

Jonathan Merritt outed as gay?



UPDATE #3: Jonathan Merritt [shares his tragic story with Ed Stetzer](#). Apparently, Azariah Southworth was not bluffing Southworth also posted an [update](#)...

UPDATE #2: Ken Silva at Apprising Ministries offers a similar perspective to what I've offered here. Silva apparently personally talked with Azariah Southworth. Note also he writes of his decision to post the article: "The story had already hit the Internet and it's only a matter of time before it would be widespread..." Precisely. I discovered Southworth's post via a pingback to one of my posts on Jonathan Merritt. ([link](#))

UPDATE: Baylor law school grad, [Aaron Weaver](#), rightly logged on and challenged me to post "all" relevant info pertaining to this issue indicating I should not just offer a partial picture. I happily agree. Hence, I post the relevant part of the [comment](#) he logged here:

"JM has publicly stated - see his January 17, 2009 blog post - that he has a girlfriend and not gay. He's even mentioned his girlfriend in a retweet this month! July 3rd to be exact.

That information should be included in this post or you should take the entire post down.

In addition, [Tim Rogers writes](#):

"BDW has made a point about Jonathan tweeting about his girlfriend. I can vouch for something that I saw in NOLA at the Cafe-Du-Monde. On Tuesday evening I went Cafe-Du-Monde to enjoy a beignet and coffee. The place was crowded and I noticed Jonathan Merritt with a group inside enjoying themselves. I noticed that his dad and mom came in with others and one was a young lady. She and Jonathan embraced and sat down at a table

together and it was clear they were more than just acquaintances. Thus, it was apparent to me that he was in a heterosexual relationship."

We welcome believable information "against" and not simply "for" the claim I linked in the main post. Hence, I was not favoring the sites I sourced contra Merritt. Indeed I owe no allegiance to the sites I sourced other than making fair inferences from their material if I quote them. And, as I indicated multiple times below, I offered *no judgment either way* on this issue. Nor do I feel obligated to mention an issue only if I supposedly believe a person guilty as [one commenter](#) incredibly implied. Begging pardon, but we are obligated, so far as I am concerned, to work through issues whether or not we agree with particular claims.

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We've had our disagreements with fellow Southern Baptist, [Jonathan Merritt](#). I first crossed swords with Merritt over his leftist [environmental crusade](#) a few years back. The more recent conflict with Merritt's view concerned the [name change](#) for Southern Baptists. Sandwiched between the two came the most scurrilous issue--Merritt's non-stop condemnation of Southern Baptists (a.k.a. evangelicalism generally) for what he deemed as [clobbering the gay community](#) with the Bible. Perhaps now it's been revealed why Merritt was so adamant about not condemning the gay community--at least that's what's claimed by a purported long-time friend. *According to a prominent "gay evangelical" Merritt himself is gay... >>>*

[Azariah Southworth](#), a self-confessing "gay evangelical" posted a revealing piece on his blog, *azariah speaks: the writings of a gay evangelical*. Of Merritt, he writes:

Jonathan Merritt is a good man with great intentions. Jonathan pushes for a society which seeks to understand the "other." He encourages conversation and relationship building over arguments and division. I agree with his approach and I know he is being genuine in this approach.

Southworth goes on to make this stunning claim:

I feel though what has led Jonathan to this thoughtful and effective approach is his hope for a future where **people like me and him, gay people, are no longer excluded but included in every aspect of society**" (embolden added).

And, lest any think Azariah just made a slip of the pen, he writes again:

Exposing this truth of Jonathan's sexual orientation is not an easy decision for me. I take no pleasure in doing this. As I type this my stomach is turning because I know of the backlash he will receive. I have thought about what all of this will mean for him and for me. I base my reasoning in the importance of living an authentic and honest life.

Finally, Azariah concedes some may contend with his public claim. So be it-- "*The nature and history of my relationship with Jonathan will not be disclosed. However, if evidence is required to back my claim it can be provided*" (italics and parenthesis original)

It *sounds like* this dude has the goods. Even so, we'd hope (and pray) Southworth is bluffing and the young Merritt can make his assertion into mere gossip. The untold damage this can and will do, *if true*, remains incalculable. Merritt routinely speaks for Baptist colleges, universities, and

is a frequent speaker at Lifeway's events. In addition, two seminary presidents--Danny Akin and Al Mohler--have in the past supported Merritt's views on various social issues.

In fact, Al Mohler told Jonathan Merritt in an [interview](#) last year that evangelicals have "lied about the nature of homosexuality" and have practiced what can only be called a "form of homophobia." Does this alleged new revelation we hear from the gay community concerning Merritt's supposed gayness shed new light on Mohler's disturbing words a year ago? We're not sure yet, but intend to probe more thoroughly.

More importantly, we surely need to pray for the Merritt family and [CrossPointe Church](#) during this time. According to Merritt's [speaking itinerary](#), Jonathan is scheduled to speak at his home church-- Cross Pointe Church--this coming Sunday (July 29). Former SBC president, James Merritt, is the Senior Pastor (Dr. Merritt is Jonathan's dad). Whether the claim is true or not, the public confusion within and without his church family--not to mention the predictable ire toward his church family--will be awkward and voluminous.

- To read the full post, see [Jonathan Merritt: Come Out](#)
- To read another piece on the same subject from the gay community, [read here](#). **Caution:** the content of the ads as well as the content of the comment thread may not be suitable or acceptable to some sensitive consciences
- For a similar perspective as indicated in this post, see [Ken Silva's post at *Apprising Ministries*](#)