



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 28, 2012

Southern Baptists Condemn Anti-Homosexual Diatribes of Ind. Baptist Ministers

There is no doubt where the [Southern Baptist Convention](#) (SBC), one of the nation's largest evangelical denominations, comes down on the issue of same-sex marriage. Throughout the years, its leaders at both the local and national levels have been at the forefront of graciously explaining the scriptural condemnation of homosexual behavior and the importance to the church and the culture at large of defending the traditional institution of marriage between a man and a woman. But recently, as the extreme comments of a pair of Independent Baptist pastors condemning homosexuals have gone viral on the Internet and beyond, the SBC has responded by condemning the hateful rhetoric and reinforcing the need for Christians to respond in biblical love to those caught in sinful lifestyles.



The most notorious example of the extremist speech came from the Rev. Charles Worley (above left), pastor of Providence Road Baptist Church, an Independent Baptist congregation in Maiden, North Carolina. As reported by [Reuters News](#), during a May 13 sermon Worley rightly told his congregation that God opposed homosexual behavior, but then took his sermon in a decidedly non-Christian direction by offering his own unscriptural ideas on how to deal with those involved in the homosexual lifestyle. As quoted by Reuters (and confirmed by a YouTube video, bottom of page), Worley suggested building "a great big large fence 50 or 100 miles long. Put all the lesbians in there. Fly over and drop some food. Do the same thing with the queers and the homosexuals. Have that fence electrified so they can't get out. You know what? In a few years, they'll die out. You know why? They can't reproduce."

Worley's comments were apparently prompted by [President Obama's recent endorsement of the legalization of same-sex marriage](#). "I've never been as sick in my life of our President getting up and saying it was alright for two women to marry, or two men to marry," Pastor Worley was recorded saying. "I can tell you right now, I was disappointed bad. I'll tell you right there, it's as sorry as you can get. The Bible is against, God's against, I'm against, and if you've got any sense you're against!"

According to [Baptist Press News](#), a website associated with the 16-million-member SBC, the recorded sermon is not the first example of Worley suggesting violence against homosexuals, nor is he the only Independent Baptist minister to do so. BP News reported that another Baptist pastor, Sean Harris of Berean Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C., "has since expressed regret for his words, claiming he was taken out of context and admitting he spoke carelessly after garnering attention on YouTube. During a sermon leading up to the vote on a [North Carolina marriage protection amendment](#), which voters



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passed, Harris told his church that when young boys begin acting effeminate, dads should squash those tendencies by striking their sons.”

In response to the comments of the two Independent Baptist pastors, Randy Stith, the SBC’s national strategist for gender issues, released a statement condemning hateful and condemning speech and reinforcing his denomination’s commitment to true Christian compassion for those struggling with homosexuality. Stith, who recalled that he was once “negative and condemning” toward homosexuals, emphasized in the May 23 statement, released by the SBC’s [Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission](#), that the SBC seeks to be “proactive and redemptive in reaching out to those who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions.”

Stith noted that “from the video clips it would appear that both men lead fairly large churches. I wonder how many people in those congregations were gripped with the fear that their personal struggle might be discovered. And how many have loved ones involved in homosexuality? I wonder about the loneliness and isolation they must have experienced, knowing they could never share those burdens.”

Emphasizing the importance of ministering God’s mercy to those struggling with sin issues, Stith wrote that those who serve on the SBC’s [Task Force on Ministry to Homosexuals](#) “have as a stated objective to help Southern Baptists be ‘proactive and redemptive in reaching out to those who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions.’ Our goal has always been to help Southern Baptists and others develop compassionate hearts for those who struggle and their families.”

Unfortunately, he added, “the watching world too often has witnessed examples of the opposite. While I am grateful that the two most recent instances were not in Southern Baptist churches, they still stand as reminders to us — not only pastors, but all believers — that above all else we must represent the heart of Christ.”

He advised that the comments from the two pastors demonstrate “a complete lack of understanding of how to minister to those struggling with this particular temptation. Real masculinity cannot be stereotyped. Attempting to force a sensitive son to share all of his father’s interests is a recipe for disaster. Children desperately need the loving involvement of their fathers, not their condemnation.”

The retired SBC minister admonished fellow pastors “to be aware that in this cyber-savvy world, anything you say can be worldwide within moments. Paul says, ‘Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt’ (Colossians 4:6). Will your words meet that standard? Will they hold out hope to anyone in bondage? Will they bring honor to Christ?”

[BP News](#) reported that in response to President Obama’s public support for same-sex marriage, SBC spokesman Roger Oldham released an official statement emphasizing that while the his denomination stands in strong opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage, it encouraged Christians “to speak biblically and authoritatively on the many moral, ethical, and political issues that polarize our nation, but to do so with kindness and gentleness.” Oldham said that “while we are deeply distressed at the President’s endorsement of same-sex marriage, I believe it is fair to say that the vast majority of Southern Baptists would urge these pastors and all Christians to state their convictions with redemptive grace.”

In 2011 the SBC passed a resolution on “[Civil Public Discourse](#),” in which it officially came out in opposition to extreme and volatile speech. The SBC resolution noted that the nation “is polarized concerning many moral, ethical, and political issues” and that “Christians have a God-ordained responsibility to give public voice to these issues biblically, authoritatively, and specifically (2 Timothy



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4:1-2).” Alluding to such groups as Wichita’s Westboro Baptist Church, which has gained notoriety for supposedly protesting homosexual behavior by picketing military funerals, the SBC denounced “the speech or activities of any individual or group that brings shame upon the name of Christ and His gospel,” and urged its members “to continue to speak biblically and authoritatively with conviction, kindness, and gentleness.”



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