

Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | September 18, 2022

Week 4 | Sexual Orientation

Dear Church,

The best question someone has ever asked me came from “Evan.”

I’ll never forget the time I sat in my office and talked with “Evan” (an alias name to protect this individual’s identity). This was the first time I had met Evan face-to-face after exchanging some messages via email. It was amazing how quickly we dove into deep conversation.

I knew going into this conversation that Evan was same sex attracted. What I didn’t know, but found out *during* the conversation, was that Evan had experienced trauma in his childhood, had grown up Catholic, didn’t identify much with the LGBTQ+ community, struggled with a porn addiction, and also loved Jesus.

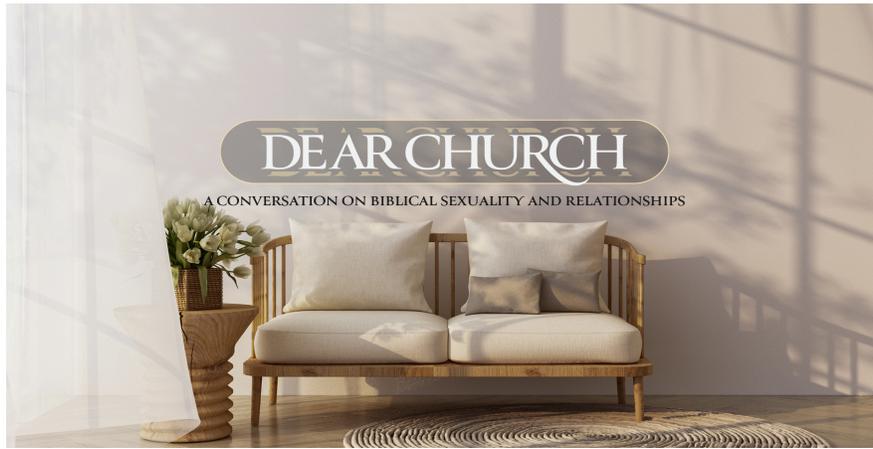
What I quickly realized in this conversation was how unique of a person Evan was. Of course, we know that everyone is unique. But so often, we categorize people and assume that they *think* a certain thing or *are* a certain way without actually taking the time to know them.

In talking with Evan, I found his questions probing and insightful. I found him honest. I found him curious about Christ’s demands for our sexuality. And I found him as someone genuinely eager to learn what God says about same-sex relationships.

During our conversation, we came to a place where it was obvious that Evan was in a battle against competing realities. He wanted to surrender all – his life, resources, and sexuality – to Jesus. But he also felt like being same sex attracted was *his identity* and that to deny that part of himself would be to deny himself. He felt stuck.

Then, *the question*.

He looked at me after all of that and said, “Emerson, do you ever *regret* following Jesus?”



I had to think about that for a minute. All his other questions like, “What does the Bible say about homosexuality?” or “What is discipleship and what does that mean?” I was more than able to answer and answer quickly. I knew the relevant literature on those topics.

But that regret question was *different*. This was a question erupting from a deep place within himself. This was a question that had notes of sacrifice laced in it, a question that had traces of longing and hopes, and a question that could be rephrased this way: “Is following Jesus and giving up this part of my sexual identity *worth it?*”

That’s not a question to be answered lightly. So, I thought about it for what felt like five solid minutes.

And I asked the Holy Spirit for help. And then **John 6** came to mind and I had my answer.

I looked at Evan and said, “No.”

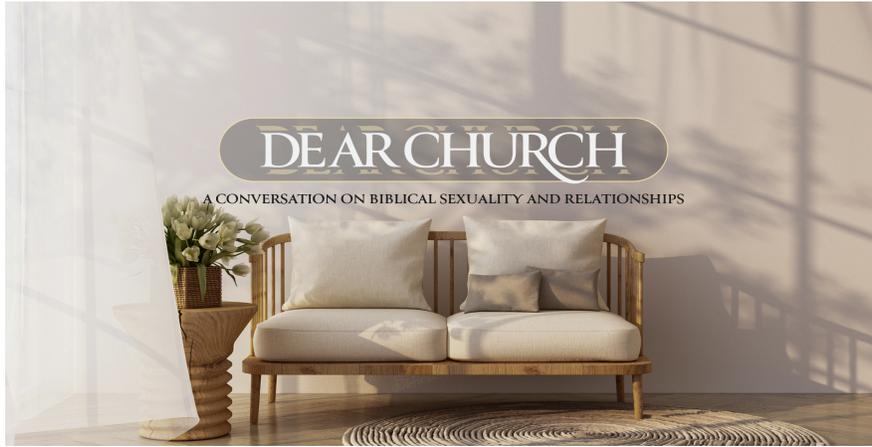
His eyes widened and he asked me to elaborate.

I said, “Have there been things in life I feel like I’ve missed out on? Yes. Are there things that I have given up because I follow Jesus? Yes. Are there things that I have *not done or experienced* because I follow Jesus? Yes. But all those things pale in comparison to knowing Christ.” I told him, “In life I feel a lot like the disciples in John 6. Jesus says some hard things in that chapter and a bunch of people give up on following him. Then he turns to Twelve and says to them, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ And it was then that Peter said, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...’ There are a lot of things I could run after, but they are fleeting. They don’t fulfill me. Only Jesus provides me with living water. Only Jesus can provide the eternal bread so that I never hunger. If I didn’t follow Jesus, where else would I go?”

That seemed to resonate with Evan.

When it comes to the topic of sexual orientation, everyone is at a different place. Some wrestle with what the Scriptures actually say, others don’t care what the Scriptures say, others know what the Scriptures say but still wrestle with the tension of self-denial and a life of discipleship.

Evan is still on the journey. And it’s an honor to continue to walk alongside him as he navigates the reality of life with God and the reality of his own sexuality and how those two things relate.



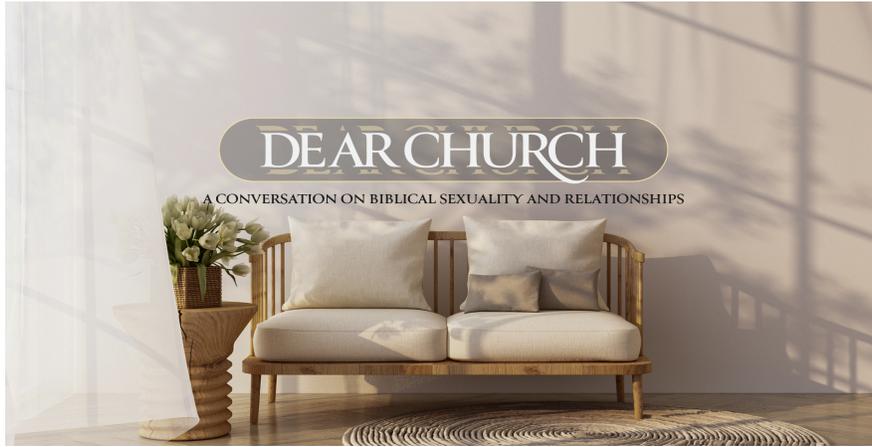
This topic can't be navigated from a purely academic perspective where we're trying to interpret the Scriptures. But it's even harder when we think about walking with people who are actually same sex attracted and trying to guide them toward Jesus.

As I've tried to come to grips with this topic on both a Scriptural and pastoral level, here are some things that I've found helpful that might be helpful for you too...

1. Like last week, I always want to start with Scripture. I'd encourage you to read **Matthew 19:1-12, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, and 1 Corinthians 7:1-40** carefully to get a feel for what Jesus and Paul say about marital relationships and homosexual behavior. What do they say about those topics? How might these passages be at odds with our culture's stance on those topics? What resistance do you feel in reading these verses? What questions do they raise for you?
2. Prayerfully – emphasis on *prayerfully* (i.e. do this *with* God) – think about the following questions:
 - What posture do you find yourself in for this sermon discussion on sexual orientation? Do you sense openness in yourself towards those in that community or do you feel closed-off? Explain.
 - Do you know anyone who struggles with their sexual orientation? How does that kind of proximity to this topic (or lack thereof) shape your view on it?
 - What questions do you have about this topic that are still unresolved?

Jot down any significant elements that come to mind. Then, write a prayer to God for anything you feel needs resolved.

3. Lastly, if you'd like some additional resources on this topic, here are a few I'd recommend:
 - *People to be Loved* by Preston Sprinkle (available on Sundays for purchase at a discounted rate!) is written from a loving, grace-filled, and truthful posture.
 - Additionally, I loved a video from Dr. Sean McDowell that offers thoughtful responses to frequently asked questions of Christians related to the LGBTQ



- community. Find it on YouTube by searching for “Responding to Pro-LGBTQ Arguments”.
- I also found another sermon by Jon Tyson helpful as well. Find it on YouTube by searching The Controversial Jesus – Jesus and the Gay Community – Jon Tyson.

I hope these resources are helpful to you. If you have any questions, don't ever hesitate to reach out by emailing contact@thecreek.org.

Grace and peace,
Emerson