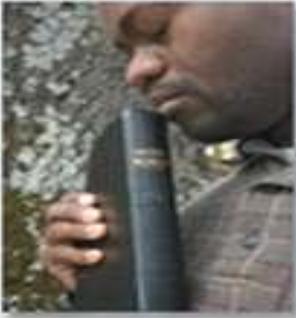


## IMPACT OF THE US SUPREME COURT'S APPROVAL OF 'GAY' MARRIAGES ON CHRISTIANS & THE CHURCH



*While the news may be filled with headlines about our culture's shifting views of sexuality, remember that God has not changed – and neither have his requirements for us. "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV).*

*Greetings to you Ministers of the Most High God – Jesus Christ. This month marks one (1) year since this Newsletter has been going and I hope you are being edified in some way.*

The U.S. is now the 21st country to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide

In this landmark opinion-decision, a divided Supreme Court ruled on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015 that states cannot ban same-sex marriage. This means that married same-sex couples will now enjoy the same legal rights and benefits as married heterosexual couples and will be recognized on official documents such as birth and death certificates. Since this decision I have been wondering what else we can expect.

My mind may have drifted too far in asking the question: what is the Lord saying to us as Christians; what should His people have done for Him to stop this decision and now that the decision has been taken what should His people be doing. Is it that we as Christian never did enough to evangelize or pray enough about this matter? Were we too silent /complacent? The implications of this decision though profoundly ungodly has happened so why or how was the most impacting country (USA) get this 'issue' to become legal?

Some persons in their attempt to console themselves have said that ...the reality is the impact on marriage numerically is that gay couples will still make up a tiny fraction of married couples [less than 1 in 100 in the US]. But while the ratio is said to be miniscule compared to the number of heterosexual married couples (about 56.4 million according to the 2000 census) Analysts are torn over the impact legalized gay marriage will have on the way Americans view the institution of marriage (the way most of us know)

and the way they look at homosexuality". [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com) (2004) While pondering these thoughts someone sent me an email with a response/reaction from the Superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI)

*Response/reaction from the Superintendent of the UPCI)*

In essence, he answered one of the questions asked above by making five (5) recommendations as to how Christians should respond and they are summarized below:



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The Superintendent closed his response to the **US Supreme Court's decision of redefining marriage** by reminding us that when Paul encountered opposition, he asked the church to pray for an open door for him to speak the word clearly (Colossians 4:3-4). When the Apostolic church experienced persecution, they prayed for boldness to speak the word and for signs and wonders in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:29-30). In these last days, God has promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:17-18). Let's pray for Apostolic, end-time revival!

With the response from the Superintendent in mind **further research**

was embarked on to see what other Ministers of Religion had to say about the announcement in the USA and closer home Jamaica.

*What other Ministers of Religion had to say in the USA and closer home Jamaica.*

From reports and reactions expressed and reported the Christian beliefs of most are strongly affected and as indicated earlier some are of the view that this has happened because Christians did

(1). ***“Continue to uphold God's Word.*** In God's plan marriage is the union of one man and one woman who make a lifelong commitment..... (2)***Proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.*** Jesus Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:17). God came in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself. Likewise, our mission is not condemnation but reconciliation; we implore everyone to be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:18-20)..... (3) ***Continue to affirm the worth and dignity of every human being.*** God has created all of us in His image, and Jesus Christ died for all. We should treat people with respect and kindness even when we disagree with their behavior or lifestyle. We should recognize everyone's civil rights while realizing that, as the Declaration of Independence states, true human rights come from our Creator and not from government. Our refusal to redefine marriage has nothing to do with bigotry or hatred. We recognize that God has given people freedom of choice and that some activities are legal but not permissible for Christians. In these cases, we disagree with those who do not share our faith..... (4)***Defend the freedoms of speech, press, association, and religion.*** These freedoms will likely come under attack by those who wish to silence all opposition, and thus we need to participate in the political and legal process to uphold them. It is not "hate speech" for Christians to preach and teach about sin and righteousness. We must vigorously oppose all attempts to compel Christian institutions such as churches, schools, adoption agencies, and counseling services to endorse same-sex marriage. Likewise, we must oppose any attempt to take away their tax-exempt status because of their religious beliefs in this matter..... (5) ***Pray for our nation and our world.*** God is still in control, and our hope is in Him. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20)".

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not give the question of homosexuality being legalized the attention it deserves in prayer and fasting; as well as letting our voices be heard on the matter but sit quietly and allowed it “sneak up on us” or as some people have said “infiltrate” where it matters most in advocating what is seen as their ‘rights’. There is even the thought that the voices of the Christians were not very clear and our prayers to God about this were not strong enough. Did we drop the ball? I leave these thoughts to you.

### *Impact on Christians*

*A number of Christians have resigned, been fired and being sued.*

Did we really  
‘drop the ball’?

In a news item from Kentucky, USA **four couples are suing a clerk** who has refused to issue gay-marriage licenses — or any marriage licenses at all — following the U.S. Supreme Court decision that same-sex couples have a legal right to marry. According to the Clerk her Christian beliefs prevented her from complying with the Supreme Court decision, so she decided to issue no more marriage licenses to any couple, gay or straight. She is said to be among a handful of judges and clerks across the South who have defied the high court's order, maintaining that the right to "religious freedom" protects them from having to comply.

Note is also taken that in another state the Jackson Sun Newspaper reported **two employees resigned due to their opposition to same-sex marriage**, (<http://bit.ly/1JD8WS0>). One of these Clerks has state - "It's a deep-rooted conviction; my conscience won't allow me to do that [because] it goes against everything I hold dear, everything sacred in my life."

..some have nevertheless pledged to never issue a marriage license to a gay couple while large % has been complying because they can't afford to lose their jobs.

*State Officials have also warned that defiant clerks could be risking criminal charges.* One of the attorneys who filed the lawsuit, wrote that the clerk "has the absolute right to believe whatever she wants about God, faith, and religion, but as a government official who swore an oath to uphold the law, she cannot pick and choose who she is going to serve, or which duties her office will perform based on her religious beliefs." As a clerk, she took an oath to abide by the law and perform her duty without prejudice; if she refuses to do her job because of her religious convictions, or if she doesn't agree with the law - her option is to resign/quit and walk away- She has a choice.

Attorney, Ann Milliken, President of the Kentucky County Attorneys Association added that *clerks who refuse to register and issue licenses could be charged with official misconduct, a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail*; some have nevertheless,

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pledged to never issue a marriage license to a gay couple while large % has been complying because they can't afford to lose their jobs.

### *The reactions of Jamaicans:*

Two major Newspaper columnist Ian Boyne, Veteran journalist working with the Jamaica information service and host of TVJ most popular talk show "Religious hard Talk"; and Martin Henry, University Administrator both wrote on the issue in Sunday Gleaner dated July 5, 2015. Mr. Henry concluded his article entitled "Gay marriage and a titanic clash of cultures". Both men have written interesting and thought provoking articles which are worthy of reading and should be explored by all.

Mr. Boyne, in particular spoke of the intense, bitter and deepening war of words that has erupted in the US announcement to allow Gay marriages which he says 'Reason is the biggest casualty'. He went on to say that the biggest opponents are religious people who he says are busily quoting the Bible, calling down brimstone and fire and announcing Christ imminent return; while proponents of gay-marriages are consigning them (religious people) to the Dark ages and likening them to the racist and defenders of slavery.

### *Personal response*

This has been the most topical discussion in a long time in the news media and on the lips of Jamaicans in general who have expressed different views and feelings on the issues relating to or which have led many to same sex relationships. My professional practice has indicated that some gender preferences have come about because of how individuals were socialized and their general sexual orientation whether traumatically or passively. In the field of Social Work and Counselling there is always an interest in the "why" of the behavior of clients; through this process it has been established that many people have become interested in same sex relationships because of bad experiences and out of fear. These I know can be helped through re-orientation and re-socialization to what is desired by God; for others only Divine intervention will make them victorious.

I am aware that the Christian first reaction is not that of compassion but rather condemnation the story of Sodom & Gomorrah must be borne in mind – the Lord did promise to spare them because people of God *bargain* with Him for them. Have we as Christian bargained for those among us? Can we really say that we have done our part in preventing the decision made by the US or (God forbid)if it should come to Jamaica could we really say we have done out part in preventing any such decision? Are we going to be complacent until it gets here? Are we taking the Grace of God for granted?

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I will close with the admonition of the International Superintendent to “Pray for our nation and our world” and add that while the news may be filled with headlines about our culture’s shifting views of sexuality we should remember that God has not changed—and neither have his requirements for us. “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, NIV).

**Ministers! *Keep the Faith and Be blessed***

### A RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE MINISTER

*The article below is selected from the many that have been written about the topic, and included for your edification*

#### **A Christian response:**

#### *The Supreme Court Approves Same-Sex Marriage*

**Rev. Kelli B. Trujillo**

Is Scripture’s teaching on this matter clear? Homosexuality is a divisive topic among Christians and in the broader culture, as evidenced by media coverage surrounding the Supreme Court’s decision today. But this is not merely an issue to be debated—it is also deeply personal for many people. Can a person live a gay lifestyle and follow Christ? Is it even fair to ask someone with same-sex attraction to live a celibate life?

As a Christian psychologist, I realize this is an extremely sensitive issue. If you have homosexual or bisexual tendencies, this is not just a cultural or theological debate—it speaks to the core of how you see yourself and how God views you.

This issue impacts not just those who identify themselves homosexuals (males and females) but all of us. Regardless of whether you identify with this struggle, you will have to sort through your own views about God, Scripture’s teaching, and homosexuality. You will likely have a good friend or family member who is gay. You’ll have to make decisions about whether or not to attend a gay wedding, whether to have your daughter and her partner over for dinner, or whether to attend a church with a gay pastor. Because of changing laws, you will have to navigate what is legal when it seems to conflict with what is biblical.

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## Navigating the Changing Tide

Within the last decade, the Christian opinion on homosexuality has gone through a drastic about face as many Christians have changed their minds regarding their beliefs about gender, marriage, and romantic love. Claiming that homosexuality is anything other than an acceptable lifestyle that's approved by God is now seen by many to be unloving, judgmental, and hateful.

To make matters more confusing, there have been vigorous attempts to reinterpret the Scripture passages that directly address homosexuality (Genesis 19:1–29; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 1 Timothy 1:10–11). Because of these efforts, evangelical Christians now disagree about whether the Bible condemns homosexual activities. Some write off the Old Testament passages as obsolete and interpret the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah as inhospitality and violence rather than homosexual behavior. They claim that Paul and early church leaders didn't understand sexual orientation in the sense that we understand it today and those New Testament prohibitions against homosexual behavior speak only to ...pedophilia, and homosexual acts committed by heterosexuals<sup>1</sup> rather than to committed, homosexual couples.

Yet while the concept of a homosexual orientation was first suggested in the 1890s, we can safely assume that men and women in biblical times struggled with sexual orientation—even if they didn't have our modern framework and terminology to label those feelings and desires. Although the classification of homosexual issues has only recently evolved, human nature itself hasn't changed. Scripture's clear teaching on sexual morality addressed the same human struggles, temptations, and sin that people experience today. Whether you experience same-sex attraction or you know someone who does, here are some key truths to consider as you navigate this complex issue:

*The truth about God is that He is both absolutely holy and unconditionally loving. We can never understand God's love if we don't also embrace his holiness. Oswald Chambers wrote in **Love: A Holy Command**, "Anything that belittles or obliterates the holiness of God by a false view of the love of God is untrue to the revelation given by Jesus Christ."*

## God Is Compassionate . . . and Righteous

The truth about God is that he is *both* absolutely holy and unconditionally loving. We can never understand God's love if we don't also embrace his holiness. Oswald Chambers wrote in *Love*:

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<sup>1</sup> *Heterosexuals: Sexual feeling or behavior directed toward a person or persons of the opposite sex*

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*A Holy Command*, "Anything that belittles or obliterates the holiness of God by a false view of the love of God is untrue to the revelation given by Jesus Christ."

God's love is limitless and extends to all humankind. His love includes gay men and women; it includes *all* sinners—including you and me. Let's make sure we are absolutely clear on this point: Jesus' life on earth showed us that he extended great love to all of humanity, including those societies deemed as "unworthy" of love.

At the same time, in his love God gives us boundaries. God's compassion never cancels out his truth and holiness. Because he loves us, he knows that we are most fulfilled, as he intends us to be fulfilled, when we live according to his design.

The truth about God is that he is *both* absolutely holy and unconditionally loving. We can never understand God's love if we don't also embrace his holiness. Oswald Chambers wrote in *Love: A Holy Command*, "Anything that belittles or obliterates the holiness of God by a false view of the love of God is untrue to the revelation given by Jesus Christ."

Yes, God is so full of mercy and compassion. However, his love has never cancelled out his call for all of us to yield our lives—including our sexuality—to his holiness, no matter the cost. We completely miss the character of God if we ignore his call to obedience and holiness because of his love. This loving God judges sin and tells his people to "be holy because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

### **Attraction Isn't the Same as Action**

Every single one of us can identify with a specific temptation that seems to plague us. Perhaps the draw to pornography seems too strong to resist, or maybe you feel like you just can't stop sleeping with your boyfriend. Or perhaps you tend to lie more naturally than telling the truth or you secretly love a juicy morsel of gossip. We *all* struggle with sin and brokenness; we are *all* in need of God's grace.

Because sexuality is so closely tied to our sense of identity, separating same-sex desires from homosexual action is often difficult. Unfortunately, many Christian men and women who experience same-sex attraction feel condemned by the church simply for having the battle. Religious institutions have heaped on shame by wrongly categorizing homosexual urges as more detestable than any other temptation.

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There is nothing sinful about *the struggle* of a person with homosexual attraction. We all struggle with something, be it depression, alcoholism, rage, habitual masturbation, bulimia, or any number of temptation and difficulties. Yet there is a difference between dealing with an ongoing struggle and legitimizing the behaviors the struggle may lead to. While we can't control what we struggle with, we can control whether we yield that temptation to the Lord.

### We Are All Called to Self-Denial

"God would never give someone sexual desires that he doesn't intend to fulfill. That's just unfair!" This kind of thinking pervades modern Christianity and not just in regard to homosexuality. A Christian woman who recently contacted me had this to say: *I used to be an advocate for waiting to have sex until marriage, but as the years have gone by I no longer feel this way. I think it's all well and good for teens and those in their early twenties to strive for such a goal, but as someone who has recently entered her late twenties; it seems like an outdated and irrelevant idea to hold on to. I'm dating a Christian man right now, but who knows if we will have sex outside of marriage. . . . I just know that waiting isn't something I'm personally interested in anymore.*

Jesus calls not just those who identify as homosexuals to "deny themselves," but he also ushers that challenge *to every disciple*. Deny your pride, your lust, and your self-righteousness. Deny your rights to please yourself for the greater joy of pleasing your Father in heaven.

While indeed it may not seem "fair" to deny one's sexual urges or romantic feelings, God's call for disciples has never been "fair." Jesus came to give us a full life (John 10:10), yet his command to us as his disciples is to deny yourself, lose your life, and take up your cross and follow him—even unto death (Matthew 16:24–26)! Scripture's call to sexual holiness isn't meant to be easy or even feel fair.

While pursuing our desires may provide a degree of happiness, God doesn't want us to merely be happy. He longs for His children to discover a deeper joy and contentment that comes through fellowship with him and a grateful heart.

Jesus calls not just those who identify as homosexuals to "deny themselves," but He also ushers that challenge *to every disciple*. Deny your pride, your lust, and your self-righteousness. Deny your rights to please yourself for the greater joy of pleasing your Father in heaven.

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Sometimes he doesn't allow us to have what we desire because he longs to teach us an abiding happiness and joy that the world can never take away.

The call to surrender your sexual desires rather than acting out of them requires great sacrifice. It may, at times be painful, exhausting, and lonely. We only make a choice like this because we love God more than we love ourselves.

There are many godly men and women who make this choice—who continue to struggle with homosexual thoughts and urges throughout their lives but who have committed themselves to saying no to temptation. On the other hand, choosing a lifestyle outside of God's will expressed in Scripture—whether that's living with your boyfriend before marriage or sleeping with other women—is choosing a different path than obedience and intimacy with God.

### **God Redeems and Heals**

The call to surrender your sexual desires rather than acting out of them requires great sacrifice. It may, at times be painful, exhausting, and lonely. We only make a choice like this because we love God more than we love ourselves.

God's redemption, grace, and healing are for all of us—those with opposite-sex attraction and those with same-sex attraction. Yet we sometimes make the mistake of dictating what healing in the area of homosexuality ought to look like. For example, *if a woman has sexual desire for another woman, we may assume that healing means she becomes attracted to men; gets married to a caring, Christian husband; has a house full of children; and lives happily ever after in her feminine, suburban home. If that doesn't happen (or a woman superficially embraces these trappings of "normal feminine life" simply to prove that she's redeemed), it may seem that God's healing has failed.*

**We must remember:** God is God. How He deals with each of us in our sin and brokenness—whatever that struggle may be—is ultimately God's business. Healing and redemption for *any person* usually doesn't mean his or her messy life is suddenly cleaned up and wrapped in a nice, neat bow. The apostle Paul alluded to the messiness of his own redemption story. Throughout his Christian walk, he lived with a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7) that God refused to remove in order to keep Paul dependent upon God's grace. Paul longed for heaven so he could be free from this fallen world and the struggle of his own flesh.

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*God's healing for a person dealing with homosexual feelings may not be to give him or her heterosexual desire. God's desire for you is not necessarily heterosexuality, but holiness. Ultimately, the greatest healing for any person comes when we learn to submit every desire to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Sometimes God delivers us from our brokenness, and other times he strengthens us through our struggle with it. The bottom line is this: God's power is sufficient in your weakness, even if that happens to be a pull toward homosexuality. Living a godly life doesn't mean embracing sin nor does it involve the absence of continual temptation. It means accepting God's compassionate love while also relying on God's strength to pursue holiness.*

### Changing Culture, Unchanging God

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Although human interpretations of biblical teaching on sexuality may change, the Word of God was a solid foundation for Christians living 2,000 years ago and is the same for Christians living today. "The grass withers, and the flowers fall; but the word of our God endures forever" (Isaiah 40:8, NIV). I take great comfort in knowing that God's teachings are true and unchanging—even when it becomes difficult to stand on those truths as the cultural tide turns against them.

One of the most wonderful things about being a Christ-follower is that God doesn't change.

#### ONE YEAR OLD

*It's really amazing how time moves, it is now one (1) year that this Newsletter has been providing monthly 'information that Ministers can use'. I hope you have been edified.*

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