

# A Shameful Day in Evangelical Christian Publishing

For many years now, publishers have been releasing books that claim the Bible does not oppose committed homosexual relationships. That is nothing new. But it is a sad and shameful day when a major Christian publisher releases such a book and claims that it is a solid evangelical publication. This is abhorrent, disgraceful and terribly misleading. And it needs to be addressed and exposed.

But first, the background to the story.

In 2012, a young man named Matthew Vines, who professes to be a “gay Christian,” released a video of his talk about the Bible and homosexuality, and it quickly went viral. His demeanor was engaging and his appeal to the Scriptures very serious, but for those who know the Word well, there was nothing in the least bit persuasive in his presentation. In fact, it underscored just how impossible it is to use the Bible to justify any form of homosexual acts or to sanctify intimate homosexual relationships.

The impossibility of Matthew’s position was further emphasized when my colleague, the well-known apologist James White, put out a series of YouTube videos that thoroughly rebutted Vines’ video. And both White and I have offered to debate Matthew and any colleague he would choose, but to date, there has been no response, although we’re still hoping that a debate (or a series of debates) will take place.

There has also been a good amount of publicity over the last few months announcing the publication of Matthew’s book, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, which, through no intentional planning on my part or my publisher’s, is due to be released two weeks

before my own book, *Can You Be Gay and Christian? Responding With Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality*. (I sincerely hope that readers of his book will take the time to read mine as well.)

But here is the disturbing news. The book is being published by Convergent Books, which is part of a publishing conglomerate that includes the much-respected evangelical publishing group WaterBrook Multnomah (also sharing some of the same staff). And the chief executive of the company, Stephen W. Cobb, is vigorously defending his choice to publish the book. In fact, he is making an extraordinary effort to publicize it and claiming that it is thoroughly evangelical.

Have we totally lost our bearings as the people of God? Are we now debating the undebatable and trying to sanction the unsanctionable?

The WaterBrook Multnomah group publishes books by authors like John Piper, Chuck Swindoll, Ravi Zacharias, David Jeremiah, Randy Alcorn, David Platt and Bill Gothard, and now its sister publisher is releasing a purported evangelical book defending homosexuality? (This is not being written on April 1 as some kind of April Fool's joke. I am being dead serious.)

Responding to an investigative piece written by Christian attorney Matt Barber, Cobb explains that his company is publishing the book "because [they] believe it offers a thoughtful examination of Scripture on the topic of same-sex relationships from a bold, young, evangelical writer whose first calling is to promote a civil, loving, and biblically based conversation on the subject."

What?

Certainly, the tone of the book is meant to be civil, and it does attempt to interact with the Scriptures, although, to emphasize this again, you can no more use the Bible to legitimize homosexual relationships than you can use it to

legitimize adultery. But to describe the author as “a bold, young, evangelical writer” is to make the word *evangelical* utterly meaningless.

It would be like speaking of a fine, conservative Catholic author whose new book questioned the office of the pope, or of an excellent, Orthodox Jewish author whose latest volume explained how pork was kosher. It is just as laughable (or, really, lamentable) to speak of “a bold, young, evangelical writer” whose book attempts to make a biblical case for same-sex relationships. Talk about turning truth upside down.

To be sure, I personally own a large number of books written by professing “gay Christians,” including *The Queer Bible Commentary* and *Holy Homosexuals*, so I’m familiar with the arguments. And I’ve interacted face to face with professing “gay Christians,” most of whom seemed extremely sincere.

In fact, in my own book, I do my best to introduce readers to the very real, personal struggles experienced by people with same-sex attractions who want to follow Jesus, and it is something that has driven me to my knees in prayer, often with real brokenness and even tears of intercession for them.

The travesty here is for Cobb, the head of both WaterBrook Multnomah and Convergent (an imprint for “less traditional Christians,” which is quite an understatement), to choose to publish this book, then to defend that choice, then to present Matthew Vines as an evangelical, and then to go all out with a publicity campaign to promote the book. (Cobb writes, “We have extensive marketing and publicity campaigns in place, with which we hope to reach the widest possible readership.”)

As I note in my book, there are “no new textual, archeological, sociological, anthropological, or philological discoveries [that] have been made in the last fifty years that would cause us to read any of these biblical texts differently. Put another way, it is not that we have gained

some new insights into what the biblical text means based on the study of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Instead, people's interaction with the LGBT community has caused them to understand the biblical text differently."

The point is that nothing has changed in terms of what Scripture teaches, which is why almost no one through the centuries has thought to use the Bible to sanction homosexual relationships—that is, until our day, and this is simply the fruit of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, not the fruit of dramatic new insights that would cause us to turn the Bible on its head.

And that's why there are fine Christians today who still struggle with same-sex attractions but who renounce them as contrary to God's plan and who live holy, separated lives, enjoying a full and robust relationship with the Lord without homosexual activities and same-sex romantic connections.

In short, those who want to revise biblical sexuality and morality have moved away from the Word of God, and if they have any sense of integrity, they need to renounce their claim to be evangelicals—and that includes Cobb, if he personally claims to be one—and say, "We are liberal Christians who no longer hold to the authority of Scripture, because of which we embrace homosexual relationships."

In refusing to do so, they have muddied the waters of the faith, brought reproach on the gospel, further confused a very lost society, and become propagators of deception in the church. And they will answer to God for all this one day.

As things stand now, the same publishing conglomerate that released books by an evangelical author like Joshua Harris with titles and subtitles like *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* and *Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World* is releasing a book championing the idea that God blesses two men (or women) having sex with each other as long as they are committed.

This is madness.

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