Calling for Tolerance for Homosexuality

SALLY RYAN BURGESS

"God, please don't let me be gay. Everyone knows I can't be gay and be a faithful servant of yours. Everyone knows what scripture says about people like me. Please God this can't be who I am, it is too difficult and it can't really be to your purpose, can it? Oh God, please take this burden away from me, make me do something else, anything but this. God, of all the people I could be in love with, why am I in love with a beautiful, intelligent, charming, eccentric, evangelical, conservative Christian youth minister? Why is she so in love with me? Please, help me God. Show me what you would have me do about my life. Am I yours? Am I your disappointment?"

I prayed this prayer last spring and summer while involved in my first relationship with a woman. I don't think that I really began to listen to God's answer until recently. The answer is clear to me now: "Rye, you are a beautiful child of God and I created you. I created you gay. I have a purpose for you. Rye, you are loved by me. Others may hate you, but I love you. Your purpose is to serve by challenging hatred and intolerance when you encounter it."

I have accepted this challenge: to speak and challenge you to do the same. The world is ripe with Christian and others who wield scripture as a weapon of hatred, judgment and intolerance. They assert that homosexuality is an abomination seen and that all homosexuals are doomed to eternal damnation. While all Christians do not hold this worldview, it is a common view held by conservative and evangelical Christians. While many other Christians do not hold such bigoted beliefs, some conservative Christians tolerate bigotry and remain silent when others are attacking homosexuals. The time for change is now. I appeal to everyone at the University of Richmond to ridicule yourselves, your relatives, your friends and their views about the truths of homosexuality. Additionally, I encourage you to carefully examine the biblical interpretations of innocent Christians and their views on homosexuality. It is important to note that there are many different interpretations of scripture on homosexuality. Anglican Christians can deny that the Bible states that sexual orientation is a sin and that it is a matter of personal choice. Gay Americans can argue that Christianity allows for gay marriage and gay adoption and does not consider it a sin. Other interpretations include the belief that all homosexuals choose to be homosexual. Homosexuals can change their sexual orientation, homosexuals are not fated, homosexuals have a right to be treated as equals, homosexuals have a right to be tolerated and accepted by society. The world is ripe with Christians and others who wield scripture as a weapon of hatred, judgment and intolerance.

The American Psychological Association in its statement on homosexuality notes that the research on homosexuality is clear: Homosexuality is neither a mental illness nor moral depravity. It is simply the way a minority of our population expresses human love and sexuality. Groups who try to change the sexual orientation of people through so-called conversion therapy are misguided and run the risk of causing great deal of psychological harm. In the United States, 90 percent of all sexual abuse is committed by heterosexual men. The molesters are almost always family members, close family friends or the mother's boyfriend, and finally "the APA encourages all mental health professionals to work to help persons that such stances are grounded in myths, misinterpretations and hearsay."