

# 95 Reasons Why I Support God's Word and not the ELCA's Recent Social Statement!

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On Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517, Martin Luther wrote his "95 Theses" to express his disapproval of the Roman Catholic Church's sale of indulgences, letters of pardon for sin that were contrary to the sound teaching of scripture. It is never wise for the church to go against God's Word for the following reasons ...

1. The Church is the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelation 19:7, 21:2, 9, 22:17)
2. How dare the Bride of Christ say to its Lord, "I no longer wish to keep our marriage vows!"
3. The Church's marriage vows were to go and make disciples of all nations ... "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded ..." (Matthew 28:20, NASV)
4. The marriage covenant between Christ and His Bride included "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47, NASV)
5. We covenanted to be His "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8, NASV)
6. As witnesses, Jesus gave us the task to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of heaven
7. All men and women in the Church are to accept this covenant of marriage for Jesus said, "There are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He, who is able to accept this, let him accept it." (Matthew 19:12, NASV)
8. But not all men and women will accept these vows to "preach the word; (to) be ready in season and out of season; (to) reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." (2 Timothy 4:2-4, ESV)
9. The Bride that stays true to the covenant agreement will "always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, (and) fulfill the ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5, ESV)
10. On August 20, 2009, the church with full knowledge broke these "marriage vows" to determine for herself the difference between good and evil (Genesis 3:5)
11. It appears that the Bride has decided to no longer be obedient to God's Word
12. It appears the ELCA has called into question the sovereignty of God; that is, what God says is no longer of first importance
13. Further, it appears that on August 20<sup>th</sup>, the church obfuscated the distinction between Law and Gospel
14. The Law drives us to repentance and confession, and the Gospel announces the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ for those who accept His work of salvation
15. Forgiveness of sin without repentance, and the acceptance of sinners without confession, is cheap grace

16. Real grace is shown in the example of the loving Father in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15)
17. The loving father in Jesus' parable offers his unconditional love, and then restores full inheritance to his son who was lost and living far away from home, but returns to confess that he had been living a selfish life, and bows his knee to the father
18. In response to Bishop Hanson's September 23<sup>rd</sup> letter to the church, he quoted, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." (Colossians 3:16) That is the main issue!
19. "Word" is "logos" in Greek; meaning, "sayings of God, moral precepts, given by God, doctrine and teaching"
20. Aren't the actions of the Churchwide Assembly in August a contradiction to our Lutheran confession of scripture?
21. In Bishop Hanson's letter we are urged "to make this a time to engage one another with honesty and respect in renewed and deepened theological conversation."
22. "95 Reasons" hopes to engage the church in meaningful discussion
23. In Bishop Hanson's letter we are asked to "be valued allies in this endeavor (to sort out Law and Gospel) and not be adversaries in a power struggle for control of a church body, synods, and congregations."
24. But the fact is there has been a struggle for over 8 years to wrest the church from a clear understanding of God's Word
25. Bishop Hanson's letter calls for peace and unity in the church
26. In the words of Luther: "Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, 'Peace, peace,' and there is no peace!" (Luther, 95 Theses, #92) And ...
27. "Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, 'Cross, cross' and there is no cross!" (Luther, 95 Theses, #93)
28. Bishop Hanson asks us to engage in important conversations by creating safe places to articulate deeply held biblical, confessional and theological convictions; that is, to have "an elasticity rather than rigidity in our ways of supporting and carrying out ministry and mission."
29. Because the church has voted to disregard the historic teachings of the church, the task of creating healthy conversation is made more difficult
30. St. Paul's, Maumee; for example, has a mission statement that implores us "to connect the unconnected to Jesus Christ and together grow in full devotion to Him"
31. The "unconnected" may feel that everyone has the right to live and let live as they please
32. Without knowledge of a biblical worldview, a variety of lifestyles are naturally accepted by the carnal nature
33. Any attempt to express the biblical view of marriage may be met by general confusion especially since St. Paul's will teach what the scripture says about gay marriage while the wider church holds a differing view
34. The issue is further confused by this decision because to endorse Lutheran clergy who are in committed, monogamous, marriage-like relationships with the same sex is to accept their "marriage," but by application, becomes an endorsement of living together without the benefit of a marriage blessing or marriage license
35. The August 20<sup>th</sup> decision does not offer this arrangement to any one but clergy in the church. Therefore, the decision stopped short of blessing same-sex unions in marriage ... a convoluted and inconsistent decision that does not help our biblical witness
36. As Bishop Hanson suggests, we could become more "elastic" about our scriptural interpretation, and relax our biblical view of homosexuality as a sin
37. But the decision to ordain or install clergy who are actively participating in an alternative lifestyle goes against scripture, conscience and reason

38. Forgiveness is wonderful for those who put their trust in God, and not in Assemblies and Synods that teach contrary to scripture
39. They who so teach deny the Cross of Christ and the Means of Grace
40. In a world that accepts any lifestyle, our children are confused by the contradiction in what the church is teaching
41. One young high school student after the ELCA's vote wrote on *Facebook*: "Homosexuality is no longer a sin."
42. Wouldn't the words of Luther be just as true for us: "Christians are to be taught that the (Bishop's) pardons are useful, if they do not put their trust in them; but altogether harmful, if through them they lose their fear of God." (Luther, 95 Theses, #49)
43. Life-change is the heart of the Gospel
44. Once an "unconnected" person begins to organize their life around Jesus Christ, they can be persuaded to live their life for Him
45. Connected to Christ, (John 15), the believer abiding in Christ begins to bear the fruit of the Gospel
46. The fruit of transformation comes from Christ who changes the orientation of mind and will to be more and more obedient to Him
47. Romans 12:2 says: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
48. Through the saving work of Christ, we are called out of darkness into the light
49. 1 Peter 2:9 says: "you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (NIV)
50. To explain our mission in light of the ELCA's recent decisions is to confuse the unconnected who don't understand the importance of the clear distinction between a biblical worldview, and the culture out of which they are being called
51. Bishop Hanson tells us to use "evangelical, missional imagination" but if "missional imagination" creates statements like "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and supplants trust in the love and forgiveness of God, it ought to be rejected
52. Bishop Hanson writes: "While we engage in these important conversations let our evangelical, missional imagination be marked by the signs of a church that lives in faith, hope and love through: a continual dwelling in the Word of God and prayer ..."
53. Imagination is a gift from God when it is in keeping with God's Word
54. Imagination not aligned with scripture leads to heresy
55. In Romans 1:26-27, Paul describes homosexual activity as "dishonorable passions," "contrary to nature," "shameless acts," and "error."
56. Along with other sins, in Romans 1, Paul describes the alternative lifestyle as a consequence of man's rejection of God Himself
57. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul includes the practice of homosexuality among those life styles that can be changed by the power of Christ Jesus
58. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, the good news is that those who "were washed ... sanctified ... were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God" can be changed and live free and forgiven
59. To claim that Jesus is silent in the scripture about this issue, and would thereby approve committed, loving, monogamous homosexual relations is an error
60. Jesus confirms the Old Testament in its entirety including its condemnation of homosexual behavior
61. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets ..." (See Matthew 5:17-19, and John 5:39-40)
62. Wolfhart Pannenburg, professor of systematic theology at the University of Munich, takes a strong position against theologians who contest the historic teaching of the Church.

63. Pannenburg writes: "Those who would press the Church to change the norm of her teaching on this question must understand that they press the church toward schism."
64. Pannenburg writes: "For a church which allows itself to be pushed to regard homosexual activity as no longer a departure from the biblical norm and to recognize homosexual partnerships as a form of personal relationship equivalent to marriage would no longer stand on the foundation of the Scripture but rather in opposition to its unanimous witness."
65. And again: "A Church that takes such a step has thereby ceased to be an evangelical church in the tradition of the Lutheran Reformation." (Pannenburg, "You Shall Not Lie with a Male," 1996)
66. The main issue concerning the ELCA's recent decision questions the authority of scripture
67. The decision by the ELCA does violence to the use of scripture
68. Martin Luther wrote: "No violence is to be done to the words of God ... but (the scriptures) are to be retained in their simplest meaning wherever possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids" (The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, Luther, 1909)
69. To deny what the Bible forbids is to do "violence" to the text
70. To deny the authority of scripture creates schism in the church
71. To deny that homosexuality is a sin is to lead the church down a path that has been a proven disaster
72. Defenders of civil unions of same-sex partners are fond of saying that since the advent of civil unions in 2000, "the sky has not fallen." (Stanley Kurtz, National Review, "Gay Priests and Gay Marriage," June 3, 2002)
73. The response is that the effect of civil unions and gay marriage on the ethos of marriage will likely percolate for years before the harm becomes evident. (Stanley Kurtz)
74. This is exactly what has happened in the church. It has been 30 years since the homosexual presence in the Roman Catholic priesthood began to increase markedly. (Stanley Kurtz)
75. Only now, after more than three decades, is the church experiencing an authentic emergency. (Stanley Kurtz)
76. The sky will not fall, we are told in the ELCA; yet, for the Roman Catholic Church, "the sky is already halfway down." (Stanley Kurtz)
77. Advocates of gay marriage are fond of comparing those who warn against it to racists who purveyed silly scare stories about the effects of miscegenation. But the real model for the effects of gay marriage on the church is the priesthood scandal. (Stanley Kurtz)
78. Here is a case in which gay sexual culture has not been tamed by, but has instead dramatically subverted an important institution. (Stanley Kurtz)
79. The church must remain true to scripture, and true to the Great Commission
80. The scripture shows us that Jesus does not condemn sinners, but He came to save, and that salvation is found in a relationship with Him (John 3:17)
81. Therefore, the church should clearly reject condemnation of homosexuals and acts of discrimination and injustice
82. Chartering a Christ-centered ministry, the church should teach clearly the Word of God that homosexual orientation is not a sin, and that it is absolutely essential for a homosexual to be active in a local church among a fellowship of loving believers
83. The church should invite homosexuals to be a part of the fellowship of believers – both homosexuals who are dissatisfied with their orientation and those who are satisfied with it as it is. How can they be transformed by the love of Christ apart from His Church? (Merton Strommen, "The Church and Homosexuality: Searching For a Middle Ground," 2001)
84. "Lord, help us to see our church as a family of faith that treats all people in the same way you've treated us ... with love and grace."

85. The church should teach that human nature's "default setting" is to be "in bondage to sin," and that we are unable to free ourselves, and that unless our will is captive to Christ, we are lost
86. "Free will creates judgment creates rejection creates flight ... where as, the un-free will creates sympathy creates mercy creates comfort creates change" (Paul Zahl, "Grace in Practice," p. 110)
87. Persons with a human will transformed by Christ from a gay lifestyle should be able to tell their stories without the risk of recriminations
88. The church should continue to hold up committed, heterosexual marriage as God's ideal (recognizing that singleness is also a God-pleasing calling) (Merton Strommen)
89. The church should be a place of transformation, helping those dissatisfied with their homosexual orientation to seek change through love, affirmation, counseling and support groups (Merton Strommen)
90. Many heterosexuals who have negative, hate-filled attitudes toward homosexuality are in need of transformation toward becoming more loving, gracious followers of Jesus Christ (Merton Strommen)
91. Wisdom from the Holy Spirit and the compassion of Christ are two attributes we need to have in the church because the common phrase, "Hate the sin, but love the sinner," require great amounts of grace to put into practice
92. Law without the Gospel is destructive
93. The church's message to gay and lesbian is the same message to all in bondage to sin: "But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, 'In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.' It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 17-25, ESV ... compare 2 Timothy 4:2-4 with the Jude passage)
94. The church may win or lose the same-sex marriage debate ... but the church must remain faithful, speak the truth in love, stay ready to make a defense of the gospel, and proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sin in Jesus' name
95. As Martin Luther said: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the Word of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point." (Luther's Works, "Briefwechsel, WA, Vol. 3, pp. 81ff)