



Jeff Forester

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Dear Church,

I love Jesus. I love America. I love homosexuals. I love the Bible. I love marriage. I love freedom. I love the Church. I love the Constitution. I love you. I want to be known more for what I am for than for what I am against.

Whether or not 5 people on the Supreme Court overruled the votes of the people of the State of Michigan with regard to the definition of marriage, there is only one truth we as Christians at Heritage Church will follow: "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29 NIV).

The Bible is clear in its definition and examples of marriage; therefore we do not have the authority, and neither do 5 judges, to change the definition of an institution God established long before any government. Jesus stated in Matthew 19, "...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. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:4-6 NIV). God, the Creator, out of love, established marriage between a man and a woman, and Jesus reaffirmed this by quoting Genesis 2. Jesus taught that the parameters of marriage were established by God, and while 5 justices chose to redefine who can have a government license for marriage, they cannot overrule the Supreme Judge of the Universe in His opinion and design for marriage just to suit the popular opinion in society.

Let me be clear, **this is not a new position for Heritage Church**. We have been consistent with our position on what the Bible says about homosexuality and gay marriage for the past 15 years. I have personally preached on this subject 3 times in the past 3 years. Pastor Kevin has mentioned God's design for marriage 2 times in the past 3 years. No matter what your position is, if you loved Heritage Church yesterday, you should still love Heritage Church tomorrow. We did not pick this fight and we are not going to shift our position simply because of public opinion.

In light of this new ruling, I would like to remind our church family that we will remain, as always, steadfast in our God-given mission of presenting the Good News of the Gospel to all people, everywhere. Our church doors, as always, will remain open to all who realize their need for a Savior and to all who would come to hear the Word of God. Jesus taught us that only sinners need a Savior when he said, "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick*" (Matthew 9:12 NIV) - and we're all sinners! Paul reminds us that



"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:13-14 NIV).

We will obey God's command to love all people, *"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law"* (Romans 13:8 NIV). **We will show God's love, even to those who would make us their enemies.** We will obey Jesus' command, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**"* (Matthew 5:43-44 NKJV). We will love everyone, regardless of their sin, whether open or private, sin is still sin. *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good"*** (Titus 2:11-14 NIV).

We will remember that loving someone does not mean we must condone their sin. Sometimes, the best thing we can do is respectfully disagree and warn them of what God's Word says. *"Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. **We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church"*** (Ephesians 4:14-15 NLT).

Many Christians are smudging the reputation of Christ and Christians all over the internet with their unkind and often unbiblical words, instead of following the clear teachings of Jesus to *"... Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you"* (Luke 6:27-28 NIV). Christians CAN & SHOULD stand up for truth in the public square. We SHOULD engage in the public dialog about current events. **I choose to be biblical, reasoned and measured in my responses. I don't have to be the first to speak or weigh in with an "off-the-top-of-my-head" response and I don't have to forward every message I agree with.** Sometimes wisdom is found in patiently collecting your thoughts and sharing them with the right people at the right time and not necessarily the first thing that crosses your mind. The more in control and less emotional we are in our response, the more likely we will be able to make an impact with our words. *"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. **But do this with gentleness and respect"*** (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

Many Christians, in an emotional moment, are ruining a lifetime of spiritual investment among some of their non-believing friends by making unkind, politicized statements that do not reflect how Jesus spoke with unbelievers. We are ruining our soul-winning influence in order to make a political statement on social media! *"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone"*** (Colossians 4:5-6 NIV).

We are being told by "cultural fascists" that dissent and disagreement is equivalent to hatred. This has never been true. Disagreement is not hatred. Agreement is not love. Sometimes, telling someone "No" is the most



loving thing you can do for them. Warning somebody about what the Creator thinks about a subject is not hate. **I choose to respectfully stand for what I know is true and I choose to love people in the same way Jesus loves them.** We can genuinely love you and honestly disagree with you. We will not be bullied into silence or false agreement and forced obedience, simply because you disagree with us. However, as ambassadors for Christ, we must be civil, speaking with gentleness and respect. We must work for peace and show love. Being free to disagree, and doing so in a respectful and civil manner has always been at the core of our governmental system and is protected in the First Amendment. Freedom of speech and freedom of religion are both rooted in the idea of freedom of conscience. Founding Fathers, such as the First Chief Justice, John Jay, affirmed the importance of freedom of conscience. Chief Justice John Jay once said, “Security under our constitution is given to the rights of conscience and private judgment. They are by nature subject to no control but that of Deity [the Lord], and in that free situation they are now left.”

As we are faced with opposition, whether it comes from our families and friends or through outside dealings such as social media, we will remember to “*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*” And to “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*” And that “*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*” (Romans 12:12, 14, 18 NIV).

We will take heart in the many promises of our Lord that, though persecution will come from the world, He promises that, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven...*” (Matthew 5:9-12 NIV).

We will repent of our own sins, individually and corporately, and pray earnestly for our country. God says, “*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land*” (2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV).

This is an intensely emotional time for many people in our country, and **we cannot lead by the feelings of our heart.** “*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV). It doesn’t matter if our heart’s desire is that we “just want everyone to be happy,” or that we “just want everything to be fair,” we must always stand for what God says is right. We make our decisions based on God’s Word, not on what tugs at our heart strings. Many times, we are tempted to do what we think is best, just like the people of Israel often did: “*...everyone did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6 NKJV). Whenever this happened, whenever the people of God walked away from God’s clear teaching, it never went well for them. God says, “*I the LORD do not change...*” (Malachi 3:6 NIV). God’s mind did not change after He heard the majority opinion from the Supreme Court.

Please continue to pray, fervently, for wisdom and for God’s direction for myself and for our church leaders, as we begin to navigate through the unprecedented waters of Constitutional change and the potential issues on the horizon for religious liberties.

Above all, look up and take heart! Jesus said, “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33 NIV).



If we claim to love God, we must obey His Word and His commands. *“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith”* (1 John 5:3-5 NIV).

I love Jesus. I love America. I love homosexuals. I love the Bible. I love marriage. I love freedom. I love the Church. I love the Constitution. I love you.

I LOVE THIS CHURCH!

Pastor Jeff

P.S. On our homepage, at www.experienceheritage.org, you can find a link to a message I did for a large group of college-age adults a couple of years ago on the subject of “What Does God Think About Homosexuality.” It’s about an hour long and addresses nearly every reference to homosexuality in both the Old & New Testaments of the Bible. I hope it is useful for you as you sort out the biblical position on homosexuality and the gay marriage debate.

P.S.S. This Sunday (July 5th) during service, I’ll be speaking more on this topic and what it means for America. If you are in town, you won’t want to miss it.