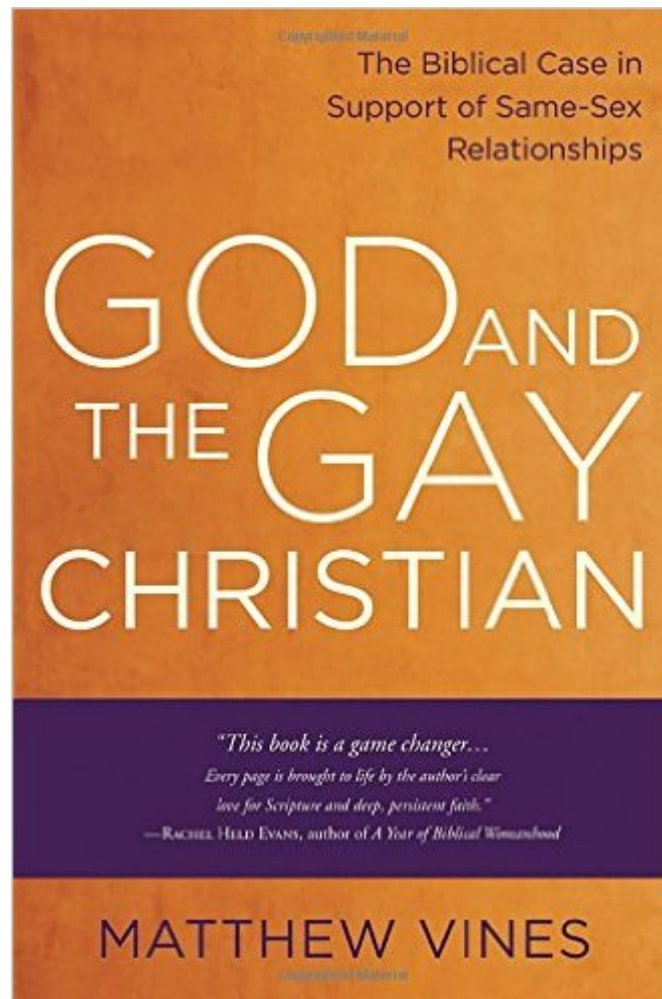


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God And The Gay Christian: The Biblical Case In Support Of Same-Sex Relationships



Synopsis

The landmark book exploring what the Bible actually says—and doesn't say—about same-sex relationships. As a young Christian man, Matthew Vines harbored the same basic hopes of most young people: to some-day share his life with someone, to build a family of his own, to give and receive love. But when he realized he was gay, those hopes were called into question. The Bible, he'd been taught, condemned gay relationships. Feeling the tension between his understanding of the Bible and the reality of his same-sex orientation, Vines devoted years of intensive research into what the Bible says about homosexuality. With care and precision, Vines asked questions such as: Do biblical teachings on the marriage covenant preclude same-sex marriage or not? How should we apply the teachings of Jesus to the gay debate? Can celibacy be a calling when it is mandated, not chosen? What did Paul have in mind when he warned against same-sex relations? Unique in its affirmation of both an orthodox faith and sexual diversity, *God and the Gay Christian* has sparked heated debate, sincere soul searching, and widespread cultural change on the issue of what it means to be a faithful gay Christian.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As controversy has swirled in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision upholding gay marriage I wondered if anyone had managed to write a rigorous, Biblically-grounded defense of gay marriage. The answer is: yes, this book is it, and boy is it a doozy. For author Matthew Vines, the issue is personal: he was raised in a loving, Christian, Bible-believing home, but realized when he was 19

that he was gay. What to do? After coming out to his dad, the two of them began an in-depth reexamination of scripture that would ultimately change both their minds on the subject. If you've studied what the Bible has to say on the topic of homosexuality at all you probably know two things: one, 'homosexuality' is not a word in either ancient Hebrew or Greek and indeed not something they had a cultural concept for (relevant Biblical passages tend to relate to specific acts); and two, there are six 'lobber passages' strewn across the Old and New Testament which have generally been used to show that the Bible comprehensively condemns gay sexuality. Vines of course digs into those six passages, but before he does so he spends several chapters laying some important conceptual groundwork. He examines the tools scripture gives us to judge whether a doctrine is good or bad, he delves into the history of the church changing its mind when presented with new information, and then he presents some new information: to wit, the church has only known about sexual orientations for about 200 years. What follows is one of the most fascinating parts of the book, an examination of the framework within which ancient peoples actually understood homosexual practices. It was a radically different one than we have today.

Matthew Vines is an Evangelical Christian who is seeking to not only establish that the Bible does not actively condemn loving, monogamous, homosexual relationships, but actually supports them, and he's going to try and do that using a high view of the Bible. I've seen other resources, primarily online, from various progressive churches that are inclusive of the LGBTQ community by taking a low view of the Bible, that is, by not accepting that the Bible is inerrant and ultimately the authoritative Word of God. It's more of a set of "guidelines" and therefore, the sections of the Bible condemning homosexual behavior are not to be taken literally or, they were social norms that were once valid in ancient societies but have no application in the modern world of faith. Vines, by contrast, embraces the full authority of the Bible but believes it has been misinterpreted and misapplied, resulting in the Evangelical Church's long condemnation of homosexual behavior and of gay people, including the gay Christians in their (our) midst. First, let's take a look at the reasons Vines believes Evangelicals should re-evaluate how they read the Bible relative to LGBT Christians:

1. First, we saw that a categorical rejection of same-sex relationships has been deeply damaging to gay Christians.
2. We saw that the concept of same-sex orientation did not exist in the ancient world. Prior to recent generations, same-sex behavior was widely understood to be the product of sexual excess, not the expression of sexual orientation.
3. The church has an established tradition affirming that lifelong celibacy should be voluntarily chosen, not mandated. Maintaining a condemnation of same-sex relationships would require us to revise that teaching.

Regardless of your own personal feelings about gay marriage, you can't help but agree that the Church's position on homosexuality has alienated droves of people, gay and straight alike. Having been raised in a conservative area of Florida, this is something I have struggled with since high school. When I was in college, I met both gay and straight people that were driven completely away from Christianity and anything to do with God, out of hurt and/or anger. I also met people that were gay Christians. One even said to me, "I know that this is a sin, but it's not worse than anyone else's sin." The fact that so many churches have said, "You can be gay OR Christian but not both" has never sat well with me. We all have sins we struggle with, whether it's pride or greed or whatever. So why was homosexuality singled out? That was my first red flag. My next red flag was that I could understand Biblical prohibitions against other sins (such as greed, adultery, etc.), but didn't understand why God would prohibit a loving relationship between two consenting adults just because they happened to be the same sex. This is where Matthew Vines comes in and explains the historical reasoning for the Bible's apparent condemnation of same-sex behavior. For example, the practice of pederasty, a sexual relationship between an adult man and a pre-pubescent boy, is inherently wrong for obvious reasons. Men raping other men to assert dominance -- clearly wrong. The verses in the Bible speak to specific things that were happening in the culture at the time. Additionally, the idea of sexual orientation didn't even exist back then. No one was "gay" or "straight." People were just people that happened to engage in sexual activity.

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