

## Chaplain Thoughts on the Transgender and Other “Trendy” Issues:

By a retired CB Chaplain who humbly prefers to remain anonymous

I think as a private answer to another chaplain’s inquiry (on CBAmerica’s position on the “Transgender Issue”), your statement pretty much hit it on the head.

“Our position on Transgenders is like our position on Homosexuality, Same Sex Marriage, and all sex outside of marriage, as defined in our Statement of Faith and excerpted below. Considering the transgender policy established by the previous administration and set to be implemented in July, we treat everyone with dignity and respect, listen, screen, and provide pastoral counseling to those who ask our advice, based on our biblical convictions and limits of conscience; and refer those whose behavior, beliefs, and values we cannot affirm, to another chaplain who can; or to an appropriate behavioral/mental health practitioner, should the situation so warrant. In short, as chaplains, we care, advise, provide, or provide for with dignity and compassion, without compromising our convictions, prayerfully seeking the best for each person who comes to us for assistance.” (Andy’s statement)

I also agree with the reticence of the CBAmerica board on listing, cataloging, and dissecting all the trendy sins, and the making policy statements about them. I don’t think it’s good for the denomination (association), nor the individual chaplains – who, based on the priesthood of the believer, may not always come down exactly where the board comes down. And I believe that it WAS historically a Baptist distinctive that we all have the freedom of conscience you mentioned in your answer.

It reminds me of my experience pastoring CB churches. In all the churches I ever pastored, I was successful in getting the Church Covenant changed to move past the prohibition era covenants all of them had when I arrived. Personally, I was (and still am) a teetotaler – I can’t stand alcoholic beverages. However, I don’t believe that it’s a sin to have a glass of wine with your meal, or to chug a beer or two at the ball game. But I always pointed out that those prohibition-era church covenants never said anything about homosexuality! It just wasn’t one of their trendy sins at the time, so in their effort to catalog all the sins their members weren’t supposed to engage in, they left that one out . . . and many more. So the satisfactory statement we came up with was that we would strive for “attitudes and actions” that would be pleasing to God, as revealed in scripture. We dumped a whole list of sins, and yet, I think, came up with a more inclusive (in fact larger) body of both things we could and shouldn’t do. Not by listing them, dissecting them, and cramming them down our parishioners’ throats. But by making the standard easily identifiable, and those who had questions about a particular behavior could seek the counsel of the Word, rather than the policies of the church.

As for me personally, I would often reach up to my left collar (the one with the cross) and explain to a counselee that though I might have been conveying Army policies or guidelines up to that point, that THIS – the cross – was what brought me into the Army, and that what I was about to share from that point on, would be a reflection of what I believed, as a pastor representing God’s view of the issue – as I understood them. The soldier was never offended because I made it clear from which collar I was speaking, and I, like him/her, had the freedom to follow my conscience – even in the counseling moment. I always made it clear that not everyone saw things that way – not even every chaplain would see it that way. But it was my personal view of what God intended, and I was there (in the Army) to represent Him. With that caveat, I could lovingly, (with dignity and respect) share my thoughts with a homosexual, a transgender, or a bank robber. I could share with them what scripture had to say on the

matter, and help them see the logical conclusion of their actions, and hopefully give them something to think about without taking on a condemnatory attitude . . . there it is again – attitudes and actions that would please Him – even when engaging a gay or lesbian soldier . . . or a transgender. It should probably look a lot like Jesus' attitude when they brought the woman who was caught in adultery to Him. Did she feel affirmed by Him? I think so. Was her adultery affirmed by Him? Of course not. At least, that's how I see it. One man's opinion.