

# Is Christianity Homophobic?

Series: The Deconstruction Zone: Navigating Doubts and Difficulties

Brad Bailey – July 23, 2023

**Note: The notes here are more extensive than what was actually shared due to time requiring moving more briefly and quickly through parts. All the main points were shared and these notes are simply more complete.**

## Intro

Welcome as we seek to hear God...and continue in a mid-summer series entitled “The Deconstruction Zone. In this series we are engaging some core ideas amidst **our current culture...** that **can become seeds of doubt and difficulty...** that are too often left unengaged.

**Our intent is not to presume** that such large questions can be **satisfied and settled** in the brevity of our time...but to **provide some initial perspective** that can **help in navigating the question.**

Especially true today... in engaging the question:

## Is Christianity Homophobic?

Does the Christian faith inherently bear a fear of those who are attracted to their own gender?

I will unpack that a bit further in a moment...but I imagine that some of us are thinking... **this is almost too dangerous to engage amidst our current culture.**

**I know** that we **live amidst polarizing narratives** regarding sexuality...a **cultural war** in which we can find ourselves **drawn to stand up against** those who are **oppressing a marginalized group ... or to stand up against** an **ideology that is seeking to devolve** the very foundations of our meaning and morals.

It's very possible that **30%** of those here are drawn towards one side... and **30%** are drawn to the other side...and **30%** are feeling entirely divided... and the other **10%** don't have an internet connection.

I can imagine that some of us **may fear** the potential for **division among us...**and **even within us.**

**So why speak into the polarized nature of sexuality?**

Because equally not engage is **to allow hurt and hate to go unspoken to.** Thousands of live who experience same-sex orientation... or conflict with gender identity... have grown up in churches...where they **never found a safe space** to process what they experienced... and sometimes **never found kindness.**

**And of course...in relationship to our series...** it relates to a **cultural idea** that **many are navigating** as they consider their beliefs.

**Knowing how strongly people feel about the ...I want to begin with two critical points that I believe are vital to you and I...**

**1. We don't have to agree...but let's grow together in engaging the heart and mind of God for human life.**

The current issues regarding sexuality are **challenging...** and I would add **...evolving.**

For the **past 20 years** I have had a **personal desire to focus on the challenges related to sexuality and sexual ethics...** cycling through **cultural ideas...** **personal conversations...** and **engaging in fresh Biblical study and reflection.**

On one level...I embrace that I am **always in process.** I have come to embrace that **my responsibility** is to be **faithful more than certain.** I embrace **my best understanding of the heart and mind of God for human good...**but continue to seek to discern that. And I hope that at some level we are all in that process.

[1]

The issue of sexuality is **so wide and deep...**and today we are **only engaging one question.**

So I imagine **a lot of “But what about..?”**

Towards that end... **we've created space today** for some initial opportunity to discuss the wider deeper questions.

I have also **prepared a lot more in the way of resources as well...** but I hope we can take advantage of some initial direct discussion

time after services.

I believe that it is also fundamental that

**2. We should never forget that engaging sexuality is never just an ethical “issue”... but about what real people are navigating.**

The more I have watched the differing positions engage...what continues to strike me...is that much of the intensity arises as we move away from this intersecting space... some operate out of a loyalty to truth... some operate out of a loyalty to people... and when positions arise out of either...the other tends to only go deeper into their reference point.

I sense that we are often being played...into a false space... between truth and love.

In Jesus these meet... (will come back to that)

*The point is that that kindness is not optional.*

*As one voice described [2]...*

**“Sometimes how we believe is just as important as what we believe.” – Preston Sprinkle**

**Today... we are only engaging one question.**

**Is Christianity Homophobic?**

For nearly 2,000 years it has been the general understanding of the Christian Faith...that created us as complimentary as male and female...and that complementary nature is what reflects the image of God... and that this complimentary nature uniting in covenant... is what constitutes the basis for physical union.

Until recently...that was a rather consistent but not central belief. I believe that is still true...though not with recognizing the challenges it raises. There is a lot we could explore about this position...but today the focus is not so much on the position....but on the posture.

In regards to Is Christianity homophobic...phobia refers to fear...so in the **most literal and narrow sense** of the question.... It is asking if the Christian faith inherently bears a **fear of sexual relations between the same gender.**

But the **wider question is usually not simply fear... but hate.** And not simply fear and hate of those who experience or live out same sex attraction... but **of those of various sexual dispositions ...including all that identify under the broad term as transgender.**

**Does the Christian Faith bear an inherent fear and hate of a group (or groups) of people based on sexual orientation or gender identity?**

**Let me begin with a little window into my own journey ...**

I grew up near the main local beach where all the local kids came to surf, play volleyball, and hang out. In the latter part of the 1970s... during my high school years...I worked as a Beach Boy...at a private beach club next door to that local beach.

(We had a few notorious years... and just a few weeks ago they had a reunion of this group... 40 years later.)

It was also the beach that **adjoined what became a world famous gay beach** way before there was much public sentiment for any openly gay expression. As such...there was an **underlying animosity** towards those the otherwise closeted lives. It was a clash of cultures... and we had our share of some tense exchanges.

A nearby ... was a rather **infamous gay bar** just across the road. One night, after drinking away with my cohorts, we were driving by and I jumped out of the car, kicked open the door to this bar and threw in a lit smoke bomb. I jumped back in the car as we drove off ... **never to think of it again.**

But fifteen years later... the Lord brought this up in my heart. I had recommitted my life to Christ... formed a community in San Diego that opened our home to those in deep need... ended up back in Los Angeles...and becoming a part of the Westside Vineyard. At the time...there was a ministry to those seeking sexual wholeness...and **many of my new friends were those dealing with homosexual desires**

as well as sexual addictions. By this time **I could deeply appreciate our common bond of faith and finding deeper wholeness in God.**

At one point the Holy Spirit brought my past animosity and actions to the forefront of my mind. I **felt the need to face the sin** towards not only individuals but also **countless lives whom God loves.** So late one Friday night... without telling anyone... I drive down to that infamous gay bar... feeling a need to ask forgiveness.

Of course **fifteen years later...**there **wasn't much chance of directly speaking** to the past. I went in and asked for the owner. Little did I know that the owner of the bar owned the primarily gay restaurant just a few doors away. Even more profound... the bartender then told me that the man who owned both establishments ... was the same man who operated them 15 years earlier... and that he was there that night. [3] So I walked over and into the upper scale restaurant and asked for the owner. I told him of what I had done and asked his forgiveness... without denying that we likely disagree in some beliefs. He told me no one had ever come to him like this and he spoke graciously about understanding the ways people can act when they're young. Then he invited me to come bring my family for dinner. This was just the beginning of discovering that I live in the common grace before which all our sexual lives must seek Jesus to help us love aright.

### **What was going on for me?**

I was **confronting my own fear and animosity.** (Hate may be too strong a word... but there was an animosity.) **Jesus had brought me into a space to face my own fears and prejudice.**

I wasn't simply facing a part of my Christian culture... but the larger culture.  
The truth is that

***We often fear... and reject... what we don't want to face...even in parallel forms...in ourselves.***

**Our sexuality** has always been **a source of some conflict...** by way of **comparison** to other boys or girls....by how **desires can consume us** and **control us...**that we try to pretend doesn't.

I don't care how bold someone may appear about their sexuality...no one is completely comfortable with who they are...including their sexuality.

***As sociologist have noted...***

***"A culture laughs at what is most unresolved within it."***

This is a part of our **human condition and culture.**

Such **fear of what is within us...**can **simply be projected** onto some common **target of public aversion.**

The point is that the problem is **not inherent to religious culture in itself. It is part of our human experience.**

**But religious cultures** tend to **care more about being good...**so by their nature... they can involve greater discomfort with dynamics like lust.

People may feel uncomfortable with the insecurity of fulfilling gender expectations ...and the power of sexual desires...and the way we desire what we know is not honoring.

**As such... when we ask if Christianity is homophobic... we have to face the fact that**

***"Christianity" always refers only to a variety of cultural and human forms that claim to reflect Christ. In this sense, "Christianity" is strewn with elements of homophobia... of fear and aversion... not because of the actual life and teachings of Christ...but in spite of them.***

**Fears and aversion have run through Christian culture.**

Such fear and aversion has run through humanity.

At times such fear and aversion has **run through me.**

At times such fear and aversion has **treated people in tragic ways.** [4]

Too often Christian culture has **allowed itself to make kindness an optional virtue...** and as the Apostle Paul wrote...everything becomes nothing but the sound of a **clanging cymbal.**

(To any who have experienced such... I am sorry.)

What I hope we can understand, is that the more significant question, is  
**How does Christ engage this type of fear and hate?**

### **John 8:2-11**

*At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” <sup>6</sup> They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup> “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”*

Here we see **someone’s violation of sexual boundaries** brought right **before the feet of Jesus...** to test him. What do we see in the way of Jesus?

**1. Jesus restores the common ground...** as he confronts the projecting of common shame.

Those stones they were going to be projected... Jesus knew that they were projecting their own guilt and shame. So he gives them a chance to face themselves.  
That is what God did in me... realize that you have your own brokenness.

This world is in a constant process of dividing the good and the bad... but Jesus does not see that.

When Jesus called a tax collector named Levi to follow him... it was scandalous...and it led to this exchange....

### **Mark 2:15-18 (NLT)**

<sup>15</sup> Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus’ followers.) <sup>16</sup> But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with such scum?” <sup>17</sup> When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

He **didn’t divide people** as good or bad...but by those who recognized their need for healing. And we do well to recognize that **Jesus was neither condemning** her as a person...**nor affirming her way of life**. He wasn’t operating out of either hate not affirmation... he was **operating** out of **compassion**.  
[5]

**2. Jesus creates a safe space...** as he stands with one in the place of shame...without condemnation.

Whereas the **crowd had separated themselves...**in a way that **made themselves feel safe...** Jesus silenced the condemnation...and **stands with her**.  
What a change he brings. He **confronts the voices and violence** of the crowd... and now **she is left in his presence**. And he makes clear...he is not there to condemn her.  
And we might think it’s because he didn’t judge her way of life. We might think he didn’t condemn how she was living.  
But he said he didn’t condemn HER as a person.

As for her way of life? He tells her: ***“Go now and leave your life of sin.”***

Did he believe that she was living out who she was meant to be? No.

Was he clear about that? Yes

### **3. Jesus calls for leaving the self-defined life... to restore one's God-given identity.**

I have **wondered what she may have thought**. “If only he really knew me...the people were right... this is all I know... it's who I have become. Could she believe that there was grace to change? My sense... is that she believed him...because he speaks from the depths of heaven's love and authority.

What seems **quite clear...** is that Jesus **neither condemns** her as a person **nor condones her way of life**.

He won't join that which wants to separate her and project their own shame...and he won't join that which presumes he has to affirm her choices.

**What Jesus brings before us is that which creates space to stand against hate...and to speak to that which reflects God's desire for human good.**

**Jesus creates space where truth and compassion meet.**

This is what we see as he engaged so many lives.

As someone described... it understanding that

***“Jesus represents inclusive love and exclusive truth.”***

And I believe **this challenges the way our culture has separated these two**.

The politics of sexuality has developed the designation of one “side” as inherently “homophobic”... discriminatory... against civil rights... and worthy of all the disgust of those hate-filled lives who supported slavery and racial injustice. The other “side” can be deemed as those who are destroying moral sensibility, marriage, and the family and are full of hate for these God-ordained ways of life. **Each position** and posture considers the other side as **inherently motivated and defined by hate**. I believe it is this **premise of hate** which is **most deeply dividing us** and which we do well to confront. [6]

We will never escape our polarizing contempt until we are willing to give up the false self-righteousness and superiority it plays on. Then we can have the courage to recognize that those we disagree with... may not bear hate... as much as have real concerns.

**The truth is that most of those who I know who have same sex attraction and gender identity conflict haven't chosen such feelings and may genuinely love God. Most of those who want to affirm such sexual dispositions, either personally or on behalf of others, don't simply hate God.**

**Similarly, most of those who do not affirm all of the means to normalize such sexual dispositions ...don't hate those who bear them ...nor do they desire to see discrimination from the essentials of civic life.**

The true nature of tolerance is defined by how we extend regard and respect to those we disagree with. When we allow our understanding of tolerance to be re-defined as demanding agreement... it negates the call to tolerance entirely.

The premise of hate **leads to a deeper divide of family, friends, and community**. There is an **entirely different effect upon a relationship** when two people acknowledge **disagreeing** and consider the other to be **“wrong”** in their assessment of what is good...than when one or both declare the other to be a **“hateful”** person. The simple truth is that no one feels safe when their character is judged unfairly. People will never feel safe when we press them to declare their “position” in some simplified manner to serve our desire to judge them and affirm our moral superiority. People will never feel safe when we **post our judgments on social media** demeaning certain people or positions for all to see. (We **may feel we have been heroic...** or needed to prove that we are on the “right” side ...but **we have also sent a warning to anyone who doesn't agree with us as to how we will treat them.**)

The premise of hate... is **cutting us off into smaller corners of life**... safe but more alone.  
**How much larger would our sphere of friends** be if we didn't have to agree in order to love one another.  
**How much stronger would our family ties be** if we didn't have to affirm every belief and choice that another makes.

We may do well to ask ourselves... do we accept that we hate all those who have a different view about any particular ethic?

We do well to ask ourselves if we think a parent's love should be defined by how they agree and affirm every belief and choice that their children make?

I think we have a **natural sense** that **just agreeing**...is a **cheap form** of love.

We may disagree about what God's design and desire is for our sexuality... but the truth that I want to contend for today...is that

**Love is not defined by agreement and affirmation of all beliefs and choices...but by how we join others on the common ground of our need... and support that which reflects our best understanding of that which honors God's desire for human good.**

And there lies the point that true love will bear... that which **reflects our best understanding of that which honors God's desire for human good.**

**So to the answer the question:** Does the Christian Faith bear an inherent fear and hate of a group (or groups) of people based on sexual orientation or gender identity?

**I believe deeply and definitively the answer is no.**

We may not agree on God's desire for human good...but there is nothing inherently hateful about holding different beliefs.

I believe God created life with order... to which our current experience does not simply "fit."

God has never led me to believe that his design and desire is not rooted in our complimentary nature.

I believe that we have been created as complimentary beings... regardless of sexual desires or fitting gender stereotypes.

Christ doesn't call us to be heterosexual... or gender-conforming...he calls us to be holy... to align our lives with God...which involves denying our autonomous and self-determined ruling selves... and return to the heart and house of God our Father.

Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

I know that may raise a lot of questions... a lot of "But what abouts"...I am glad it does.

It leads me to a deeper heart for the challenges it raises...real people with real longings... but I haven't come to believe that the challenges redefine the design.

My sense is that **God has something more beautiful** than we can yet imagine...and he knows that we are only seeing ourselves in a dim mirror.

My encouragement...is to follow the way of Jesus in this regard... who leads us to **a higher source of existence and identity.**

Regardless of what you believe may be how any individual lives out their sexual attractions or identity... that we can embody that which doesn't merely see and define life by its radical individualism...and ultimate autonomy.

We have a different story re belonging... and fitting...it brings moral meaning...but far more.

And towards this end... I believe that if we dare to consider the story God has revealed...we will be challenged... to see that it is a far more beautiful story which we are to aspire and embody.

At best... this can open the door to the a more common space...  
I know that involves a lot more...but I sense it is the door to that space.

And it leads into a space in which Jesus brings more to bear  
**But I would add that Jesus also challenges communal qualities that create a more welcoming space....**

**1. Jesus creates a space for our common brokenness...for gathering together in our various conflicts and confusion related to our sexuality.**

What opened up for myself...was realizing that we were all created to be a gift in some fundamental complimentary fashion...and I was a broken version... with my own insecure and selfish desires.  
And I found a common space... alongside others with different manifestations.

I am not suggesting that there are not unique dynamics related to same sex attraction or gender identity...  
but I believe that when we gather around Jesus... we are to find ourselves on the common ground of the need to be loved and love aright.

My sense is that Jesus would call all of us to embrace that we are first and foremost created to be children of God... and not to be identified by our various conditions. We have various conditions... dispositions...but we are children of God who are called to be loved and love aright.

**2. Jesus creates a space for greater freedom in how we experience and express our biological gender.**

While I won't attempt to dive deep into the meaning of gender... I think it is vital that we see that Jesus invites us into a healthy freedom from fitting some cultural laden ideas and ideals.

The nature of what it means to be male or female has always been loaded with cultural ideas and ideals that can become a source of oppression.

Being embodied as a male or female has always had degree of confusion and conflict that we have to navigate.

***Not one male has ever lived without the tension of how to be a man.***

***Not one female has ever lived without the tension of how to be a woman.***

What we see in Jesus is both an affirmation of being embodied in our sexual distinction... he was a male and related as a male to females...BUT he defied the cultural and oppressive stereotypes of his day...and ours.

***Jesus reflects the authentic self as embodied in sexual distinction in relationship to God...and not cultural ideas.***

He defies that which is bound to cultural ideas... and he defies that which presumes that our most authentic selves are found by simply our self expression in itself.

**I believe that the Bible is scientifically sound when it mentions only two sex categories – male and female. But it's also profoundly liberating when it comes to how males and females are expected to embody this distinction.**

While the Bible celebrates our sex differences as male and female, it gives us tremendous freedom in how we live within our sexed bodies.

The Bible may affirm that marriage is a beautiful reflection of covenantal love...and that children are a blessing... but the Bible never implies that a male becomes more male by way of either marriage or sexual activity.

Jesus regarding heaven...

As Rebecca McLaughlin describes [8],

Jesus explains that when he returns to bring heaven and earth back together, there will be no marriage (Matt. 22:30). Why? Because marriage is a temporary state, designed to point us to a greater reality. At the resurrection, no one who has chosen Jesus over sexual fulfillment will have missed out. Compared with that relationship, human marriage will seem like a toy car next to a Tesla, or a kiss on an envelope versus a lover's embrace.

That may sound depressing... but it is liberating.

And Jesus liberates us from many of the cultural ideas that have dominated a world that is separated from God.

Jesus showed courage...turn a table... confront the powerful... face death...but without a need for physical dominance.

### **From a Christian perspective, who I am in relation to God is my authentic self.**

If we allow cultural ideas to define us...and speak of what it means to be a man...or be a woman...we will create that which can become oppressive.

And if we allow the belief that we are the ultimate source of identity... we will find ourselves lost to our own vain attempt to name ourselves.

I find myself not in the depths of my psychology but in the depths of his heart. And when he calls you or me "child," "beloved," "friend," that's who we are, and any other identity—male, female, father, mother, child, friend—flows out of that.

The final challenge for us to see is this...

### **3. Jesus creates a space for deeper belonging.**

Jesus created a profoundly different basis for belonging...and a different dynamic for belonging.

Into a culture that held a high value for the nuclear family... where people are associated with their lineage...Jesus never marries... and creates a new center of belonging...which is life with the Father.

He never brought an end to the God given value of family...and an appropriate honoring of father and mother...but they no longer were the central source of what it means to belong.

He created a way of belonging that was rooted in God's family...not one's ethnic heritage or family lineage.

I won't begin to expand on all that means...but I would suggest...that it means a lot. It invites us all to know that we do belong...and that we are called to create a space for others to belong as well.

And it may speak to even our diversity on how we currently understand God's will for human good in relationship to our sexuality.

Where we can discover space for acceptance that transcends agreement... we create space for belonging.

CLOSING:

**Jesus modeled love as foundational...not conditional.**

**He died for us WHILE we were sinners.**

He joined meals with sinners... yet spoke more deeply about sin...in a way that included more of us...not less.

It was not because he hated everyone.

It was because his love is rooted in reality...a reality that is more beautiful than anything we have known.

And the love I find in the presence of God is not that which simply affirms all that is within me... but a presence that accepts me with grace... and the sense that God has far more than I have known.

PRAYER



## **Notes:**

1. By stating “we do not need to agree”... I won’t abdicate my responsibility as the pastor - teacher of this spiritual community... which involves seeking to be faithful to the centrality of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, and the work of the Spirit in our midst. But I know that many people hold different perspectives and many find themselves in process. I am giving space to those differences...while assuming that as the Lead Pastor...there are practical boundaries when such differences on such matters may exist.

I do not believe we all have to initially agree in order to gather. Our weekend gatherings in particular, are to be as wide open as the hillsides and crowds where Jesus first taught. Like those first settings, he is the center around which we gather... and ultimately it is a place of engaging and entering the life he has for us. My challenge is to engage...send me an email...check out some resources. A great first read would be that chapter in Rebecca McLaughlin’s book list in series resources. It’s a rich 20 minute read.

2. Sprinkle, Preston M.. Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say (p. 154). David C Cook.

3. This owner was Don Cranford ... whom I later learned started working at The Golden Bull as a bartender in 1968. When the owner was going to sell it... he stepped up to buy... keeping the employee family together. It appears that he was the owner of the neighboring SS Friendship bar as well. It appears that the bar “shuttered in 2005” and “is now the Shorebar, which opened in 2012 and draws a younger, flashier crowd.” He sold the Golden Bull to The Verge Group in 2017, which oversees it today.

4. Christian culture must stop relegating compassion to being some sort of secondary virtue we can cast aside for the sake of our grand cause. When someone posed the question, “Is it more important to be right or to be kind?” ... there was wisdom in the response that said: “We’re never right if we’re not kind.” Kindness does not require being mild. Kindness is that which binds us in a basic regard and respect for the dignity of another. It may include passionate confrontation of another’s ideas and choices...but never merely in a self-serving or publicly exploitive manner.

As one wrote, “We lament the alienation, judgment, anger and hatred that marks far too many of the debates around sexuality. Our theological and ethical positions are important. But if they are held without love, we are nothing but a clanging gong and resounding cymbal.”

5. While the crowd was operating out of condemnation rooted in fear and hate...Jesus was operating out of compassion.

“When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” - Matthew 9:36 (NKJV)

6. How have we accepted the premise of hate regarding different assessments of sexual ethics? I would suggest a few elements:

- A healthy awareness of prejudice and mistreatment. Following the civil rights movements emerging in the 1960s, there was an awakening of injustice... of the guilt of slavery and racism... and a natural inclination to avoid similar prejudice. In other words...there has been actual hate... so we are prone to accept that it is the same when someone applies it another situation.
- Political power by way of forming an enemy – Political power is built by creating an enemy... the more evil the enemy can be cast...the better for growing one’s base and gaining political power. The reality is that in the name of labeling others with hate... it is often the power by which hate begets hate.
- The manipulation of language repeated over time – Headlines have gained complete freedom to declare judgments that shouldn’t be accepted as logical based on the actual facts...but when they stated enough times ...they are often accepted as acceptable fact. Every day articles and blogs use labels such as “hateful”... “anti”... “exclusionary”...of everyone who differs their research conclusions, policy assessments, or nearly any religious moral belief.

7. My sense is that when we gather around Jesus... there should be a type of freedom from the way in which LGBTQ can become the source that defines us or divides us. I shouldn't lose appreciation for what may be a very different experience for others...but I should find growing awareness that we are all far from fully home... far from living out of the identity that we share in Christ.

8. McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* (p. 174). Crossway.

### **Resources:**

While the frame of this "Deconstruction Zone" series was distinct from others, I am indebted and would recommend these resources on the general topic: *Before You Lose Your Faith: Deconstructing Doubt in the Church*; by Trevin Wax (Author), Ian Harber (Author), & 14 more (2021); Amazon - [here](#) / Provided as FREE eBook at TGC - [here](#); *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion*, by Rebecca McLaughlin (2019, Crossway) - [here](#); James Emery White Meck series: Deconstruction Zone

**Regarding "Relating to Sexual Dispositions"** – similar ideas in a paper by Westside Vineyard Church's Lead Pastor Brad Bailey – see:

[Relating to Sexual Dispositions](#)

### **Regarding homosexuality... and the Christian Faith**

The following represent those engaging this topic from personal experience (of same-sex attraction) and processing of faith by which they maintain a historic understanding of the Scriptures.

Rebecca McLaughlin's chapter "Isn't Christianity Homophobic?" in her book [Confronting Christianity](#) (Exceptional engagement of this question within the brevity of a single short chapter.)

[Is God Anti-Gay?](#) - Jesus, the Bible, and Same-Sex Sexuality (Can you be gay and Christian? – March 1, 2023, by [Sam Allberry](#)

[Same-Sex Attraction and the Church](#): The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life by Ed Shaw (November 9, 2015) - Ed Shaw (a pastor with same-sex attraction) observes that most people who have left the traditional Christian viewpoint have not done so because they have carefully examined the Scriptures and found the traditional view wanting, but because they no longer find the Christian ethic "plausible." Therefore his book provides a more expansive view towards the assumptions about the potential to live faithfully that are a healthy challenge to both the culture at large and the church. He frames his answer around nine "missteps" that the Church has made mainly because we've adopted cultural values rather than what scripture has said. For instance, do we believe that our identity is defined by our sexuality or by our relationship with Christ? Do we believe that sex is the only way to find intimacy? Do we believe that happiness should determine our morality?

[Living Out Ministry](#) – Ed Shaw (above) and team provide a wide set of online resources on sexuality ...emphasizing developing conversations.

[What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?](#) by Kevin DeYoung, (April 30, 2015) – Deemed to provide the most accessible yet solid presentation of the traditional Biblical sexual ethic that engages the Biblical texts and views as well as pastoral wisdom. (Well reviewed by a wide range of those engaging this topic and maintain a historic understanding of the Scriptures including Moore, Butterfield, Gagnon, Greear, Hill, Carson, Yuan, and McDowell who notes: "He ...counters some of the common assertions such as, "You're on the wrong side of history." This is the one book I chose to use with my high school students to train them to think more deeply about the issue."

[The Journey Out: How I Followed Jesus Away from Gay](#) by Ken Williams; (March 8, 2021) – Offers a helpful more personal connection to the deeper pain of self-rejection and ultimate hope that both the author and others have found.

[A War of Loves](#): The Unexpected Story of a Gay Activist Discovering Jesus by David Bennett, (November 13, 2018) - Raised by open-minded agnostic/atheist freethinkers in predominantly-secular Australia, David gives only a brief analysis of scriptures pertaining to homosexuality. The focus is more on his story of feeling like a bit of an outsider among both "affirming" and "non-affirming" Christians. David emphasizes that

both American culture and the American church are preoccupied with romantic and sexual love. The gay and Christian communities are often seen as polar opposites: one a progressive, inclusive community, the other a community of oppressive, archaic laws. Having stood on both sides, I know the reality is far more complex.” (p. 17)

[Sex Without Bodies](#): The church’s response to the LGBT movement must be that matter matters. Article by Andy Crouch, June 2013 – A valuable brief assessment of the underlying issue....all the more appreciated by how it identified the issue so many years ago.

Several recent lives combine personal experience as same-sex attracted Christians who are living faithfully according to the Scriptures including: Christopher Yuan, Jackie Hill Perry, Wesley Hill, Rosaria Butterfield, Rebecca McLaughlin, and Sam Alberry, among others. None of these are simply “ex-gay” testimonies in that all of them, including Cook, confess to experiencing ongoing same-sex attraction. Some have married someone of the opposite sex (interestingly, all the women in that list) while others have remained celibate (all the men in that list).

### **More scholarly engagement with Biblical text and meaning:**

[The Bible and Homosexuality](#) By J. Glen Taylor - Good “article length” engagement noting the issues raised about the different texts and views.

[Homosexuality: The Relevance of the Bible](#) by David Wright - A respected scholar adds his assessment to the historical interpretive nature of the passages.

Robert Gagnon is known for having written the most exhaustive scholarly support for the traditional position toward homosexuality. [[The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics](#) by Robert A. J. Gagnon (Sep 1, 2002).] He is generally deemed a very “formidable” voice, though as a scholar at the forefront of defending against new “preferred interpretations”...his voice bears the polemic nature and there are pejorative edges in some comments.

### **Resources related to transgender issues:**

**Book** engaging all related issues: Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say by [Preston Sprinkle](#) – February 1, 2021; - [Amazon](#)

**Short book** that provides introduction / could be shared with youth:

Finding Your Best Identity: A short Christian introduction to identity, sexuality and gender - 18 Nov. 2022, by [Andrew Bunt](#) –[Amazon UK available on Kindle](#)

**Articles that provides a few vital points:** [5 Things Every Christian Should Know about the Transgender Conversation](#) – Article by Preston Sprinkle

[Intersex and Transgender Identities by Preston Sprinkle](#) (Article)