

Christ and the Workplace: Discrimination



According to current news reports, an American state is discussing whether to pass legislation to allow businesses to refuse serving Gay and Lesbian people on religious grounds.

Whether a state should adopt such legislation is one issue. How we stand for or against homosexuality on any grounds is another.

The deep and most disturbing issue is the ethics of discrimination. *Should Christians discriminate against anyone, anywhere...including the workplace?*
No.

Ethics and Christianity

Ethics concerns the values we choose to adopt and practice. The study of *Ethics* researches and defines:

- **to whom are we responsible, and for what?**

Christian ethics presupposes, researches and then defines:

- **we are responsible to Jesus Christ for how we practice his values, everywhere.**

Discerning what Jesus' values are needs to be grounded in how we understand Scripture.

Using the Bible

The foundation for Christian ethics and belief is the Bible. *We believe because of evidence*, recorded in the stories of Scripture. Our basis for Christian ethics is Jesus' teachings and examples, recorded in the Gospels. He taught and practiced his greatest command – *love one another*. He loved (and loves) everyone. His *love* seeks to reconcile all people with God and one another, not discriminate, humiliate or separate them.

What works against Jesus' absolute and unconditional love is sin. Jesus often identified points of separation (sin) between people and God. Two stories illustrate the point: the rich young man (Mark 10: 17-31; life center and priorities) and a woman caught in adultery (John 8: 1-11; values and priorities). Jesus' goal was (and is) to love, redeem and reconcile people.

Understanding the Bible

Many of the Bible's stories can be understood in a variety of ways; eg., do we or don't we ordain women to the priesthood? *Religious reasons*, based in Scripture are often given to justify discriminatory behaviors and legislation.

Discriminating against Gay and Lesbian people allegedly takes moral support from Scripture. But when we apply whatever understanding on this subject with Jesus' greatest command, *love one another*, one would hope that his words and authority would prevail. *Love* does not discriminate against anyone – a hard and secularly unpopular statement, but it reflects Jesus' clear command to love.

Now What?

Because you have the right to do something doesn't make it right. Secular authorities may or may not have the ability to pass discriminatory laws – for whatever reason. This is God's world, however, and we ignore God's sovereignty and authority at our peril.

Arguments to allow religious discrimination against Gay and Lesbian people can go in any number of directions. We can fling Bible verses, arguing from the heap of cuts and quotes whatever we want to say. Ultimately, the issue of whether Christians 'may' discriminate – in Jesus' name – remains. Christians should not discriminate against anyone!

Ethics – *to whom are we responsible, and for what* – is the basis for legislation. Christian ethics recognizes: we are responsible to Jesus Christ for all that we say and do. Since Jesus emphasized *love* for everyone, discrimination against any person or group is not acceptable.

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