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Perspective

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Perspective is a monthly journal with articles and book reviews. It is part of the “equipping” ministry of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, where we exist to KNOW, EQUIP, and SEND one another for the worship and glory of God.

SERMON SCHEDULE

July 6

An Unconquerable Hero

Colossians 2:9-15

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A Wise Freedom

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FIGHTER VERSE

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 3:5-6 (ESV)

The Songs of Songs for Today

Part Two, 3:1 - 6:3

Aaron Menikoff

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF MARRIAGE, is based on Christ's words that a man and a wife are to be regarded as a single organism . . . The male and the female were made to be combined together in pairs, not simply on the sexual level, but totally combined. The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside of marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union. The Christian attitude does not mean that there is anything wrong with sexual pleasure, any more than about the pleasure of eating. It means that you must not isolate that pleasure and try to get it by itself, any more than you ought to isolate the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again.

--C. S. Lewis

When Lewis first spoke these words over the airwaves of the BBC in the 1940s, the institution of marriage was already in a precarious condition. This is nothing new. Marriage has always been in a precarious state. We need look only at the life of Noah, the life of David, the life of Solomon, and the life of the Corinthian church. Bible figures aside, just look at your own life. Jesus said it is an adulterous act to look lustfully at a woman. Sexual purity is hard to grasp.

Although sexual immorality has a very long history, we can still say that we live in an age that is radically and increasingly confused about sex and marriage. The separation of sex from marriage is practically assumed by the culture-at-large, and it's just getting worse. A New Jersey company manufactures and sells sex robots. Its slogan is telling: "Always turned on and ready to talk or play." Men who fear rejection but crave stimulation find themselves attracted to this high-cost device. It truly provides for a one-way relationship. As one intrigued consumer mused, "A robot . . . could anticipate my cycles, never criticize me over them, learn how to just let me get over them. . . . I'd want from a robot a lot of what I want from a woman, but I think the robot would give me more in some ways. With a woman, there are her needs to consider. . . . That's the trouble I get into. If someone loves me, they care about my ups and downs. And that's so much pressure."¹ We are on the cusp of a technological revolution that will further the gap between sex and commitment. This inhumane view of sexuality is upon us.

The problems we've witnessed with Internet pornography are only going to explode in the years ahead. Men and

women will increasingly look for emotional and physical satisfaction in artificial worlds where they will never experience the pain or sanctification of engaging with real people. The kind of marital union that Lewis described so many years ago will be foreign to them. These pleasure-seekers will have no category for the idea that marriage and sex were designed to go together.

One of the most useful and practical tools to recalibrate our understanding of sex and marriage is the ancient love poem known as the Song of Songs. As I mentioned in Part I of this series, *the Song of Songs is an explicit but tasteful, ancient love song designed to point singles to patience, spouses to each other, and everyone to Christ*. God has given this book to us so that we can understand his design for marriage and sex in a fallen world.

The Song of Songs can be hard, at first, to understand if you don't approach it with a basic framework in mind. I take the whole song to refer to a man and woman who are already married. This may make some of the headings in your Bibles confusing. The editors of the ESV, for example, take the beginning of the Song to refer to an engaged couple whose marriage is consummated later in the book. But given the explicit language throughout the poem, I think it is best to see the beginning and end as referring to a husband and wife. That's why I call the two main characters simply, Husband and Wife.

To get the most out of the rest of this article, you would be helped by sitting down now and reading Song of Songs 3-6:3. It should just take a few moments, and as you do, pray for singles that you know. Pray they would be

patient and trust in God's good plan for their lives. And pray for marriages around you. Pray that husbands and wives would grow in grace and godliness. Finally, pray that everyone would stand amazed at the faithfulness and love of Christ since that, ultimately, is what we find in the Song of Songs.

Now that you've read Song of Songs 3-6:3, let's focus on two simple but important observations.

First, Husband and Wife do not have a perfect marriage.

The middle section of the Song of Songs is slightly darker. It's not all darkness—these verses are certainly punctuated with praise and joy and physical intimacy. But there's real, painful emotions expressed here. We see that in a fallen world, Husband and Wife don't have a perfect marriage. Notice Wife's concern in chapter 3, 1-3,

¹On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. ²I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. ³The watchman found me as they went about in the city. "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"

Some take this to be a dream, since it starts with Wife on her bed at night. They assume she's an engaged woman dreaming about the first night with her man. Maybe. But for reasons I've already mentioned, I think it makes better sense to see this as a wife who feels the pain of her husband's absence.

We don't know why the husband is away. Is he at work? Is he on a business trip? Did they get into a fight and he went down the street to Waffle House? We don't know. Maybe we shouldn't even try to reconstruct a historical setting. This is, after all, a love poem. What we know is that wife feels distant from Husband, and that's all we need to know. In verses 1 and 2 she says, "I sought him, but found him not." Wife is longing for Husband, but he's not there. She's lonely.

I don't want to take anything away from the joy of marriage, but it's important to recognize that marriage is not a cure for loneliness. There are going to be moments, maybe even seasons, when you are lying side by side in bed but feel miles apart. Just as someone can feel lonely in a crowd, you can feel lonely in a marriage.

Why is this? It's because husbands and wives are sinful, hurtful people. It's why I appreciate that some fairly recent books address marriage in a refreshingly honest

way: Dave Harvey's *When Sinners Say I Do?* and Paul David Tripp's *What Did You Expect?* are excellent resources. Both authors insist that people disappoint. God and the gospel, not marriage and sex, bring true satisfaction in this life.

This is important for all of us to see, but if you are reading this and are single, you might want to pay special attention at this point. There are many good reasons to get married. Marriage is wonderful! But don't think marriage is going to solve your battle with loneliness, insecurity, or fear. Only Jesus can do that. Only He can provide the kind of rest, security, and hope you need. Marriage won't solve your problems. Every marriage is imperfect.

Let's look at another example of this imperfect marriage. Chapter 5, verses 2-8. Once again, Wife is talking:

²I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night."

³I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?

⁴My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. ⁵I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. ⁶I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. ⁷The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls. ⁸I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love.

Remember, we are dealing with a love poem. We shouldn't conclude that Husband knocked on her door or that Wife was beat up by watchmen in the night. This is a poem, and what we see in these verses is a poetic picture of a strained relationship.

It begins, once again, with Wife and Husband apart. She's in bed, he's standing outside in the cold. He wants her to let him in, but she won't. She's got some excuses, pretty lame excuses of the "I've got a headache" variety. Look again at verse 3, "I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?" This verse is important. When Husband comes to the door, she doesn't leap with joy—she's apathetic toward

him. She doesn't want to get up, put on a robe, and get her feet dirty. Husband has become an inconvenience to her. By verse 4 her mind has changed, but it's too late, he's gone; his patience wore thin, and he left for Waffle House. Once again, she's alone.

What does it feel like when your marriage is not where it should be, when you're angry with your spouse for pushing you away, but you know that much of what's happened is your fault? It feels like a kick in the gut, doesn't it? Perhaps it feels like you've been beat up the way Wife describes in verses 7 and 8. I don't think Wife was really beaten up, but the pain of pushing Husband away and being abandoned by him was hurtful. Clearly, what we have here is not a perfect marriage.

Song of Songs is an amazing and honest book. Marriage is hard and messy and painful. People are broken and sinful and hard to live with.

The day before Deana and I married, my brother asked me a question. He wondered how Deana and I could know if we are compatible since we never lived together. My brother, not a Christian and not yet married, had yet to learn a fundamental lesson: men and women are not compatible and, until the new heavens and new earth, will never be compatible. Paul Tripp put it this way, "We live in a world that is still sadly and terribly broken. Your marriage will not be protected from those flaws."ⁱⁱ

Far too many marriages are cracking under the pressure of misplaced expectations. Couples think love will carry the day. We look to our spouses to give what only Christ can deliver. Only when we realize that our marriages are frail and our spouses sinful, will we understand how strong and perfect and satisfying is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's only in Christ that we can begin the hard work of building a godly marriage.

So that is the hard reality. Husband and Wife did not have the perfect marriage and; if you are married, neither do you. But there is hope to be found in the Song of Songs. An imperfect marriage can be good. And that leads us to the second observation I want to make from the heart of the Song of Songs.

Second, marriage is marked by intimacy and hard work.

Our passage is not entirely bleak. Yes, Husband and Wife have an imperfect marriage, but we find Husband and Wife willing to do the hard work necessary to make their marriage better. It shouldn't surprise you to hear that physical intimacy is a picture of a healthy marriage in the Song of Songs. In other words, their hard work of building into their marriage is rewarded with wonderful,

sexual intimacy. In part one I emphasized that marriage is marked by intimacy and commitment. Now I want to stress how marriage is marked by intimacy and hard work.

Wife feels far from her husband. Eventually she finds him: "Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me." Why does she take him to her mother's house? Commentators struggle with this verse. They agree this is the last place they would go to be intimate. But I think that's the point; she does not want to be intimate right now, not yet. She is pleased to find her husband, but not ready to be with him. There's a distance, a gap between the two that has to be bridged before they are ready to come together.

Husband understands he must labor to open up his wife emotionally and sexually. I mentioned previously that Husband woos his wife with words. He does the same thing here:

¹Behold, you are beautiful my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. ²Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. ³Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. ⁴Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. ⁵Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. ⁶Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. ⁷You are altogether beautiful my love; there is no flaw in you. ⁸Come with me from Lebanon my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. (4:1-8)

Here is Husband wooing Wife with words. But how does he do it?

First, he takes his time.

Notice how he painstakingly surveys her body. This is a man who has taken the time to observe his wife. He has taken the time to get to know her, and to put his observations into words. It is valuable to send your Wife

an encouraging note or a text—that’s good counsel. But you also need to do the hard, time-consuming work of knowing her. Do you know your wife’s favorite restaurant, her favorite dish, her favorite activity, her favorite color? Even better, do you know how your wife became a Christian, how she’s doing spiritually, or how she needs to grow in Christ? Brothers, it takes time to know and to love your wife.

Second, he is specific in his praise.

His words are explicit but tasteful. Wife wants to hear more than simply, “You are beautiful.” Husband has comments to make about her eyes, her hair, her teeth, her lips, her neck . . . I’ll stop there. He’s specific in his praise. Husbands, are you specific in your praise for your wife? Why is she beautiful? Why do you love her? Why did you marry her? How have you seen her growing spiritually? Be specific in your praise.

Wives, your husband should be focused on your heart. But it’s worth noting that Husband observes his wife’s body. He is attracted to her body. You should strive to be attractive to your husband. Above all, adorn yourself with godliness and good works! But in the process, be mindful that your husband is visual, and it’s good to present yourself in a way that pleases his eyes. You should never try to live up to the air-brushed models on magazine covers. You should not forsake the biblical call to modesty. But in the privacy of your home, you should show your husband your body and allow him to be specific in his praise.

Third, he is gracious in his speech and actions.

A godly husband knows his wife’s insecurities and seeks to reassure her. Look again at 4:7, “You are altogether beautiful, my love, there is no flaw in you.” Do you see the grace in his words? This is a man who knows what it means to have been redeemed by God, not by virtue of his character but God’s kindness. It is the man who knows God’s grace who can speak and act graciously toward his wife. Are there flaws in Wife? Of course there are. But those flaws are inconsequential when compared to the virtues God has worked in her. Husband knows that, and so he appreciates her for who she is, not for what she lacks.

Fourth, he expresses words of commitment.

“You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with just one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace” (4:9). Wife had moments, maybe even seasons where she felt far from Husband. Part of wooing Wife was reassuring her that

she captivated his heart. He wanted her to know that she alone is the apple of his eye.

Husband, of course, wants to be intimate with his wife. But he knows that sex is about more than flesh-on-flesh—it’s about loving, protecting, and caring for another person. Intimacy doesn’t begin with sex; it begins with words and actions that communicate love. As we see in 4:12, Husband gets it, “A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.” Through his words and actions Husband is unlocking this garden and unsealing this fountain—he is unlocking Wife.

And notice how she responds to his commitment in 4:16, “Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.” And so he does. And that’s why I say a husband must labor to open up his wife emotionally and sexually.

But the Song of Songs is not one-sided. There is also evidence that in a biblical marriage a wife works hard to encourage her husband. You’ll remember in chapter 5 that Wife was apathetic to Husband. And when she finally decides to let him in, it’s too late. He’s gone. So she goes to the onlookers in 5:8, the “daughters of Jerusalem,” and she asks them to help her find her husband. Their response is fascinating: “What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you thus adjure us?” (5:9) These onlookers want Wife to explain why she wants to be with Husband. They know that Wife has treated Husband poorly. “Clearly,” they tell her, “he must be just another man. He can’t be that special if you wouldn’t even come to the door.”

These onlookers are using sarcasm to challenge Wife to remember Husband’s qualities. They want her to honor Husband. Wife gets the point, and her response is glorious:

¹⁰My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among then thousand. ¹¹His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. ¹²His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool. ¹³His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. ¹⁴His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. ¹⁵His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. ¹⁶His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (5:10-16)

Does anything strike you as odd about this encouragement? She's not speaking directly to Husband. She's speaking to the onlookers, to the daughters of Jerusalem (5:8). She's telling them all the things she likes about Husband. She explains, very publicly, why she desires him. And it ends with those beautiful words in verse 16, "This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

When Husband praises Wife, he does it directly, "You are beautiful," he says. But when Wife praises Husband, at least here, she does it indirectly; she lets the world know why he's her man. Why is that?

Here's what I think: Wife knows that Husbands wants her respect. He wants to be admired by her. Wife had belittled Husband in 5:3-4, she'd left him knocking on the door, standing outside in the cold. But with the encouragement of her friends, Wife now goes into the public and honors her husband.

Wives, have you ever thought about how you speak about your husband in public, when you are with your friends? One of the surest ways to push him away is to belittle him. He values your opinion more than any voice in the world. And when he has your respect, he will do everything he can to please you.

In the Song of Songs, we find an imperfect couple willing to do the hard work of pursuing marital intimacy. And it's well worth it. Just look at 6:2-3 where Wife declares, "My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies."

Here is another explicit but tasteful description of wonderful sex. But that's not all we see. We see a husband and wife who have worked hard to make this kind of intimacy possible. The husband has labored to show his wife that she is the apple of his eye. The wife has worked hard to show her husband that he is the king of her castle. It's no coincidence that Paul, in Ephesians 5:33, offers a command in line with what we see in Song of Songs, "Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Song of Songs and the Husband of the Church

It's appropriate that we find a connection between the Song of Songs and Ephesians 5. Paul teaches that the union between a man and a wife is a great mystery that refers to Christ and the church. Therefore, the Song of Songs has always been about more than marriage, it's about this gospel mystery.

For centuries the Jewish understood that the Song of Songs pointed to something greater than marriage. It's why they read the Song of Songs aloud in preparation for the Passover celebration.

Remember what Passover is. It's the annual remembrance of the day God saved Israel from captivity in Egypt. For 400 years Israel had been slaves to Pharaoh. God came to Israel's aid, but he came in judgment. The LORD decreed that every firstborn male would be killed. But in the midst of this decision came a promise: every home that sacrificed a spotless lamb, and spread the blood of the lamb over its doorposts, would be saved. God "passed over" those families. The LORD redeemed Israel.

So why would Israel choose to use the Song of Songs to celebrate the Passover? What is it about this ancient love song that pointed their hearts to the redemption of God's people? When the Jews read the Song of Songs, they saw more than the love shared between Husband and Wife. They saw something of God's unique, covenant love for his people. They saw God as the perfect husband of Israel. As the prophet Isaiah declared, "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer" (54:5). God is the husband of his people.

Jesus is the husband of the church. Amazingly, when Paul rebukes the Corinthians for forsaking their Savior, he does so by referring to Christ as their husband, "I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2).

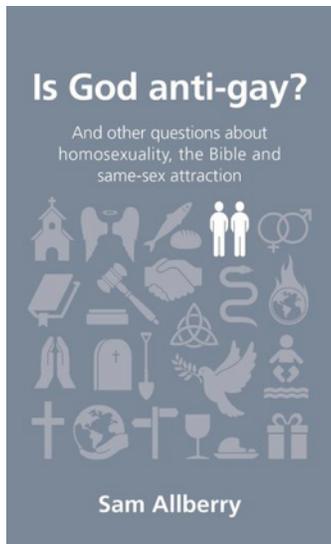
As you reflect on the Song of Songs, I pray you find lots of wisdom to help you have a godly marriage. If you are single, I pray that this book helps you understand what marriage is in God's eyes. But more than anything, let us see something of Christ in these words. Our marriages with one another are imperfect, but they point to a perfect union, one between Christ and his church. This marriage is for everyone who would follow Jesus, the Savior who suffered and died for his people. And so John wrote, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9).

~Aaron Menikoff

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*Sherry Turkle, Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other (Basic Books, 2011), 65.*

*Paul David Tripp, What Did You Expect? (Crossway, 2010), 19.*

*This article was adopted from a sermon originally delivered on Sunday, March 30, 2014. Visit [www.mvbchurch.org/sermons](http://www.mvbchurch.org/sermons) for an audio recording.*



# Book Review

## *Is God Anti-Gay?: And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction*

by Sam Allberry

Reviewed by Nick Collins

IN THIS BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT BUT IMPORTANT BOOK, Sam Allberry combines pastoral wisdom, authentic

autobiography, and sound

exegesis to provide Christians with a helpful introduction to the topic of homosexuality.

From the first few pages, it's clear the greatest strength of the book is its simple readability. Despite the complexity of the subject matter, Allberry, associate pastor of St. Mary's Church in Maidenhead, England, distills the most important points of his discussion into five short chapters. Together with an autobiographical introduction and conclusion, these chapters provide a wise way forward for Christians to be a faithful and compassionate witness to the gospel in our society. What truly makes this book remarkable are the aforementioned autobiographical elements Allberry scatters throughout the book. Allberry is a young Christian pastor who experiences same-sex attraction (SSA) and is committed to a biblical vision for sexuality. The introduction, conclusion, and various other autobiographical anecdotes within the book provide a glimpse into the soul of a godly gospel minister for whom homosexuality is a deeply personal issue. In the end, Allberry gives us a coherent account of SSA that resonates both with the clear teaching of Scripture and also with our collective experience as members of a fallen humanity.

The shape of Allberry's discussion is simple. Before addressing homosexuality specifically, he spends an entire chapter describing a biblical understanding of marriage and sex. Then he provides a brief overview of the various texts throughout Scripture that directly address homosexual behavior. Finally, in the last three chapters, Allberry takes a look at the issue of SSA itself from three perspectives: the individual Christian who experiences SSA; the church at large and its ministry to people with SSA; and the world, where Christians are called to be a compelling witness to those outside the church with SSA.

In the chapter on homosexuality and the Bible, Allberry surprises the reader at the outset with a clear warning: "What the Bible says about homosexuality does not represent everything God wants to say to homosexual people" (23). It can be hard to understand or explain SSA in light of the gospel because we sometimes take a "Strong's concordance" approach to ethics, assuming the most relevant texts are the ones that directly mention the issue we're trying to explain. However, Allberry's warning reminds us that, particularly when talking to gay people, it's often best to assume they already know what we believe about their sexuality.

Although the first two chapters are helpful in their own right, the final three represent the real meat of the book. A foundation by itself—without walls, a ceiling, or furniture—doesn't qualify as a home. Likewise, sound doctrinal foundations with a sound, biblical sexual ethic are fundamental to an accurate understanding of the challenge of homosexuality. And yet, if our response fails to incorporate concrete examples of gospel grace and truth, then there's little truly Christian about it.

### Gospel-Centered Response

Allberry's examination of homosexuality can be described as gospel-centered because the gospel is always a third-party dialogue partner in his discussion.

For people who struggle with SSA, the issue of gender identity is an enormous source of anxiety. The existential heart-cry deep within the soul of these individuals is, "What kind of a man (or woman) am I if I experience same-sex attraction?" The temptation to provide a creaturely answer to this question in the form of a culturally derived gender identity (such as "gay" or "lesbian") can be strong. Yet Allberry rightfully insists we stick to the truths of the gospel when attempting to navigate the murky waters of gender identity.

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Besides the broader issue of gender identity, Allberry describes how the gospel addresses other specific sources of confusion and anxiety that often plague those who experience SSA. For example, many Christians who experience SSA will remain single for the rest of their lives. Allberry helpfully reminds us that both marriage and also singleness point to our relationship with Jesus Christ, and that neither is a more blessed state than the other. As he writes, “Union with Christ forever is what the earthly states of both marriage and singleness actually point to” (74).

Allberry also addresses the tendency to equate “change” with orientation change. On this point, he helpfully cautions: “I believe change is possible, but a complete change of sexual orientation is never promised in the Bible” (46). In this way, Allberry notes, SSA is similar to other besetting sins Christians face. For some, SSA may be a serious but temporary temptation; for others, however, it will be a lifelong struggle. In both scenarios, we must remember our God is gracious and merciful.

Perhaps the most valuable chapter of the book is the one on the church’s response. The advice here is worth the price of the book. Allberry covers topics like what to do when a gay couple visits your church, as well as specific and practical suggestions that pastors and church leaders would do well to implement as they seek to be proactive in supporting saints in their congregations with SSA.

### **Title Choice**

The only aspect of *Is God Anti-Gay?* that may actually end up confusing some people is the title itself. To be fair, at the end of his conclusion, Allberry does provide a direct (though brief) answer to the question posed by the title. But even if he hadn’t, it’s not completely far-fetched to suggest the entire book provides a compelling framework to answer this question accurately.

At the same time, we should probably also recognize we live in a society where the church is routinely accused of being hateful toward gays. In a recent book by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons titled *unChristian*, they claim that as many as 80 percent of young people (ages 16 to 29) within the church use “anti-homosexual” to describe Christianity. If this is true, then the question “Is God anti-gay?” deserves a direct, full-on response.

Despite a potentially unhelpful title, I strongly recommend pastors, church leaders, and all believers add this book to their library. It is a valuable resource about an increasingly relevant and volatile topic in our society. Even more, it provides Christians and churches with a

thoughtful, gospel-grounded perspective that is often too hard to find.

*Nate Collins is the executive director of Aligned Grace Resources, a ministry he founded with his father to equip churches to minister the grace and truth of the gospel to people affected by same-sex attraction. Nate and his wife, Sara, live with their two sons in Louisville, KY, where he is pursuing a PhD in New Testament at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.*

*\*Editors Note: This review comes from The Gospel Coalition and has been unaltered.*

*This book review can be found at [http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/is\\_god\\_anti-gay](http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/is_god_anti-gay)*



Deacons and ministry leaders play a vital role in the life of the church, as they exhort, serve, unify, and build up the local body of believers. The deacons and ministry leaders at Mount Vernon have modeled this pattern and have served faithfully however, many of them are coming to the end of their three-year term. According to our Constitution, a deacon or ministry leader may be re-elected for additional three-year term or they may choose to step down from their position.

Below is a list of deacons and ministry leaders that were nominated at the last Church in Conference on May 18, the ministries, and the respective nominees. Please be in prayer for the nominees and the members as you prepare to vote at the next Church in Conference on Sunday, July 27. If you have any questions or concerns about these nominations, please speak to an elder. Please pray that the Lord will give us clarity and unity as we prepare to vote.

| Deacons                     | Nominee          | Term? |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Member Care Ministry Leader | Sharon Luck      | 1st   |
| Deacon of Personnel         | Bill Timmons     | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Widowed Members   | Hubert McLellan  | 1st   |
| Women's Ministry Leader     | Shirley Chandler | 1st   |

| Deacons                      | Nominee         | Term? |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Deacon of Building & Grounds | Jim Clayton     | 2nd   |
| Decorating Ministry Leader   | Betty Dewberry  | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Finance            | Larry Norwood   | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Greeting           | Anthony Blalock | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Greeting           | Andy Blackburn  | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Local Outreach     | Chuck Stone     | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Lord's Supper      | Joe Drexler     | 2nd   |
| Deacon of Member Care        | Bill Luck       | 1st   |

