

April 2004

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For the zeal of one

Phinehas...has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them... --Numbers 25:11

Dr. James Dobson met yesterday in Portland with pastors from more than 700 churches in 34 Oregon counties who have come out of the Church closet to stand against homosexual "marriage." Pastors were urged to instruct their congregants on the issues of our times, to conduct aggressive voter registration drives, and to contribute time, money and spiritual resources in the defense of marriage and family.

But some think it may already be too late to blunt the same-sex marriage movement.

In an April 3, 2004 column, All over but the brimstone, *World Magazine* publisher Joel Belz says that "Activist courts' have properly come in for severe criticism by those in our circles who are alarmed by the attacks on traditional marriage." "But," he adds, "we shouldn't kid ourselves. The dry rot in our foundations extends far beyond the courts. . . Virtually all of America's college and university systems—including way too many Christian institutions—are in on that treachery."

Whether by treachery or by dereliction, Belz's claims are hard to dispute.

Case in point. On February 26, four members of ECWR,¹ a gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender "Christian" organization, presented "Put a face on homosexuality" at Seattle Pacific University (SPU) in the Student Union Building fireside room. SPU is a private Christian university. We learned details of the event, as did the administration, from Dr. & Mrs. Charles Fankhauser whose daughter is a student at SPU.

Alerted by her daughter in advance, Mrs. Fankhauser decided to drive up from Olympia to attend the forum even though she was uncertain to what purpose.

According to Fankhauser, the only thing in the program resembling a biblical point of reference was the opening "prayer." Otherwise, students were advised that ex-gay ministries don't work, Scripture is unreliable because the original manuscripts do not mean "homosexual" when they say "homosexual," and parents who question "our sexuality" are themselves in crisis.

In a brief but strongly worded letter² to SPU President, Dr. Phillip Eaton, Mrs. Fankhauser outlined what she witnessed at the homosexual forum—adding—"This is recruitment and indoctrination...I am shocked. Shaken to the core!"

On March 25, Dr. Eaton responded:

"...I regret to say that news that we were sponsoring such a program came to me after the event had already happened. In fact your letter was about the first report I had with any detail about the content of the session..."

I want you to know where I stand and where we stand as a Christian university. We are anchored by the ancient teachings and authority of Holy Scripture that marriage is between one man and one woman. This has been the critical cornerstone for family, relationship, sexuality, community, and civilization for some four thousand years. It remains the teaching of all major religions of the world. Despite some challenges now being waged in various corners of some denominations, it remains the teaching of the Christian church worldwide.

What makes my heart sick is that any Christian or traditional view on this matter has been pushed to the margins of the culture. The dominant voices of the culture, our newspapers, media, entertainment, and secular education, have bullied us into an uneasy silence by co-opting the language of equality, human dignity, individual freedom, and so on, all values that come from the Judeo Christian tradition to begin with. Who can speak out against such values?

And so I find myself, as one leader in the community, and as an important voice for Seattle Pacific University, searching for the right way to teach our students and to share with the culture where we stand, because we do have a clear position on this matter. The culture is certainly “teaching” them what to think. I have come to the conclusion, and have begun this discussion with our leaders on campus, that we must be more proactive in our teaching and guiding on this issue and so many others. We may have taken it for granted a bit too much that our students know where we stand. This event tells me that just maybe we are a bit naïve and should move now in being more proactive...

...I am very sorry about what happened on our campus. I am especially concerned that four speakers from the gay community were given a platform without response from our community or without being challenged by perspectives from our tradition or our position. We do take a stand, and we have all kinds of people on our faculty and staff who articulate this position with clarity and with convictions that are deeply informed by the Scriptures and our church tradition...”³

Long ago, Moses met with leaders to relay the method of atonement for Israel’s defilement of the marriage bed. The Lord’s people were unwittingly “joining” themselves to Baal, the god of Peor, through their harlotry with the women of Moab, and were under a curse. And even as they were discussing the matter, a young man from a prominent family brought a Midianite woman to his tent—in plain sight of the whole congregation. Without hesitation, Phinehas grabbed a javelin and took off after the pair—thrusting it through them both.

Those familiar with this episode in *Numbers* chapter 25 know that Phinehas didn’t need to form a committee or wait to see what others would do before taking right action. Evidently, his zeal in light of the apathy of others around him was so refreshing, it pleased the Lord to spare Israel from further wrath. But a psalmist reveals another nugget hidden in “the rest of the story.” He writes: *...But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked. This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come. (Ps 106:30, 31)*

Perhaps Dr. Dobson’s meeting with pastors yesterday can’t be compared to the meeting Moses had with his leaders. And maybe the zeal Mrs. Fankhauser displayed in confronting university officials might not be credited to her as righteousness for endless generations. But then.....

Rick Forcier

Executive Director

¹ Evangelicals Concerned Western Region, Inc., www.ecwr.org

² Fankhauser letter edited for space. Unedited version available upon request.

³ Dr. Eaton letter edited for space. Unedited version available upon request