoted to Christ than ever before? Yet nothing is the same between us. Instead of a beloved member of the family, I feel a stranger and in exile in the place where I once found a warm embrace.

You tell me you only do this because you love me. But love doesn't check a person's sexuality or gender identity before embracing them.

"Why have you turned your back on God?"

"Why have you rejected His redeeming work?"

"Living in the Spirit you can overcome this."

"Your behavior is repugnant to me."

Comments like this are not random. They come from many family members – parents, siblings, friends, pastors, mentors. Messages to shame me, guilt me, rebuke me, condemn me. Without ever actually talking to me. Asking about my life. The worst assumed. Expecting me to renounce my honesty and return to the shadows of my former life.

No one should have to face such condemnation. Especially from those who bear the name of the Christ who proclaimed - “I have not come to condemn, but to redeem.”

Perhaps to your surprise, I still have a deep relationship with God. I still read the Bible. I love the Bible.

I know what The Word says. I know what God wants for me. I know I’ve come to a different conclusion about how I live my life. But there is space at the table of God’s grace for both of us. Christ heals divisions. He calls us to set aside our differences - yes, even differences about what is or is not sin.

Do you believe the words the Apostle Paul wrote in The Letter to the Romans?

“Who are you to judge another person’s servants? So stop judging each other. Instead, never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of your brother or sister. God’s kingdom isn’t about what one person thinks is unclean and what another thinks isn’t, but about righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. So let’s strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up.”

Will you heed Paul’s word?

Jesus said that we shall know true disciples by their fruit. Have you heard these stories? Do you see these lives? We’re passionately giving ourselves over to God for the good of our world. Our lives are overflowing with love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and... well, you know the list. Why, then, are you so quick to invalidate our salvation?

How could I have been saved so profoundly just a short time ago and now be considered unclean? Has the cross of Christ become weakened? Has the power of his resurrection come up deficient?

Please explain to me how my sexuality has become a “Gospel” issue. Since when has the announcement of God’s Kingdom and salvation through Christ ever been based upon what gender somebody falls in love with? Please tell me how disagreement about the interpretation of six verses out of over 30,000 in the Bible have come to represent the “greatest threat to the Church” today?

What are you so afraid of? Doesn’t the perfect love of Christ cast out all fear?

Where is your love?

Don’t you believe in the power of the Living and active word of God?

Believe it or not, it’s because of the Word that I have decided to “come out” as a gay man and pursuing a committed relationship with another man. I believe God is speaking to all my LGBTQ+ siblings that the Kingdom of Heaven is in our midst.

We’re not an issue. We’re not imaginary. We are followers of Jesus and we are here. We are committed to the radical, self-sacrificial way of Jesus, our Lord. And while I know that our existence doesn’t fit in your theological thinking, it is reality. And when reality and theology clash. When theology pushes people away from God, from hope, from life. Something is horribly wrong. When shame, guilt, self-hatred, and fear is the result of being brought up in a family, then the family needs to rethink what they teach because it is not from God.

My dear family, even among of all of this, I still have grace for you. God has chosen to make up his kingdom of beautifully broken people of whom I am one. I know that many of you have the best intentions. You really do want to do what’s right. To stand on the truth. To love me in the way that you believe that God demands. I have been sitting in your seat. I too struggled to accept LGBTQ+ people. To accept myself. I understand your struggle. I’ve been there too. It took a lot of work. A lot of time. A lot of prayer. A lot of openness to the Holy Spirit to stand where I am today.

And that’s all I am asking of you today.

I don't expect you to "get it" or "understand it." I am not even asking you to change your mind. All I am asking is that you love me enough to make room in your heart and lives to be humble. To listen and to accept the life stories that make you feel uncomfortable. To learn, rethink and ask hard questions. To truly understand that there are people in your life, in your faith community, that are LGBTQ+. I guarantee it. Do it because Christ commands it. Because every person matters to God. Because real lives are on the line. Because the Gospel of Jesus is for the least of these, the minority, the outcasts, the gays, those who don't seem to belong. Because they are already in the family. Because you don't have the power to exclude them from participating in Christ. The power is God's and God's alone. And He has welcomed us all as part of the family.

I am in the family.

I am in the Body of Christ.

I am included in the Kingdom of God.

I am the image and likeness of God.

I am not broken.

I am standing strong.

I am living the call to be an ambassador of Christ to bring His reconciling message to the world.

I will embody grace, patience and forgiveness but that doesn't mean remaining silent.

I will open my mouth, my heart, my life and let the light of Christ shine so that the world will see and glorify God.

We are the channels of renewal and revival. We are the future.

May we not grow proud or resentful. May we instead seek to embody both grace and truth. Because truth will win out. Grace will win out. Love will win out in the end. I guarantee it.

Dear family,

I am the rebel son but I have never left home.