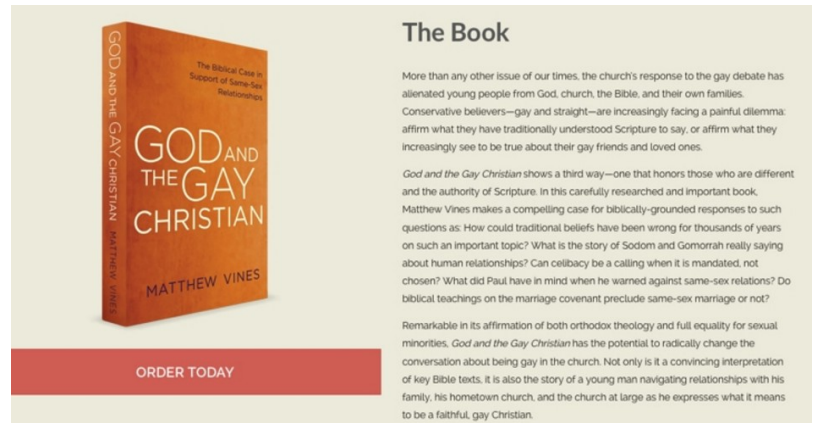




Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 25, 2014

## Evangelical Publisher Releases Pro-Gay “Christian” Book

A Christian publishing group with ties to such conservative evangelical leaders as John Piper, David Jeremiah, Chuck Swindoll, and Kay Arthur is now publishing a book that argues one can be both a practicing homosexual and a Christian. On April 22, Convergent Books, part of the WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group, released [God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships](#).



### The Book

More than any other issue of our times, the church's response to the gay debate has alienated young people from God, church, the Bible, and their own families. Conservative believers—gay and straight—are increasingly facing a painful dilemma: affirm what they have traditionally understood Scripture to say, or affirm what they increasingly see to be true about their gay friends and loved ones.

*God and the Gay Christian* shows a third way—one that honors those who are different and the authority of Scripture. In this carefully researched and important book, Matthew Vines makes a compelling case for biblically-grounded responses to such questions as: How could traditional beliefs have been wrong for thousands of years on such an important topic? What is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah really saying about human relationships? Can celibacy be a calling when it is mandated, not chosen? What did Paul have in mind when he warned against same-sex relations? Do biblical teachings on the marriage covenant preclude same-sex marriage or not?

Remarkable in its affirmation of both orthodox theology and full equality for sexual minorities, *God and the Gay Christian* has the potential to radically change the conversation about being gay in the church. Not only is it a convincing interpretation of key Bible texts, it is also the story of a young man navigating relationships with his family, his hometown church, and the church at large as he expresses what it means to be a faithful, gay Christian.

The book is authored by openly homosexual “Christian” Matthew Vines, whom the book’s website describes as “founder of the Reformation Project, a Bible-based, non-profit organization that seeks to reform church teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Vines was a student at Harvard University for two years “before he took a leave of absence to research what the Bible says about homosexuality,” the website bio relates. “His teaching on this topic has been featured in media worldwide, including *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*.

At one time Waterbrook Multnomah, which published, among other works, John Piper’s modern Christian classic *Desiring God*, was solidly biblical in its outlook, particularly at its beginnings as the publishing arm of Multnomah Bible College in Portland, Oregon. That all began to change when it was purchased by the liberal secular publisher Penguin Random House, and was absorbed into the same publishing group that would later launch Convergent Books, an imprint that appears to focus on publishing books that fall outside the circle of accepted biblical teaching.

Stephen W. Cobb, who oversees the WaterBrook Multnomah and Convergent publishing imprints, told [Baptist Press News](#) that Convergent focuses on readers who are “actively exploring and practicing faith and framing that faith in Christian terms, but they’re very open in their approach to issues that face the church today, and they really defy conventional labels.”

Cobb told Baptist Press that the Convergent imprint has been used to publish books that would not be considered appropriate for the more conservative Christian readership represented by Multnomah or Waterbrook. “Generally speaking, I wouldn’t expect a Multnomah reader to be drawn to a Convergent title,” he said, noting that works published by WaterBrook Multnomah can be expected to reinforce the accepted evangelical interpretation of Scripture that condemns homosexual behavior as sin.

Before the book’s publication, Cobb said that to his knowledge, *God and the Gay Christian* will be the first book published, by the imprints he oversees, that argues a person can be both a practicing homosexual and a Christian in right standing with God. Nonetheless, he insisted to Baptist Press that author Matthew Vines “believes in the inerrancy and the divinity and the correctness of Scripture. He believes it is God’s inspired Word.”

In a 2012 interview with the [Christian Post](#), Vines insisted that the Bible “never directly addresses, and it certainly does not condemn, loving, committed same-sex relationships. There is no biblical teaching about sexual orientation, nor is there any call to lifelong celibacy for gay people.” *God and the Gay Christian*, not surprisingly, amounts to a lengthy and labored effort to reinforce that argument.



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Vines is from Wichita, Kansas, and in the April 20 edition of his hometown paper, the *Wichita Eagle*, he lobbied for a change in the Christian Church's 2,000-year Bible-based condemnation of homosexual behavior. "My message is that change is possible," he wrote. "I think it's only really possible with the right biblical approach to arguments. That's what the book is all about. But once you have that, it's going to take a tremendous amount of persistence and effort and determination and grit for years to make that happen. But I'm convinced that it's possible."

Vines wrote that he wants "the Christian church to be an effective, authentic witness of God's love to the world," adding, "That's what most Christians want, too."

Among the conservative Christian leaders sounding off about the book was Andrew Walker of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, who said the book represented an early step "in a larger effort to fundamentally recast long-held, universally acknowledged norms pertaining to sexual ethics." Noting that Vines postures himself as a conservative evangelical with a desire to uphold the authority of Scripture, Walker argued that the book was written to introduce confusion on homosexuality into the evangelical community, "one of the last remaining constituencies in America that has not embraced homosexuality with gusto."

Ultimately, Walker said, Vines does little more than rehash the arguments that have animated discussions on whether practicing homosexuals can truly be called Christians. "If I was to condense the substance of Vines' book, here's what is happening," wrote Walker: "Vines has compiled liberal biblical scholarship and popularized it for a non-technical audience." Walker emphasized that "Vines is not advancing new arguments. In fact, his work draws largely from existing gay-affirming scholarship. Vines is making liberal scholarship accessible for common audiences and then compounding its effect by bringing in the emotionally laden context of our times."

Addressing Vines as a fellow Christian, Walker implored the author "to repent of a book designed to cast a shadow of suspicion and doubt about the Scripture's teaching on sexuality," and exhorted him to "set his desires before the cross, knowing that Jesus is better than any desire we think needs satisfied; that Jesus is better than marriage, than children, than sexual fulfillment itself."

Image: screengrab from [godandthegaychristian.com](http://godandthegaychristian.com)



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