



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 28, 2014

World Vision Reverses Itself on Hiring Homosexual “Christians”

One of the nation’s largest Christian humanitarian outreaches, World Vision, has made an about-face on an earlier announced decision that it would allow homosexual “Christians” living in same-sex relationships to work for the organization. On March 24 the Seattle-based Christian ministry, which employs more than 1,100 staff in the United States, announced that it would no longer require its staff to adhere to the biblical principle that marriage is only between a man and a woman. While the organization stipulated that it would maintain its policy requiring abstinence outside of marriage, it would permit individuals in legal same-sex “marriages” to work for World Vision.



In making the announcement Richard Stearns, president of the international humanitarian-relief group, said that the World Vision board had prayed for years about how to handle the issue as various denominations and ministries throughout the nation had begun to cave in to the demands of homosexuals. But in a letter to World Vision staff Stearns insisted that the group, started in 1950 and with a present operating budget of nearly \$1 billion annually, was not “sliding down some slippery slope of compromise, nor are we diminishing the authority of Scripture in our work. We are the same World Vision you have always believed in.”

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Stearns claimed that the change in policy was made in an effort to prevent the “divisive” issue of homosexuality “from tearing World Vision apart and potentially crippling our ability to accomplish our vital kingdom mission of living and serving the poorest of the poor in the name of Christ.”

In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Stearns said that World Vision’s board was “overwhelmingly in favor” of the change, but insisted that “this is not an endorsement of same-sex marriage. We have decided we are not going to get into that debate. Nor is this a rejection of traditional marriage, which we affirm and support.”

Stearns also said that his group had not been forced into its decision by a threatened lawsuit or pressure from homosexual activists. “There is no employee group lobbying us,” he told the evangelical magazine. “This is simply a decision about whether or not you are eligible for employment at World Vision U.S., based on this single issue, and nothing more.”

The announcement, however, was met with a firestorm of backlash from prominent evangelical Christian leaders. Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham and CEO of another prominent humanitarian outreach, Samaritan’s Purse, said he was “shocked” by the news. “The Bible is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman,” Graham said. “My dear friend, Bob Pierce, the founder of



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World Vision and Samaritan's Purse, would be heartbroken. He was an evangelist who believed in the inspired Word of God."

Challenging the rationale behind the policy change, Graham noted: "World Vision maintains that their decision is based on unifying the church ... as if supporting sin and sinful behavior can unite the church. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Scriptures consistently teach that marriage is between a man and woman and any other marriage relationship is sin."

Another prominent evangelical leader, Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), said that on one level, World Vision's announcement was not surprising. "The constellation of parachurch evangelical ministries founded after World War II have been running headlong, with some notable exceptions, toward the very mainline liberalism to which they were founded as alternatives," he said. But he warned that "here's what's at stake" with such compromise on biblical principles. "This isn't, as the World Vision statement (incredibly!) puts it, the equivalent of a big tent on baptism, church polity, and so forth. At stake is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If sexual activity outside of a biblical definition of marriage is morally neutral, then, yes, we should avoid making an issue of it. If, though, what the Bible clearly teaches and what the church has held for 2000 years is true, then refusing to call for repentance is unspeakably cruel and, in fact, devilish."

Such frank counsel from respected evangelical leaders, coupled with the threatened loss of untold millions of dollars in donations from longtime Christian donors disillusioned by World Vision's cave-in on a basic Christian tenet, prompted the group's board to make a rapid about-face on its policy change. On March 27 Richard Stearns [released a statement](#) saying that the World Vision board had "made a mistake" and had decided to shift back to "our longstanding conduct policy requiring sexual abstinence for all single employees and faithfulness within the Biblical covenant of marriage between a man and a woman."

Stearns said that he and the leadership of the ministry were "brokenhearted over the pain and confusion we have caused many of our friends, who saw this decision as a reversal of our strong commitment to Biblical authority. We ask that you understand that this was never the board's intent."

He went on to plead for "your continued support of World Vision. "We commit to you that we will continue to listen to the wise counsel of Christian brothers and sisters, and we will reach out to key partners in the weeks ahead."

But while World Vision "stands firmly on the biblical view of marriage," said Stearns with appropriate Christian charity, "we strongly affirm that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are created by God and are to be loved and treated with dignity and respect."

That reversal brought an unsurprising backlash from homosexual activists, with the [Huffington Post](#) quoting one "popular" LGBT blogger, Rachel Held Evans, as saying that the "whole situation has left me feeling frustrated, heartbroken, and lost. I don't think I've ever been more angry at the Church, particularly the evangelical culture in which I was raised and with which I for so long identified. I confess I had not realized the true extent of the disdain evangelicals have for our LGBT people, nor had I expected World Vision to yield to that disdain by reversing its decision under pressure. Honestly, it feels like a betrayal from every side."

On the flip side, evangelical leaders applauded World Vision's decision to stand on biblical Christianity. "World Vision's right decision conveys a spirit of Christlikeness and humility in tone and content," said the ERLC's Russell Moore in a Twitter post. He added in a subsequent tweet that the humanitarian



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organization had “done the right thing,” adding, “Now, let’s all work for a holistic gospel presence, addressing both temporal and eternal needs.”

In his statement thanking World Vision for its change of heart, Franklin Graham noted that “in our country today, there is tremendous pressure on Christians, churches, and Christian organizations to lower our moral standards. God is clear in His Word, and His standards never change. I’m thankful that Christians across the country urged World Vision to reverse their decision, and prayed fervently that they would do so. Three cheers.”

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