



TRAVIS COLLINS

**WHAT DOES
IT MEAN
TO BE
WELCOMING**

?

**NAVIGATING
LGBT QUESTIONS
IN YOUR CHURCH**



DISCUSSION GUIDE

PART ONE

1. What are your personal biases in approaching this topic? What prejudices, even discomfort, will you have to set aside in order to consider this topic honestly? If you are discussing this book in a group of people in which there is a high level of trust, have each person answer these questions openly. And be careful not to condemn people for being honest about their preconceptions.
2. What have you assumed about the “cause(s)” of same-sex attraction? Why do you believe you have made those assumptions? Could your assumptions be wrong?
3. Are there varying opinions on the topic of same-sex relationships within your congregation? Or would you say there is widespread agreement on the topic? No matter your answer, what would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of your congregation when it comes to discussing this topic?
4. Go to Philippians 4 and read the story of Euodia and Syntyche. What can you learn from their dispute, and

Paul's counsel to them, about your disagreements with fellow Christians?

5. Do you know someone who has an opinion about this topic that is very different from yours? Would you be willing to ask that person to articulate their reasoning behind their position, without defending your own? In other words, would you be willing to listen purely for the sake of learning, and not offer your opinion?
6. In this section you read: "So, let's take 'judge not' seriously, but let's not take it further than it was intended. The Bible gives us a balance." How do you understand the phrase "judge not" as it applies to Christians and morals? Based on what you read here, how would you describe the Bible's balance when it comes to "judging"?
7. What are some of the unfair labels that you have heard given to people in this debate over the topic of same-sex relationships?

PART TWO

1. Take a few minutes to articulate the arguments given by those whose position is different from your own. If you are a Traditionalist, describe the Affirming position. If you are on the Affirming side, describe the Traditional position. Try to put yourself in the position of one on the other side of the debate, and do so honestly and as thoroughly as you can.

2. Bishop Spong refers to Paul's "ill-informed, culturally biased prejudices." What is your opinion on the position that our experience and reasoning today are simply different from the witness of the Bible, and thus more reliable in the twenty-first century context?
3. William Webb contends that, while the New Testament never speaks with the clarity we would like about slavery and the role and value of women, there is a clear progression within the New Testament toward the condemnation of slavery and the affirmation of women. When it comes to sexual behavior between members of the same sex, however, the New Testament reflects and even reinforces the same restrictive tone we find in the Old Testament. What do you think of Webb's "redemptive-movement hermeneutic"?
4. Some contend that having a close friend or family member who is gay gives one the ability to speak with unique authority on the topic. Others contend that having a close friend or family member who is gay minimizes one's objectivity in speaking to the topic. What do you think?
5. What is your view of divorce? How is divorce different from same-sex intimacy? How does your view of divorce inform your position on same-sex relationships?
6. Do you believe, as Robert Gagnon posited, that if the Corinthian Christians had written to Paul and explained that in their church were two men in an intimate relationship who were truly in love, that Paul would have responded, "Oh, I'm not talking about them"?

PART THREE

1. Do you agree that, in our society, sexuality has been viewed as more central to our identity than is healthy? Explain your answer.
2. How do you view the call to abstinence for those who are attracted to persons of the same sex?
3. In this section we noted two conflicting perspectives. One is, "If we don't take a stance young people will be encouraged to experiment with same-sex relationships." The other perspective is, "If we do take a strong stance they will not ask for help and will dangerously internalize their struggles."

Do these perspectives resonate with you?

4. Put yourself in the position of a same-sex attracted Christian. Would you feel welcomed in a church that had affirmed a position that says, in essence, "We welcome everyone to our worship, fellowship, and membership, but we will not invite people who are in active same-sex relationships into leadership"?
5. What are the pros and cons of a church or denomination taking a position on this topic?
6. As you pray, "Search me, God," (Psalm 139:23), are there things in your own life that you need to confess and ask God to clean up?

7. Name one positive step (not mentioned in this book) that would help the Christian family deal in a healthy way with this explosive topic of sexuality.