



**JUSTICE DEFENSE
FOUNDATION**
OF KENTUCKY

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 11, 2024

Celebrating Course Correction With a Proper Perspective

DEAR PASTOR:

In the last several weeks, President Trump has issued at least four Executive Orders rejecting gender ideology as a matter of federal policy. These orders restore common sense to protect students in school and sports and to protect children from social and medical experimentation efforts to change what can't be changed – their sex. With these several strokes of the pen, the President publicly affirmed what Jesus proclaimed two thousand years earlier - *have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female.*

But as we celebrate this welcome course correction, we must remember that the foundation for our opposition to gender ideology rests upon the transcendent truth that each person, including every trans-identifying adult and every gender dysphoric child, merits dignity as individuals created in the image of God. This truth underlies why the Bible commands us to love all our neighbors, not just those who are most like us or those with whom we agree. Because we recognize the dignity of each person, we also recognize that sharing the truth about a person's identity as created in the image of God represents a more excellent way through this cultural moment. As the Bible declares, love does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. For that reason, we must stand and speak truth against false, harmful, and dangerous radical gender ideologies.

*As pastors, recognizing the tremendous damage the gender epidemic has caused,
we also must ask ourselves how we came to this place and time.*

Eleven years ago, in Spring 2014, I attended a hearing in a crowded auditorium at Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky. What drew the crowd that day was a new transgender accommodation policy proposed by the school administration. As a pastor, I was surprised that the school principal would entertain the idea of allowing a boy to use the girls' private facilities simply because the boy identified as a girl. However, as an attorney representing several girls and their families in that case, I felt confident that settled law regarding privacy, safety, and religious freedom would protect the girls I represented. I was wrong.

After several public meetings and a hostile journey through the appeals process, the Kentucky school adopted the Los Angeles Unified School District transgender accommodation policy, effectively making bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers co-ed at the whim of a few boys. It was all quite disheartening, but it was only the beginning as other Kentucky schools quickly followed Atherton's lead and adopted similar transgender accommodation policies.

What caused me the most significant concern was trying to answer the recurring question of concerned students and parents who asked - *where was the church?* We invited local pastors and other Christian leaders to speak at the public meetings, but few ventured out. I challenged pastors to consider that the "accommodation" policy represented only a first step in an unfolding strategy. I even challenged others to imagine whether there could come a day when boys might identify as girls to claim a spot on a girls' sports team and rob girls of that opportunity. However, most in the Christian community thought I was overreacting. A typical response I heard from those "leaders" *at the time was that it was not an issue the church needed to be concerned about....* I felt like the boy who tried to help the crowd see that the emperor had no clothes!

Letter to Pastors

Fast forward ten years and we now see the rapid advance and catastrophic harm of gender ideology coursing through our public schools and the minds of the next generation. While the President's executive orders represent a welcome course correction on the federal level, some state and local governments still advance the harmful, dangerous, and false narrative of gender ideology. Thankfully, in 2023, the Kentucky General Assembly passed a law to slow the advancement of the gender revolution in the Commonwealth to protect student privacy in schools, protect teachers' free speech rights, and affirm parents' rights to the care of their children's upbringing. But we knew then what we've seen unfold since – the battle is far from over.

Indeed, we know those who work to normalize the lie of gender fluidity will not stand down so easily. Case in point – on September 18, 2024, Governor Beshear issued an executive order to ban what he refers to as “conversion therapy.” On its face, this sounds reasonable if he has in mind the archaic practices that included electric shock, ice baths, and other forms of discredited coercion. In that respect, we can agree with the Governor that no one condones such treatment for confused children. But the vague and overbroad language of the Beshear's order goes too far. It promotes a false, harmful, and dangerous, narrative that represents an offense to parental rights and religious freedom and fails to protect children. For example, with the swipe of his pen, Beshear purports to prohibit any licensed, certified, or registered professional from engaging in any practice, treatment, or intervention seeking to change a child's gender identity, behaviors, or expressions. Under this umbrella of so-called conversion therapy, some agenda driven activists would include activities such as talk therapy, prayer, deliverance ministry, and other means of encouragement to correct a child's view of self. In this way, Beshear's order threatens the freedom to communicate truth to children.

So, how should the church respond to the overreach into the lives of families who seek compassionate care and treatment for children based upon biblical truth? Should we remain silent, quietly submitting to the authority of the Governor, grumbling in our fine buildings but failing to otherwise respond outside the building to love our neighbors genuinely? Perhaps for such a time as this, we should reflect more earnestly on the biblical understanding of *loving our neighbor*, as Francis Schaeffer suggested, "in a practical way, amid the fallen world, at my particular point of history."

Let me illustrate. I am walking down the street and I come upon a big, burly man beating a tiny tot to death – beating this little girl – beating her – beating her. I plead with him to stop. Suppose he refuses? What does love mean now? Love means that I stop him in any way I can, including hitting him. To me this is not only necessary for humanitarian reasons: it is loyalty to Christ's commands concerning Christian love in a fallen world. What about that little girl? If I desert her to the bully, I have deserted the true meaning of Christian love, responsibility to my neighbor.¹

Be assured, we certainly do not advocate violence in any form. However, we do suggest a biblical response demonstrating the church's role as an expression of “Christian love, responsibility to my neighbor” outside the building. In that regard, perhaps we should reflect on the practical role of the church as suggested by Martin Luther King Jr. in his letter to pastors, written as he sat in a Birmingham jail for exercising civil disobedience to unjust laws. King's letter offers a thought-provoking reflection on how the gospel represents the hope for all generations in all areas of life:

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period when the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed.

¹ Francis Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1984), 128.

Letter to Pastors

In those days the Church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.²

Under Beshear's order, parents apparently could only seek help from professionals who will affirm gender transition, an unbiblical social experiment that we know presents grave harm to children. Under Beshear's order, some men and women in your congregation may be forced to compromise their biblical convictions to remain in their vocation. Why would the Governor issue such an order? And in light of the unending assault on truth by gender activist who perpetuate the lie, do we really believe that this order is the last step, or could it simply be another step in the advancement of gender ideology?

Once again, I'm reminded of those girls and families at Atherton eleven years ago, facing a brave new world now known as the gender revolution, asking - *where's the church?* And I'm reminded now, as I was then, of the biblical admonition to God's people not to stand aloof, watching as an enemy carries away our neighbors. Instead, we're called to rescue those being drawn away to the slaughter. Or, as Henry Blackaby told me years ago, these ideologies against the knowledge of God advance in culture when the church fails to show up, and the church fails to stand up, and the church fails to speak up. He then added to our small gathering, *ladies and gentlemen; we're the church.*

Jesus did many things during his earthly ministry, but one thing is clear from his own words: *for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth.³*

Pastor, how will you bear witness to the truth through your leadership for such a time as this? Will you consider opportunities to show up, stand up, and speak up against the false, harmful, and dangerous narrative of Governor Beshear's radical gender ideology? Will you join the effort to restore the art of Christian persuasion in culture as a voice for godly influence? Will you call and lead your flock to do the same? If so, please know that the Justice Defense Foundation exists to stand with you. Our team offers to meet with you or your congregation, share resources from years on the frontlines, and provide a host of workshops without cost to you. We encourage you to get in touch with us today and let us know how we can collaborate so that, having done all, we can stand together for truth and biblical justice for the sake of the next generation to the glory of God.

Clint Elliott
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²Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (April 16, 1963).

³John 18:37