

# Statement on Proposition 8

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*By Jesse Stutt, President*

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Last year, following the CA Supreme Court's decision to uphold Proposition 8, *Progressive Christians at Stanford* held a candlelight vigil in White Plaza. The event was well-attended, and representatives from many faith traditions shared testimonies and words of encouragement. The next morning, a front-page photo of the event was featured in the *Stanford Daily*. In the wake of the one-year anniversary of the passage of California's Proposition 8, I have been asked to briefly share my reflections on the event and the issue of same-sex marriage. As a straight Christian, who has attended Church my entire life, I strongly support marriage equality, for a number of reasons. It would be impossible to give a full argument in favor of these in such a short amount of space; instead, I just want to offer a few thoughts on the matter.

I believe that Christian condemnation of same-sex relationships stems from a misinterpretation of the values presented by Jesus. I believe that at the heart of Jesus' message was this: "love your neighbor as yourself". Jesus instructed us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to care for the sick, to look after the poor and elderly. I think it is ultimately this attitude of love, care, and compassion that Jesus wants us to follow. Having read the Gospels multiple times, I don't believe Jesus was interested in judging others; I believe he was interested in helping those who needed help. I think that we need to be careful that we don't lose sight of what our main objectives as Christians are; Christianity shouldn't be about an adherence to specific dogma in order to achieve salvation, and it shouldn't be about aggressively trying to convince others that we have a monopoly on moral truth. I think it ought to be about trying to live a morally good and Christ-like life, a life that is concerned not just with our needs, but also (and perhaps even foremost) with needs of others. We please God not by professing a literal belief in some controversial church doctrine, but when we show kindness and concern for those in need, when we stand up for those who are mistreated, when we recognize that through Christ we are all brothers and sisters and that each individual's wellbeing and happiness is important to Him and it should be important to all of us. In the case of Prop 8, many cruel tactics were used in trying to provide a moral sanction for bigotry. This is not right, and moreover it is inconsistent with the message Jesus preached. I think Christianity needs to voice this. And we need to really ask ourselves, "What Would Jesus Do?" What did Jesus stand for?

In this specific case, I feel the issue ultimately comes down to equality. If we want to provide State recognition of marriage and give special benefits to married couples, then I think these recognitions and benefits must be applied to all couples who love each other and who sincerely want to commit to one another. Not just some. I don't think there is a strong philosophical argument that homosexuality is immoral. And I don't think Jesus' core message is consistent with arbitrarily granting rights to some, but refusing these rights to others. I understand that the issue of same-sex marriage can be challenging, and I do believe that thoughtful and intelligent Christians can earnestly come to different conclusions about it. Nevertheless, when I examine the issue for myself, in light of what I take to be at the heart of my religion, I feel very strongly that condemnation of same-sex marriage runs counter to Jesus' fundamental teachings. In closing, I'd like to offer a few verses that have guided me on this issue and life in general:

Matthew 22:36-40

John 14:21

Romans 14:8-14

In Christ,  
Jesse Stutt

Student President, Progressive Christians at Stanford