

Jesus—not therapy—can change LGBT lives, evangelical leaders say

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. (RNS)—Evangelical leaders spoke out against reparative mental-health therapy for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people but still called on them to change, saying only through faith in Jesus can they find “wholeness and holiness.”



Al MohlerThe [Association of Certified Biblical Counselors](#) and the [Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood](#), meeting at [Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Louisville, Ky., were under fire from LGBT activists for failing to condemn reparative therapy.

Oregon, California, New Jersey and the District of Columbia now prohibit licensed therapists from attempting to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of a minor. However, the Biblical Counselors group—as religious advisers—are not necessarily subject to those bans.

Dozens of activists from the [Fairness Campaign](#), a Louisville LGBT advocacy group, demonstrated near the campus, saying reparative therapy increases the rate of depression and suicide in the LGBT community and

objecting to religious calls to “change.”

In a joint press conference, Al Mohler, president of the seminary, and Heath Lambert, executive director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, said psychological therapy, including reparative therapy, is a “superficial” response to the struggle people face in dealing with same-sex attraction and transgender identity.

A joint statement released by Mohler and Lambert still used the language of “change” and “repair” for LGBT people who, Mohler said, can only find “wholeness and holiness” through faith in Jesus.

In an interview, Mohler insisted his view is not new: “I don’t think repair comes any way other than through redemption. I have been consistent through the years in saying reparative therapy is not the way to go.”

Change of position

However, columnist Jonathan Merritt pointed out, Mohler in 2004 lamented the American Psychological Association’s condemnation of reparative therapy and “transformational ministry.” Back then, he called the association’s push for others to accept science’s findings on sexual orientation a “final insult” to traditionalists.

“We are not saying homosexuality can’t change or shouldn’t change,” Mohler said Oct. 6. “This is not something that can be reduced to deciding or choosing an object of sexual attraction. That’s simplistic and a sin against those who are in the struggle” with sexual attraction and gender identity.

Every person struggling with sin—whether pride or anger or sexual attraction—faces the same kind of battle, Mohler added. Only the gospel promises transformation, because it can “make us desire things we have never desired before, and it will give us progressively the ability to follow

him in obedience.”

He dismissed the argument by LGBT activists that they, too, can be faithful Christians.

“The great divide,” Mohler said, is between those who think faithful Christianity conforms to the Bible and those who don’t. The latter, he said, “can never be faithful Christians.”

‘Moral sanity’

Lambert, associate professor of biblical counseling at Southern Seminary, said in the press statement the conference was intended to demonstrate for ministers and counselors Christian compassion for people struggling with homosexuality and gender identity.

“We’re in a culture where Christians are the only ones that can teach moral sanity in the midst of the moral craziness we’re in,” Lambert said in an interview prior to the conference.