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ENGL 1302, 8:30-10:00 a.m.

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Evangelical Attitudes towards Gay Marriages

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Fewer Evangelical Christians condemn gay marriage today than they did five years ago. There are two reasons behind this claim: more of the younger generations are starting to accept homosexuality, more and more people can “come out of the closet,” and the Bible is being interpreted in a way to support same sex relationships.

Although Evangelicals and their congregation typically remain opposed, support for gay marriage has increased into the double digits over the past decade, especially in younger Evangelicals. According to the article “*Millennial Evangelicals push for full inclusion of LGBT Christians,*” which is about the Evangelical Covenant Church by Harry Bruinius, says that, “In 2004, 11%...expressed support for allowing gays and lesbians to marry. By 2014, younger generation…had pushed this figure to 21%.” (1) In the TIME magazine, the article “*A Change of Heart*,” which focuses primarily on the Eastlake Community Church, author Elizabeth Dias says, “…fastest change…found among younger evangelicals, whose support for gay marriage jumped from 20% in 2003 to 42% in 2014.” (46) In her other TIME magazine article “*Nashville Evangelical Church Comes Out for Marriage Equality*," which focuses primarily on GracePointe Evangelical Church, Dias supports her claim of younger generations in support of gay marriage by saying that “country star Carrie Underwood…spoke out in favor of marriage equality in 2012.” (1) There is no doubt that based on the percentages of younger Evangelicals that have become more accepting of same sex marriage by 2014 that this number will continue to grow.

As more and more people become accepting of the LGBT community, more and more people have become open about their sexual orientation and have decided to “come out of the closet.” In Bruinius’s article on the Evangelical Covenant Church, Pastor Adam Phillips says that he saw a “beautiful mix of 1,400 attendees,” (1) who follow Jesus, go to Sunday school, and go to Bible camp and youth groups, and on top of all of that, they happen to be gay. In the Eastlake Community Church article, Dias also talks about specific groups who support same sex marriage, such as the Reformation Project and the Evangelicals for Marriage Equality. For the Reformation Project, the leader, activist Matthew Vines, “train[s] reformers in batches of 40 to 50 at regional leadership workshops” so that they can go back to their home churches and “serve as advocates for LGBT inclusion (46) If they support LGBT inclusion, this reformation might help other people identify themselves as homosexual, instead of hiding in the dark because of fear.

For many Evangelicals, the marriage debate isn’t really about marriage of families or sex---it is about the Bible itself. Genesis Chapter 1 in the Bible says God created male and female for one another, and the Apostle Paul calls homosexuality a sin. In the Evangelical Covenant Church article, it says “…the Bible is clear in its condemnation of same sex relationships…” (2) Bruinius quotes Russell Moore, president of the SBS’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, says that some people would like to “take a surgeon’s scalpel to the Word of God,” and interpret the meaning of the Bible for what their purposes. (2) But Moore continues by quoting the Bible by saying, "First of all, no one refusing to repent of sin - be it homosexuality or fornication or anything else - will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). This means no matter what the sexual orientation may be, everyone will be accepted by God. In the Eastlake Community Church article, Dias also quotes Russell Moore and says, “We believe a previously dead man is going to arrive in the sky on a horse.” (47) He says this to show that not everything in the Bible is true. David Gushee, a professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University in Atlanta, says, “…evangelical Christians have altered their interpretation of Scripture…” (3) Many point out that the Bible sanctions and regulates slavery and has been used to justify anti-Semitism, certain forms of racism, and the subjugation of women. The Bible explicitly says that it condemns homosexuality, but everyone’s interpretation of the Bible is different, as seen in the readings above.

Fewer Evangelical Christians condemn gay marriage today than five years ago, the strongest reason being that a higher percentage of younger Evangelicals are more accepting of same sex marriage. As mentioned before, I believe that this number will continue to rise through the next couple decades or so. Seeing that evangelical megachurches have become more open to the LGBT community, I predict that more and more small evangelical churches will become more accepting as well.

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