

A Short List of Resources for Study of Homosexuality and the Church

Mark Achtemeier, *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage* (Westminster John Knox, 2014).

In the 1990's Achtemeier was, in his own words, "a conservative church activist working hard to defend the 'traditional' teaching of [the PCUSA] that was condemning homosexual practice.... The passage of fourteen years found me working to repeal the ban on gay ordination I had once helped put in place." (p. xi) He has come to recognize that "God's blessing is available to same-gender relationships just as much as to heterosexual ones" (p. xii). He himself has been married for 32 years.

His journey began with friendships with gay persons seeking to follow Jesus, and seeing the harsh toll it took on their emotional and spiritual health. He identifies his writing as "a spiritual travelogue" – not a scholarly survey, but rather beginning with what he saw in people's lives that made him question the traditional teaching. He recognized the pitfalls of the "fragment method" of Biblical interpretation – taking selected verses and generalizing from them for all circumstances and for all times; then he put these verses up against the broader message of scripture, and his question, then, became how to correct the understanding of scripture, not just to throw it out.

This book has a book study available for free download, divided into four sessions, but which could be used in more or fewer sessions. (Available in BCM Resource Center.) (P / B)

Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1978, revised and updated 1994).

The two authors explore the question of homosexuality in the church with such topics as stigma and stereotyping; a review of scriptural passages often quoted in discussions of homosexuality; scientific research; and the continuing challenge for the Christian church in America. This book is the outcome of more than twenty years of research and study. Very readable, and a good introduction to all the issues. (P)

Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow? Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (InterVarsity Press, 1995).

This is a compassionate and readable presentation of the main traditional argument that the Bible clearly states homosexuality is sinful behavior. Because the book is dated, what it says about the health effects of homosexuality is not universally held by scientists today. (B)

Marion L. Soards, *Scripture & Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Westminster John Knox, 1995).

This is a brief and very readable summary of the traditional biblical arguments against the church softening its position on the sinfulness of homosexuality. This book will be particularly helpful for those who do not understand the interpretive lens of more conservative biblical scholars. (Available in BCM Resource Center) (B)

Eve Tushnet, *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith* (Ave Maria Press, 2014)

Written by a lesbian who acknowledges and practices celibacy as the teaching of the Catholic Church for homosexual persons, this book is a good resource to all who are learning how to live their vocation – their “unique call from God to love and serve others and to receive their love.” An honest portrayal of the author’s own experiences, this is an inspiring book for anyone to read, regardless of their sexual orientation or their perspective on homosexuality and the church.

Ken Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation* (Read the Spirit Books, 2014)

Ken Wilson is founding pastor of the Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor, MI. He sees the question of homosexuality in the church primarily as a pastoral issue: “is the Bible addressing modern-day monogamous gay unions at all? If the answer to that question is unclear, how are we to apply the prohibitions to gay people who are willing to practice lifelong fidelity with a same-sex partner?” (p. 79)

He suggests a “third way” between what he calls the “code phrase” options of “open-affirming” and “love the sinner, hate the sin”, both of which treat the question as settled. He calls for “unity by virtue of a shared experience of a common core”, citing Romans 14-15, saying this is a “disputable matter” (pp. 94-104). His view seems to mesh with Unity Synod’s statement that this question “does not rise to the level of ‘Jesus is Lord’,” and seems to go well with our sense of essentials, ministerials, and incidentals. He asks both sides to leave the judging to God, and to welcome one another, embrace one another, as God has embraced us. (P / T)

Walter Wink, ed., *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Fortress Press, 1999).

A collection of brief, very readable essays from various writers, lay and clergy, in favor of in favor of full inclusion of homosexual persons. This may be a very good introduction to the questions for someone just beginning to explore the topic. (P / T)