

As a pastor, questions about homosexual marriage make me feel like I'm holding a grenade without a pin. Not many topics can so quickly divide a room or sever relations. We all know that the media is very quick to showcase the hateful "Christian" Westboro Churches of the world, while juxtaposing them against churches performing gay marriages. I don't blame them, they are the most interesting of the extremes, but I am here to argue that there is a middle ground.

My BA is in philosophy from the UW, not a Christian education by any stretch of the imagination. I also come from a non-Christian home, again showing that my belief system was not forced upon me by my upbringing. Despite your emotional response to my alma mater (for all you Hawkeye fans), my point is to prove that I have not been "brainwashed" into believing what I hold and teach today. I am not your stereotypical traditional pastor.

I also personally know and love many gay people. Some would say that this is like a racist saying, "I have black friends," but this is logically false. I have friends and family who are active homosexuals, but I love them none the less. Yes, I do disagree with the lifestyle and choices, but they also disagree with mine. We both agree to disagree and our friendships still remain despite our religious differences.

With that said, the middle path I would advocate is not for the non-believer, but the Christian. It bothers me that so many Christians pick homosexuality out of the list of sins and portray it as the most heinous of crimes. How quick we are to condemn the homosexual, while embracing the alcoholic or drug addict or adulterer. Why does our grace extend to the man who beat his wife, but end with the man who is attracted to men?

This is the problem with many Christians, we tend to demoralize the sins we do not struggle with. For example, not many churches would even chastise a deacon for being caught with pornography, but would immediately strip that title from a woman who struggles with homosexuality. This attitude lacks the love that Christ showed us when we were still in our sins. Christians should be known for their love, not their prejudice.

With that said, I wish I could apologize for all the abuse done in the name of Jesus, but I can't. I wish I could console every homosexual who has been abused by people claiming the title of "Christian," but I can't. I wish I could track down and beat some sense into the leaders of Westboro Church, but I know I shouldn't (though wish I could). As we move forward in a state that has legalized gay marriage, I hope that the church will have a spirit of compassion towards those who believe differently than she and that the state will also equally respect our rights and religious freedom to disagree with their decision. In the end, maybe we can live peaceably together and enjoy the cultural, philosophical, and theological differences that make up Iowa City.