

Jude 11-13

11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. **12** These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; **13** wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Review...

Jude 5-7...Three examples of judgement

Jude 8-10...Three characteristics of apostates

Jude 11...Three instances of damage/influence

Jude 11...**Woe (an imprecation of doom** cf Isa. 5:8-23; Hab. 2:6-20; Matt. 23:13-29; 1 Cor. 9:16)

Jude 11...Three identities of apostates

- **The way of Cain...Gen 4:3-8; Heb 11:4; 1 John 3:12**

Genesis 4:3-8...**3** So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. **4** Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; **5** but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. **6** Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." **8** Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Hebrews 11:4...**4** By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

1 John 3:12...**11** For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; **12** not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Tom Constable on Cain...

"Cain's way" was the way of godlessness and sensuality, violence and lust, greed and blasphemy, that led to divine judgment. It was the way of pride. Cain wanted to earn a relationship with God by his works, and he became a hateful murderer.

"... the point of comparison is that selfish regard and envy which was at the root of Cain's sin

- **The error of Balaam...Num 31:16; 2 Pet 2:15,16; Rev 2:14**

Rushed headlong..Lit "they have poured themselves out"

Numbers 31:16...**16** Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord.

2 Peter 2:15,16...They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, **14** having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; **15** forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; **16** but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

Revelation 2:14 (church at Pergamum)...**14** But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of* immorality.

Tom Constable on Balaam...

"Balaam's error" was compromise with God's enemies, and teaching the Israelites that they could sin with impunity (Num. 31:16; cf. 2 Pet. 2:15-16; Rev. 2:14).

He counseled the Midianites to seduce the Israelites to commit idolatry and fornication (Num. 31:16). His "way" was to use the spiritual to gain the material for himself. His "error" was thinking that he could get away with his sins. The false teachers also compromised God's truth in a way that involved idolatry and immorality. They would likewise perish under God's judgment, as Balaam did (Num. 31:8).

"Balaam stands for two things. (a) He stands for the covetous man, who was prepared to sin in order to gain reward. (b) He stands for the evil man, who was guilty of the greatest of all sins—the sin of teaching others to sin. So Jude is declaring of the wicked men of his own day that they are ready to leave the way of righteousness to make gain; and that they are teaching others to sin."

"Balaam was the prototype of all greedy religionists who lead God's people into false religion and immorality ..."

- **The rebellion of Korah...Num 16:1-3, 31-35**

Numbers 16:1-3, 31-35...Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *action*, **2** and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. **3** They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" ...**31** As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; **32** and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with *their* possessions. **33** So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. **34** All Israel who *were* around them fled at their outcry, for they said, "The earth may swallow us up!" **35** Fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.

Tom Constable on Korah and a summary of the three apostate examples...

"Korah's rebellion" was against God and His appointed leaders, Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:1-35). The false teachers were also rebelling against God and His leaders, the apostles. Korah also "perished."

Each of these three examples shows a different aspect of unbelief: "Cain, to show the arrogance, malice, and false piety of apostates, the example of religious unbelief; Balaam, to show the avarice, subversiveness, and seductive character of apostates, the example of covetous unbelief; and Korah, to show the factiousness and sedition toward rightful authority, the example of rebellious unbelief."

Note the progression...

They have gone

They have rushed headlong

They have perished

Jude 12,13...Five similitudes (word pictures)

Hidden reefs

Clouds without water

Autumn trees without fruit

Wild waves of the sea

Wandering stars

- **Hidden reefs...**These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves

The love feast...1 Cor 11:20ff...**20** Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, **21** for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. **22** What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

Feast with you...inside the church

Without fear...brazen irreverence

Caring for themselves...Ezek. 34:2, 8; Isa. 56:11

Ezekiel 34:2,8...**2** “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?...**8** “As I live,” declares the Lord God, “surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock

Isaiah 56:11...And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied.
And they are shepherds who have no understanding;
They have all turned to their own way,
Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one.

- **Clouds without water**...clouds without water, carried along by winds...Prov 25:14; 2 Pet 2:17

Proverbs 25:14...*Like* clouds and wind without rain
Is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.

2 Peter 2:17...**17** These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.

- **Autumn trees without fruit**...autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted...Prov. 2:22; Jer. 1:10

Proverbs 2:22...But the wicked will be cut off from the land
And the treacherous will be uprooted from it.

Jeremiah 1:10...“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.
“See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To pluck up and to break down,
To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant.”

- **Wild waves of the sea...**wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam...Is 57:20; Phil 3:19

Isaiah 57:20...But the wicked are like the tossing sea,
For it cannot be quiet,
And its waters toss up refuse and mud.

Philippians 3:19...For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ, **19** whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things

- **Wandering stars...** wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever

“The imagery of a star seems to fit the nautical theme that Jude is developing. Stars were of course the guides to sailors at night, just as teachers are responsible to lead the flock through a benighted world. But false teachers, as wayward stars, are not fixed and hence offer unreliable, even disastrous guidance. They are thus both the dangerous reefs on which the ships could be destroyed and the false guides, leading them into these rocks. There is a special irony that these lights will be snuffed out, reserved for the darkest depths of eternal darkness.”

NET Bible Notes

These men are so very unlike the Savior...

- Caring for themselves as they feast among you...

John 6...**38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 10:12-13...**11** “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. **12** He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters *them*. **13** *He flees* because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.

John 13...Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, to betray Him,

3 *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, **4** got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.**5** Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

- Clouds without water

John 4...**10** Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." **11** She *said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? **12** You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" **13** Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; **14** but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

- Autumn trees without fruit

John 15:1-6... "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

- Wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam

John 1...**14** And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 3...**14** As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; **15** so that whoever believes will in Him have

eternal life. **16** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. **18** He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **19** This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. **21** But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

- Wandering stars...

John 1...**4** In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. **5** The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 14:6,7...**6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. **7** If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

Kim Riddlebarger on Jude 11-13...

These false teachers claim to be prophets and teachers who know the mind of the Spirit of God, but in actuality, these men are behaving like wild animals acting on instinct—similar to Peter’s rebuke of such men in 2 Peter 2:10. They may act piously (and pray in King James English), but don’t have a about clue spiritual things, nor the judgment which awaits them.

In fact, in verse 11 Jude pronounces a covenant curse upon these men, just as Michael reminded Satan of the Lord’s rebuke. “Woe to them!” says Jude, “for they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.” Again, Jude cites three more Old Testament accounts of those who rebelled against God and his gracious purposes. Jude mentions Cain, who according to Genesis 4:3-8 (our Old Testament letter), killed his brother Abel when God accepted Abel’s offering but not his. Jude mentions Balaam, the prophet who spoke only as the Lord commanded (but for monetary gain), and who later led the Israelites into idolatry (when the people worshiped Midianite gods).

Balaam functions as a kind of biblical prototype of those subsequent prophets and teachers who would do just about anything for money.¹² Jude also mentions Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16:19-35). Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, but the ground opened up and swallowed Korah and his household, along with all those who followed him. The fate of these men and the judgment which came upon them was well known to all those in Jude's audience. Jude's point—the bad guys are gonna get it.

Having given another list of examples, Jude reminds the congregation why these men must not be tolerated in the churches. We read in verses 12-13, "These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever." This is an important reminder of the centrality of the Lord's Supper ("love feasts") in early Christian worship. This is also why we "fence" the table today. Such men make a mockery of the celebration of the Supper. These men cause spiritual shipwreck. They mock the things of God. They bear no fruit. They seek the satisfaction of their own needs and urges, and they are not the least bit concerned with the needs or circumstances of others—unless they can use this as a means to exploit others. They may appear pious and important, but in reality they are nothing. They are destined for judgment.

Anatomy of an Apostate...Matthew Vines and The Reformation Project

Article from The Standard Bearer...“Crept In Unawares” (Jude 4)

By Martin McGeown

January 1, 2014

When the devil is unable to intimidate the church into accepting homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, and transgenderism (LGBT), he uses deception. In this deception we hear the ancient hiss of the serpent, “Yea, hath God said?” (Gen. 3:1).

“Yea, hath God said?” has been Satan's tactic from the beginning. “Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” “Hath God said that He is the Creator of all things?” “Hath God said that there was a worldwide flood?”

“Hath God said that women shall not be officebearers in the church?” “Hath God said that marriage is between one man and one woman?”

Satan is hissing again. “Yea, hath God said that homosexuality is sin? Surely, that’s only the *traditional interpretation* of the Bible. Cannot we move on from that outdated view?” He uses scholars to undermine the Scriptures, but what he really needs is an intelligent young man with an emotionally-appealing story.

Enter Matthew Vines.

Matthew Vines is a twenty-three-year-old professing Christian who identifies himself as gay, although he claims also to be celibate. In 2010, he suspended his studies at Harvard University in order to study full time for two years the Bible’s teachings on homosexuality. Having failed to convince the conservative Presbyterian church in which he grew up that their “traditional understanding” of the Bible was incorrect, he resigned his membership. Shortly thereafter, in March 2012, he gave a speech in a more liberal church, a speech that went viral and made Matthew Vines a sensation. The speech, the transcript of which has been translated into multiple languages, has almost 650,000 hits on YouTube and has been shared on blogs and social networking sites countless times. The *New York Times* even highlighted his story in an article entitled, “Turned Away, He Turned to the Bible” (Sept. 14, 2012).

The speech itself is an attempt to explain (away) the six texts usually quoted as condemnation of homosexuality. Vines argues passionately that this “traditional interpretation” has borne bitter fruit in the church, namely that gay people are forced to be alone, and may never enjoy a romantic bond with another person, enjoy marriage, or have a family. Of course, he fails to mention that a gay person in a “same-sex relationship” *cannot* have a family, for it is biologically impossible, according to the Creator’s design, for two men or two women to produce a child.

The arguments that Vines advances have all been answered by conservative Christians before. Robert Gagnon, associate professor of New Testament at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, said, “Every one of these rehashed arguments I have refuted in previous work, of which Vines shows not the slightest awareness.” They are (1) It is not good for a man to be alone. To deny marriage to homosexuals is to force them to be alone. Besides, teaching must be judged by its fruit. The “traditional interpretation” has the bad fruit of victimizing and marginalizing homosexuals. (2) The sin of Sodom was not homosexuality, but lack of hospitality, or even (attempted) gang rape. Whatever it was, it has nothing to do with “committed, monogamous same-sex relationships.” (3) The passages of Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 are not applicable today, because the Old Testament ceremonial law is not applicable today; and, besides, the behavior

condemned was ritual prostitution, not homosexuality as such. (4) Romans 1:26-27 refers to men and women who are “naturally” heterosexual, but who deliberately commit homosexual acts contrary to their own nature. For a homosexual man to have a relationship with a woman would be unnatural *for him*. Or, the meaning is a condemnation of sexual exploitation or (again) ritual temple prostitution. (5) The words “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” (I Cor. 6:9-10 and I Tim. 1:10) do not refer to homosexuality but to some kind of sexual exploitation, and cannot be used to condemn “committed, monogamous same-sex relationships.”

One passage Vines does not discuss, leaving the impression that the Bible has only six passages about (against) homosexuality, is Matthew 19, where Jesus teaches that God instituted monogamous, heterosexual, lifelong marriage, and where Jesus affirms the clear distinction between the male and female (Matt. 19:1-12). Homosexuals desire to leave the impression that Jesus never addressed homosexuality.

I urge the readers of the *Standard Bearer*, and especially parents and Christian school teachers, to be ready to answer these arguments, for they will come up again and again. I do not have time to answer them here, but to dismiss them as not worthy of a response is not the way to equip our members.

Besides all this, we live in an emotional society. Arguments, logic, and exegesis mean little to a culture who react rather than reflect. If you have a story and can tell it in an emotional manner, you will win hearts and minds of people more than if you have good, theologically sound arguments. Politicians and the news media know this. Advertisers know this. Increasingly, the church panders to this.

Matthew Vines’ video is only the beginning. His next step has been to set up the Reformation Project, a “Bible-based, Christian, non-profit organization that seeks to reform church teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity.” How Bible-based is it? The statement of faith on the website is deliberately broad: “We are ecumenical in nature and mission, inclusive of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians alike.” What is the “reformation” that Vines’ project seeks? The Reformation Project intends to equip activists (he calls them Reformers) to spread the revisionist view of Scripture to their community and especially to their churches.

From September 18-21, Vines held a conference in Asbury United Methodist Church, Kansas City, KS. In attendance were fifty hand-picked Christians chosen from the one hundred who applied. Before they even attended the conference, these people were required to read 1,100 pages of material on the subject in preparation.

Vines writes on the Reformation Project website:

We will equip them [the volunteers] with the tools and training they need to go back to their communities and make lasting changes to beliefs and interpretations that marginalize lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Once they go back, we will continue to offer them personal, financial, and infrastructural support for months and years to come. We will ensure that even those with the biggest and most daunting of goals will have the means to accomplish them. Crucially, the aspiring reformers that we train will not be seeking to change their churches by asking them to ignore or look past the Bible. The Bible is not anti-gay. It never addresses the issues of same-sex orientation or loving same-sex relationships, and the few verses that some cite to oppose those relationships have nothing to do with LGBT people. Careful, persistent arguments about those passages have the power to change every Christian church worldwide, no matter how conservative its theology. The mission of The Reformation Project is to train a new generation of Christians to streamline that process and accelerate the acceptance of LGBT people in the church.

We have been warned. Coming to a church near you is one of Matthew Vines' "Reformers." I am no prophet, but I would not be surprised to hear of a Reformation Project event or conference in a Christian college in the not so distant future. Vines has money and influence to spread his message. Scripture, however, warns us of men like Mr. Vines, who are guilty of "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." Such men creep into the church unawares, or, like Mr. Vines, they grow up in the church. Instead of repenting, they demand that the church change the holiness of God to accommodate them.

The Bible teaches forgiveness for homosexuals, as well as for sinners of all other categories. For, "such were some of you, but ye are washed..." (I Cor. 6:11). In the way of repentance and faith. *Only* in the way of repentance and faith.

¹ Two of the best books on the subject are Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN: 2002) and James R. White and Jeffrey D. Niell, *The Same Sex Controversy* (Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN: 2002). The latter is more accessible to the common reader than the former.

² Cited in "Matthew Vines' 'Homosexuality is Not a Sin' Message Finds Support in Kansas," Examiner.com, September 20, 2013.

3 James R. White, of Alpha and Omega Ministries, has responded in a 5-hour podcast to Vines' presentation. It can be downloaded for free from <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php/2012/05/23/gay-christianity-refuted/>. White responds to every one of Vines' arguments at length. I highly recommend this to all our readers.

<https://sb.rfpa.org/pages/crept-in-unawares-jude-4/>

Matthew Vines Hosting Private Gathering to Teach Pastors How to Turn Their Churches Gay-Affirming

By Jeff Maples
August 1, 2019

This is how the militant LGBTQ mafia works. True Bible-believing Christians do not support, condone, or affirm homosexuality in any way. The Bible calls people to repent of all sexual immorality and to turn to Christ. Yet, the LGBTQ mafia is devoted to turning the Church away from Biblical teaching and toward full affirmation and inclusion of homosexuality. Why? So that they can deaden their consciences against the tormenting sound of God's Word who they know they must answer to for their sin sooner or later.

Matthew Vines — the gay activist who touts himself as a “gay Christian” and theologian — has been at the forefront of this battle for years. Vines, who has authored books on the subject of “gay Christianity” and is known for his viral YouTube video, The Gay Debate: The Bible and Homosexuality, has already caused a number of Evangelicals, including Southern Baptist leaders in a closed-door meeting to “soften their tone” against homosexuality. This “softening” of tone has allowed the onslaught of gay theology — from gay Christian outlets such as Living Out and Revoice — to infiltrate mainstream Evangelicalism through progressive outlets such as The Gospel Coalition and the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Now, Vines is offering a private gathering for pastors who are at a non-gay-affirming church who want to learn how they can secretly and subversively turn their churches gay.

The Reformation Project, founded and led by Vines, is an organization that, according to its website...

is a Bible-based, Christian grassroots organization that works to promote inclusion of LGBTQ people by reforming church teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity. We envision a global church that fully affirms LGBTQ people.

Of course, it is anything but Bible-based. Nonetheless, they are hosting Pastors in Process, designed to teach pastors to secretly turn their churches into gay-affirming churches.

<https://reformationcharlotte.org/2019/08/01/matthew-vines-hosting-private-gathering-to-teach-pastors-how-to-turn-their-churches-gay-affirming/>

NOTE- Following are excerpts from an article exemplifying a lack of biblical discernment...The inclusion of excerpts from this article DOES NOT imply endorsement

Why You Should Care About the Reformation Project (published by Red Letter Christians)

Emily Timbol October 3, 2013

Last week I flew to Kansas City to meet with 50 other Christians who want to reform the church. The first reformer I met was Matthew Jones. Sitting in the airport gate, I looked through his Facebook while scanning the faces sitting around me. He wasn't there yet. After waiting 15 minutes, feeling weirdly like I was getting stood up for a date, I got a message on my phone. "Just got to gate. Look for black hipster."

When he showed up, I greeted him like I would a friend I hadn't seen in a long time, not like the stranger he actually was. He didn't feel like a stranger because I'd been talking to him, and the other 49 participants of The Reformation Project, every day for the past three months. The summer was our pre-conference prep period, and it was grueling. Before each of us applied, we had to commit to "at least" 8-12 hours of reading a week, along with postings on a communal message board, where we'd share our thoughts and questions on the assigned scholarly articles. The subject? The Bible and homosexuality. The goal of the conference? To educate and train 50 Christian "reformers" who would then go out and teach the church how to properly treat gay Christians.

I'll be the first to admit it—many of us were gay, and we had an agenda.

Prior to learning about The Reformation Project, started by Matthew Vines, I thought I knew everything there was to know about the Bible and homosexuality. I'd been raised a Christian, and attended church almost every Sunday since birth. In 2009, when my childhood best friend came out, I spent two years praying, researching, and learning all that I could about the Bible and homosexuality.

As a vocal ally, I went into the prep-period somewhat cocky, thinking there wasn't much new to learn.

Boy was I wrong.

(At this point the author shares several instances of “did you know?” propaganda designed to undermine historic Christian teaching on homosexuality and to characterize biblical Christians as homophobic)

I learned this, and much, much more, over the four days I spent in Kansas City. We spent time listening to lectures from Dr. James Brownson, talks from African and Asian sexual minorities, a moving speech from a transgender student, and a Q&A session with the director of an incredible documentary about the “kill the gays” bill in Uganda. We spent hours and hours in scripture.

We didn't just learn though. We also worshipped. This is significant because the worship team was made up of mostly gay and lesbian Christians. Many of these Christians had been told by their churches that they could not lead worship, either because of their sexuality, or because they were not committed to life-long celibacy. Years had passed since they were last up on a stage.

Hearing Christian, who spent years in Exodus trying to pray away his sexuality, finally being able to corporately sing to God, was a moment I will never forget. Neither is the way I felt the Holy Spirit stir within and around me, as the straight and gay singers and musicians onstage swayed and lifted their arms to the sky in praise. God was there when we worshipped. He was there when we gathered to study his word. And he was there the last night of the conference, when a drunk college student was arrested in the hotel lobby for refusing to stop screaming homophobic slurs, and trying to physically attack, some of our attendees.

There were powerful lessons that came from the mountains of academic and theological material, that I obviously can't sum up in one article. But hermeneutics and exegesis were only part of the education I received. The rest came from watching, and experiencing, what it was like to spend four days with Christians who still believe despite being told for years that they were not welcome in the church. These were not people who were lazy or complacent in their faith. These were Christians willing to face abuse for the sake of the Kingdom.

The second-to-last night of the conference, prior to a worship service, Jane Clementi spoke. She was with us all week, and many of us talked to her to thank her for everything she's done in the years since her son Tyler's suicide.

Many were in tears after her talk, about her regrets as the mother of a gay teen. When she opened it for questions, Jes, one of the reformers, stood up.

“My question is about how to reach parents who still have gay kids that are alive, who they don’t support.” His voice wavered and his eyes teared up as he spoke. “I’m getting married and my parents will not be attending, and I don’t know what to say to them.”

Jane didn’t say anything for a moment, just shook her head.

“Maybe I should call your parents.”

That moment was a powerful reminder of what is at stake for the 50 reformers who were in attendance. If we can take what we learned and bring it to a church that is teaching harmful untruths about homosexuality, we might be able to save the life of the gay kid sitting in the congregation contemplating suicide. Maybe we can stop another church from sending missionaries with messages of hate to a poor country that will take their words, and turn them into death sentences.

This isn’t about debating an issue for us. It’s about reforming the decades of bad teaching on Biblical homosexuality that has taken lives.

Like Dr. Brownson said in his explanation of moral logic, “The question should not just be what the Bible says, but why does it say it?” What is clear to me, after months of academic study and four days of spiritual revival, is that what the Bible says about homosexuality is not what the church has taught. I know that because of my studies and experiences, and because of that all important question, “why?” The answer to “why?” for any question pertaining to the Bible, eventually comes down to, “because God created us, loves us, and wants us to love him.”

The verses about homosexuality, and themes of creation and procreation throughout the Bible, all point to that. What they don’t point to though, is a justification for what has been carried out by Christians against the LGBT community. The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and yes, even queer reformers at the Reformation Project Conference all recognize that God created us, loves us, and wants us to love him.

It’s time the church lets them do that.