

Home

Advertise

Business Dir.

Organizations

Subscribe

PULP



Feature Story

Good Lord!

Gay and Christian? Do we have a website for you!

By Greg Archer



God loves gays, Jesus loves gays and Justin Cannon loves letting the masses know all about it. Actually, the ambitious 21-year-old may be more jazzed these days about the growing popularity of his new dating website. It's here, after all, that a bevy of hotties — from more than 20 countries — seem to have assembled themselves in one of the more talked about dating pools that addresses something that's not really talked about — much by gay Christians. Cannon, who was raised in Michigan and is currently seeking priesthood in the Episcopal Church, launched his own "personal quest" out of "self-hate and lies" several years ago in order to gather all the 411 on the growing number of gay Christians "seeking to know what the Bible says about homosexuality. What he found is enlightening. All that inner work eventually birthed his ministry site, TruthSetsFree.net, last year and, more recently, GayHarmony.net. The BottomLine caught up with the ever busy Cannon to learn more about his unique spiritual adventures and why it has become so important for him to break down judgments even within his own community — as well as recognizing a "deep sense of unity among all Christians that transcends the walls of denominations."

TBL: You feel God accepts gays; is that the thrust of launching the site?

Justin Cannon: Through my studies and research I have come to learn that the Bible only condemns homosexuality in contexts of rape, prostitution and pederasty, just as heterosexual sex is also condemned in such circumstances. There is no blanket condemnation of homosexuality in the Bible, nor anything that comes close to condemning a loving, committed homosexual relationship. The results of my years of research have been published in the form of a Bible study that can be downloaded from my ministry's site (TruthSetsFree.net). I believe that God not only loves gays, but that he also created us how we are. As for this site, most GLBTQ Christians are excluded from joining Christian personals sites, and gay and other personal sites aren't structured to meet our specific needs. I believe the growing gay Christian demographic deserves a welcoming safe place tailored just for us, thus I launched GayHarmony.net.

How did you launch the site? Solo? Or did you receive some help?

This has been a solo project and has cost me nearly \$500-plus, and countless hours of work.

How many members do you have?

Approximately 1100— and growing daily.

Is there a large population of gay Christians that many do not know about? If so, why do you think?

I believe that there are more gay Christians than the average American thinks. GayHarmony.net alone has more than 1,100 registered members after just six months. There are thousands of gay Christians in the United States and we are beginning to emerge from the closets of fear and self-hate, recognizing that there is a place for us at God's table.

Many feel Christianity bashes homosexuality. Do you see it that way?

That's a complicated question. Yes, there are Christians who bash and condemn homosexuals, but I do not believe the Christian faith is fundamentally anti-gay. I personally believe that the larger Christian Church has not always condemned homosexuality like it does today, and in fact, there may have been a time when it was more accepting and affirming towards us. According to John Boswell's book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, until about 1200 — except the time around the fall of the Roman Empire — Christianity in the Occident was generally accepting of homosexuality. He also studied the Vatican archives in Paris, Istanbul and the Vatican for 12 years and found copies of same-sex unions. There is an image taken of an old icon of St. Bacchus and St. Serge in a traditional wedding icon format, with Christ uniting the two. They

also mentioned in the liturgies, which you can read about in Boswell's book *Same-sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*.

Have you encountered people who have difficulties coming to terms with their homosexuality and being Christian?

Every week through my ministry (TruthSetsFree.net) I receive emails from Christians of all ages, denominations and walks of life seeking comfort, help with understanding the Bible passages and ultimately seeking to understand God's will for them as relates to their sexuality. I have corresponded with young teen that are just coming out to themselves ... all the way to men and women in heterosexual marriages that are just coming to terms with the fact they are gay.

How has your endeavor been met by people within your own religion?

My Bishop, the Right Rev. Edwin Leidel Jr., of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan, has been supportive of my work since the beginning and even helped fund the printing of my Bible studies. I sometimes get hate mail through my websites, but that has slowed down. Most of my interactions have been extremely positive, and I frequently receive emails from people thanking me for the work I am doing.

What is the most challenging aspect of being gay and Christian?

Wow, I have never been asked that before. I think the most challenging aspect is holding onto that trust that are loved and accepted before God. All gay Christians, I believe, sometimes have a lurking doubt: "What if am wrong?" In those moments, I go back to the Bible, my Bible study, Christ's life and words, settle into prayer, and I return to that place of peace. Ultimately I will be accountable to God, and I can rest in that peace of knowing that God knows my heart and sees that I have been seeking his will to the best of my ability. Of course there are other challenges like families and churches that are not accepting of who you are, but I have not dealt with that personally to the degree many others have.

What have you seen after launching the site? Any common themes among gays in the Christian religion?

That gay Christians come in all colors and ages and from all walks of life.

Why was it important for you to do this?

To provide a safe place where gay Christians can meet and find fellowship, and maybe even a life partner.

How has your life changed?

I would say that I have found a deep joy in being able in my own life to be free and honest about who I am, also a deep joy in being used as an instrument of God.

What are you learning — about yourself, about people, about people wanting love?

Patience. I struggle with being patient, and through these past two years I probably have learned more about patience than anything.

What do you feel your mission is?

My mission, through gayharmony.net, is to provide a safe place where gay Christians can meet and find fellowship, and maybe even a life partner. My mission through TruthSetsFree.net is threefold. First, I am working to bring clarity to the lives of GLBTQ Christians who have been living in the shadows, wondering how to reconcile their faith and sexuality. Second, I strive to bring clarity to reading Scripture, illuminating meaning of the "clobber passages" that are often used to condemn gays and lesbians. And, ultimately, I am working to share the truth that liberates: That one can be both Christian and gay with no conflict or contradiction between the two.

What are some of the most interesting things you're seeing in this outreach.

Definitely the most rewarding part of my work is seeing lives being transformed, as people step out of the shadows of lies and self-hate into a place where they can truly embrace the fullness of God. It is interesting how there is a deep internal joy that accompanies this transformation, despite all the challenges and difficult we face.

What's your biggest hope for your site. Your projects?

Of course, I have my own hopes that both of my websites might grow and reach more and more people, but ultimately I hope that I might be discerning enough to continue to listen to God's leading and his plan for my work — and not my own plans. Just as Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine" (Luke 22:42).

So, are you single?

Yes sir ... in a future partner I'm looking for a Christian man my age whose faith is a central part of his life. more information check out GayHarmony.net and TruthSetsFree.net.

[top of page](#)