Commentary: Pete Buttigieg, Mike Pence, and the danger of Christianity that distances itself from the Bible

Christians must be wary of faith built on personal preference

Pete Buttigieg, mayor of South Bend, Indiana and candidate for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.
(Joshua Lott for *The Washington Post* via Getty Images)

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Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg is using his elevated political platform to promote a version of Christianity that makes the Word of God as revealed in the Bible secondary to personal preference.

The current mayor of South Bend, Indiana, a professing Christian and an openly gay man, has targeted another Christian, Vice President Mike Pence, attacking his faith for its adherence to biblical beliefs that have fallen out of popularity in society.

Buttigieg has gone on the offensive with a clear message: Any Christianity that does not affirm homosexuality as right is not valid.

Here's what Buttigieg said Sunday during a speech at the LGBTQ Victory Fund National Champagne Brunch:

"My marriage to Chasten has made me a better man. And yes, Mr. Vice President, it has moved me closer to God."

"You may be religious, and you may not. But, if you are, and you are also queer, and you have come through the other side of a period of wishing you weren't, then you know that that message, that this idea that there is something wrong with you, is a message that puts you at war, not only with yourself, but with your maker. And, speaking only for myself, I can tell you that if me being gay was a choice, it was a choice that was made far, far above my pay grade.

And that's the thing I wish the Mike Pence's of the world would understand. That if you got a problem with who I am, your problem is not with me. Your quarrel, sir, is with my creator."

The Bible says what the Bible says

People who are not Christians are expected to reject what the Bible says about sexuality, or anything else for that matter. But for a Christian, the Bible is essential as a foundation for what he or she believes.

The biblical stance of sexuality is that the only righteous expression of sex is between a man and a woman within the covenantal relationship we call marriage.

This view is established in Genesis (*"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." Genesis 2:24*) and affirmed by Jesus in the New Testament (*"Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate" Matthew 19:4-6*).

Further clarity on this issue is found in the Law of Moses (*"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" Leviticus 18:22*) and in the letters of the Apostle Paul (*"Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" 1 Corinthians 6:9b-10*).

Christians who ascribe to what the Bible says about sexuality do not have a "quarrel" with God; rather, it is the Christians who reject what the Bible says about an issue who have a quarrel with their creator, if they believe the Bible is the Word of God.

Sexuality does not make a person good or bad

Buttigieg talks about how his husband makes him a better, more compassionate person, and uses that as a basis for his stance that God could not possibly oppose gay marriage.

It's important to understand what the Bible does *not* say about sexuality. It does not say that homosexuality is some kind of super-sin that automatically makes a person worse in the eyes of God than a heterosexual person. It does not say that a gay person can't be decent, kind, charitable or a productive member of society. It does not say that a Christian cannot like, be friends with, or be kind to gay people.

The idea that Christians are called by God to hate and shun gay people because of their sexuality is a falsehood that comes not from the Bible, but from people who have wrongly used Christianity over the years as a cover for their own sinful and hateful ways of treating others. And that idea is used today to brand Bible-believing Christians as hate-mongers.

The Bible doesn't classify people as good and bad the way we do. The Bible says everyone is separated from God by their sin, whether that's homosexuality or any other kind of sin, and that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for those sins for all who believe in and follow Him.

After Paul lists homosexuality along with adultery and idolatry and greed and others, he doesn't go on to hammer harder on homosexuality. He gets to the important point: "Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Good politics doesn't mean good Christianity

Buttigieg's shots at Mike Pence might be good political posturing. And his vague presentation of Christianity which doesn't deal specifically with what the Bible says might be appealing to a liberal electorate.

But it doesn't make for good Christianity. A Christianity that is detached from the Bible can easily become anything any person wants it to be, putting personal opinion in the seat of authority instead of God.

The Bible says what it says. Any Christian who decides it's alright to disregard any of it, tempting as that might be, risks bringing their own faith to ruin by removing the foundation on which it is built.

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