

## Case Study 1: Homosexuality and Christianity

Kevin noticed a girl waiting behind a couple people in the line that was forming around him. Tears stained her cheeks. He hurriedly accepted the thanks of a couple other audience members who expressed how helpful his presentation on homosexuality and Christianity had been for them. The girl cautiously approached him, wiping her eyes in embarrassment. She introduced herself as Carrie and thanked him for his talk and then went on to tell him why she was crying. She had been in a relationship with another girl (Sara) for the past couple months and felt that the talk spoke to "exactly where I'm at." But, she went on to explain, "I'm dating this girl and I've never felt this way before—so committed to the well-being of another person beside myself. Can this kind of relationship really be wrong? What should I do?"

Additional background information:

- After asking a few questions, Carrie went on to explain to Kevin that her decision to "come out" had torn her family apart. Her parents disowned her and kicked her out of the house. She's been living with friends when not at school. She hasn't talked to her family in months.
- Carrie also explained the confusion she was feeling: "I feel like I've grown more in my walk with God in the past couple months since getting involved with this campus ministry. I'm reading the Bible more and praying. I'm getting really connected in a Christian community. I've never felt this close to God before. But all that growth has coincided with my relationship with Sara too."
- She described her relationship with Sara this way: "This is the most emotionally healthy relationship I've ever been a part of. There's a selflessness I've never expressed in any other relationship. Don't get me wrong, I've dated guys. But every relationship I've ever been in with a guy has been about me. I've been manipulative. They've been very physical relationships. Every guy I've ever dated I've used for myself. But Sara—I just want to care for her."

The following questions may help you frame your response:

- What situational or contextual elements do you need to account for?
- What norms or principles apply to this scenario?
- How might Carrie's motivations influence your suggestions?

A way forward:

- What would you say if you were Kevin?
- What kind of questions might you ask Carrie?
- What can you affirm about Carrie? What might need correction?
- What next steps would you suggest for Carrie?

## Case Study 2: Homosexuality in the Church

Mark and Josh are a gay couple in Tim's congregation. They started attending several months ago, even though they knew that Tim's church was "one of those conservative churches," because they had heard from friends about the meaningful community they'd found there. Tim had been both surprised and encouraged by their presence—it wasn't every day an openly gay couple walked through the doors of his church. Over a few months, they grew to become regular attenders. Some members of the congregation were confused by the presence of Mark and Josh, but most simply kept silent about it. However, a couple members of the church actively befriended Mark and Josh and invited them into their small group. The couple has been very involved ever since. Mark and Josh pulled Tim aside after the service one Sunday and shared, "Tim, we really feel like we've come to grow in our faith a lot since we've become involved here. We feel loved and like a part of the community. But we want to make that official. What do we need to do to become members of your church?"

Questions:

- If you were Tim, what would you say to their request to become church members?
- What factors would you need to take into account in order to respond appropriately?

*Additional Background Info:*

- Both Mark and Josh grew up in Christian homes and have considered themselves believers all their lives. They both have a decent knowledge of Scripture and have spent substantial amount of time studying the biblical passages on homosexuality. They are both convinced that the Bible does not condemn contemporary monogamous same-sex relationships, and that its condemnation of homosexual behavior is limited to those particular cultural contexts. After all, "the Bible doesn't even talk about the type of relationship that we have."
- When further questioned, Mark and Josh suggest that they might be willing to abstain from the sexual component of their relationship so long as they could still live together as celibate partners.
- Mark and Josh also have a 2 year old daughter whom they adopted from Africa. She has a number of chronic medical issues and is considered to be a special needs child.

Additional Questions:

- How does this additional information affect how you might respond?
- What are some ways we can make our churches safe places for LGBT people?

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY ON SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITY

### General Sexuality/Sexual Ethics

- ❖ [\*The Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality Report\*](#) (2020).
  - An advisory report produced by the PCA on human sexuality with a focus on theology, pastoral care, and apologetics related to same-sex attraction.
- ❖ *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age*. Jonathan Grant.
  - Grant's book is an excellent diagnosis of where we are and how we got here as a culture with respect to our views on sexuality. The first half of his book unveils many of the assumptions that many Christians have unknowingly adopted from our broader culture.
- ❖ *Sexuality and Holy Longing: Embracing Intimacy in a Broken World*. Lisa Graham McMinn
  - McMinn establishes relationship and connection as the heart of sexuality, rooting that relationship in the Bible's depiction of God's intention for humanity's relationship with him and with one another.
- ❖ *Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage*. Christopher Roberts.
  - This, admittedly academic, treatment of the significance of sexual difference for marriage traces the importance of sexual difference throughout the history of Christian theology. A foundational work for understanding the nature of gender distinctions and the roots of traditional Christian sexual ethics.
- ❖ *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*. Kyle Harper
  - A fascinating analysis of the first "sexual revolution" when Christianity transformed the sexual ethics of the ancient and classical world.

### Sexual Identity/Same-Sex Attraction/Homosexuality

- ❖ *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church*. Ed Shaw
  - Shaw's book is one of the most balanced treatments on same-sex attraction. Shaw emphasizes the need for church to create plausible pathways to faithfulness for SSA believers. Very pastoral and helpful for discipleship.
- ❖ *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*. Wesley Hill.
  - Part memoir, part biography, part theology, Hill writes as a Christian who struggles with his own sexual identity. His book is one of the most nuanced, balanced treatments on the topic. This book is especially helpful for those who are attracted to the same sex or want a picture of what it's like.
- ❖ *Born Again this Way*. Rachel Gilson.
  - Similar to Hill, Gilson's book is part memoir, part theological reflection on what Christian faithfulness looks like for same-sex attracted people. She writes with vulnerability and winsomeness, but also theological clarity and wisdom.
- ❖ *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*. Mark A. Yarhouse.
  - Yarhouse's book is a more comprehensive treatment of the issues surrounding Christianity and homosexuality. He deals especially well with issues surrounding sexual identity.
- ❖ *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Youth Resource*. Mark A. Yarhouse.
  - While primarily directed toward counseling adolescents, this book presents Yarhouse's sexual identity therapy (SIT) framework in layman's terms. This is a helpful book to read if you are counseling someone as they work through their sexual identity.

- ❖ *Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Christian Community.* Mark Yarhouse and Olya Zaporozhets
  - Through the stories and struggles of gay Christians who are reorienting their lives around the costly obedience required to follow Christ, Mark Yarhouse and Olya Zaporozhets call the church to reorient as well, leaving behind the casual morality that is widespread today to pursue the path of radical discipleship.
- ❖ *What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?* Kevin DeYoung
  - A helpful popularization of some of Gagnon's work on the exegetical basis for the traditional interpretation of Scripture.
- ❖ *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.* Robert A. Gagnon
  - Gagnon's work is the most comprehensive treatment of the exegesis of individual texts on the subject of homosexuality. His scholarship is solid, though his tone leaves something to be desired.
- ❖ *The Moral Vision of the New Testament.* Richard Hays.
  - One of the foremost New Testament scholars tackles a variety of issues in this book, but his chapter on homosexuality demonstrates both excellent scholarship and a pastoral heart.

### **Gender Identity/Gender Dysphoria**

- ❖ *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture.* Mark A. Yarhouse.
  - A thorough, nuanced, Christian discussion of transgender issues.
- ❖ *Transgender.* Vaughan Roberts.
  - A brief introduction to how Christians ought to think about transgender issues.
- ❖ *Irreversible Damage.* Abigail Shrier.
  - Shrier is a journalist who explores the phenomenon of "rapid onset gender dysphoria" which has led to increasing numbers of adolescent girls identifying as trans over the past five years.

### **Singleness**

- ❖ *7 Myths about Singleness.* Sam Allberry.
  - Allberry addresses common misconceptions about singleness (e.g. singleness equals loneliness, singleness is a special calling), framing the vocation of singleness within the biblical story and the common call to discipleship.
- ❖ *Redeeming Singleness.* Barry Danylak.
  - Danylak traces the place of singleness throughout the biblical story, situating it within the broader creation mandate and arguing that while marriage is a central part of God's vision for humanity, singleness too is an important calling for some Christians.