

Emergent church leader: 'Gay' OK biblical lifestyle

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Cutting-edge Christianity debates: Should we accept homosexuality?

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One of the key leaders of today's most cutting-edge church movement has opened an Internet discussion on the issue of same-sex marriage with the bold proclamation that he believes "gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and queer" individuals can and should live out their sexuality in – and blessed by – the Christian church.

"I now believe that GLBTQ can live lives in accord with biblical Christianity (as least as much as any of us can!)," writes author and church leader Tony Jones, "and that their monogamy can and should be sanctioned and blessed by church and state."

Jones is an author and former youth pastor who holds a doctorate from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is also the national coordinator of [Emergent Village](#), a loosely-formed friendship of churches that derive their descriptive name from having "emerged" from postmodernism to take the gospel of Jesus Christ into a post-Christian culture.



Tony Jones

The "Emergent Church," as these mostly young, community- and mission-driven congregations are collectively known, is criticized by some for being "theologically liberal," praised by others as the best hope for passing the torch of Christianity to future generations.

In his "[The New Christians](#)" blog, Jones opens up a discussion and debate on the issue of homosexuality with his readers and with a fellow theologian/blogger, a self-described political conservative, Rod Dreher.

Jones quotes a former professor of his, who Jones says was active in the civil rights movement:

"Civil rights and abortion will be nothing compared to how the church has to deal with homosexuality," his professor said. "I'm glad it's your generation and not mine who'll have to figure that out."

(Story continues below)

In Jones' blog, he tells his personal story as a straight man trying to understand homosexuality: from his mother's assurance that she will love him "no matter whom he loves," to a high school friend who was likely a closet homosexual and who died of AIDS.

Despite recounting his earlier days of arguing that "biblical prohibitions to homosexual sex should be taken seriously," Jones admits his experiences and feelings led him toward a different conclusion.

"And yet," Jones writes, "all the time I could feel myself drifting toward acceptance that gay persons are

fully human persons and should be afforded all of the cultural and ecclesial benefits that I am."

Jones acknowledges that detractors against the somewhat nebulous and hard-to-define Emergent churches will pick up on his statement and repeat a common refrain of criticism.

"'Aha!' my critics will laugh derisively, 'I knew he and his ilk were on a continuous leftward slide!'" Jones admits.

Some of the comments show he was correct in his prediction.

"So, your statement is that you believe this. ... Why do you believe it? Because it seems right to you?" asks a respondent identified as Michael C.

"I suppose if you re-define Biblical Christianity to mean: whatever I believe is biblical Christianity, and there is no outside authority to judge it – then yes it can be in accord. If however you mean biblical Christianity as judged by the Bible, then no it cannot be in accord," Michael C. writes. "I'm sorry to say but these arguments that I've heard from the Emergent movement seem to rely a whole lot more pleading and a lot less on Biblical exegesis (our rule and faith – especially when you say 'biblical' Christianity)."

Other comments, naturally, supported same-sex marriage.

"Gay people exist," writes Public Defender. "Gay families exist. Society cannot stop gay people from having sex or raising families. Why do you want to discourage monogamy and stable homes for these children?"

Fellow blogger and theologian Rod Dreher, whom Jones invited into a "blogalogue" on the subject, [summed up his argument this way](#):

"Emotionally, I'd just as soon say, 'Let everybody marry, it's nothing to me.' I want my gay friends to be happy," writes Dreher. "But truth is not determined by emotion, as I see it, and certainly I find it epistemologically arrogant to assume that an early 21st-century white American bourgeois male can stand in judgment of Scripture and the Church, and the long, long experience of humankind on marriage."

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