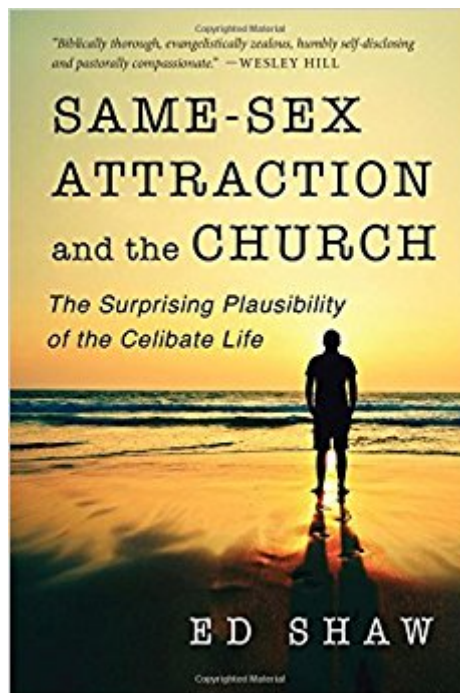




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# Same-Sex Attraction And The Church: The Surprising Plausibility Of The Celibate Life



## Synopsis

The Gospel Coalition Top Books of 2015 in Christian Living Tim Challies' Top Books of 2015  
ProdigalThought.net's Top Reads of 2015 Leadership Journal's Best Ministry Books of the Year  
When Christians have same-sex attraction, how should the church respond? Pastor Ed Shaw experiences same-sex attraction, and yet he is committed to Scripture and the church's traditional position of fidelity in heterosexual marriage and celibacy in singleness. In this honest book, he shares his pain in dealing with these issues, but at the same time shows us that obedience to Jesus is ultimately the only way to experience life to the full. He shows that the Bible's teaching seems unreasonable not because of its difficulties, but because of missteps that the church has often taken in its understanding of the Christian life. We have been shaped by the world around us and urgently need to re-examine the values that drive our discipleship. Only by doing this in the light of the Bible can we make sense of its call on the lives of those who are attracted to their own sex.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Same-Sex Attraction and the Church is a must-read for all Christians. Pastor Shaw lives out what it means to apply faith to the facts of unwanted, unchosen and sometimes unshakable same-sex attraction. This powerful book meets readers at the heart level, manifesting a positive understanding of the sacrifices of the Christian life. And because it is so disarmingly positive about the Christian art of dying to self, it sings a clarion call shedding new light on this sacred truth: the real gospel imparts a will-influencing, heart-changing light into the souls of men and women and the community that we

create together. . . . I love this book." (Rosaria Butterfield, author of *The Secret Thoughts of An Unlikely Convert*) "Our culture places sex at the heart of identity and fulfillment. But Ed Shaw has discovered in the God of the gospel a pleasure that is greater and an identity that is richer than anything we can create for ourselves. Over against the false choice of embracing homosexuality or ignoring it, he gives us the category of 'same-sex-attracted-but-in-Christ.' In doing so, he shows the power of the gospel to direct us all away from both indulging our sins and denying the reality of our temptations. The fidelity to truth and loving wisdom in this book is exactly what we all need right now." (Michael Horton, professor of theology, Westminster Seminary California) "As a Christian who also knows same-sex desire firsthand, I would put a few things differently than how Ed Shaw does here. But that doesn't stop me from applauding this biblically thorough, evangelistically zealous, humbly self-disclosing and pastorally compassionate defense of traditional Christian sexual ethics. Ed Shaw's life and teaching are an inspiring variation on what the church throughout history has celebrated as consecrated, holy virginity. May his tribe increase!" (Wesley Hill, assistant professor of biblical studies, Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and author of *Washed and Waiting*) "The big idea of Ed Shaw's book is simple: the church must make the biblical commands on sexuality seem plausible again. He calls all of us to repentance and wisely shows us a better way to battle sin, to understand sufferers and to proclaim truth with grace. Even those who don't agree with every jot and tittle will find something to be challenged and encouraged by on nearly every page. I highly recommend this clear, courageous and compassionate book." (Justin Taylor, coauthor, *The Final Days of Jesus*, blogger, "Between Two Worlds") "Read this book to learn about the faith and life of a devout celibate man. Readers will surely vary in their response to Shaw's theological views, but all will deepen their understanding and respect for celibacy as a spiritual practice and will come away challenged to build stronger supports for all people, married and single, in their local churches." (Jenell Paris, professor of anthropology, Messiah College, author of *The End of Sexual Identity*) "Ed Shaw identifies the primary obstacle to a Christian sexual ethic in today's culture. It is not that the culture weighs Christian arguments and finds them wanting, but rather that the culture cannot imagine any alternative to sexual autonomy. In this book, Shaw pastorally and wisely shows how to apply a Christian vision of marriage and sexuality to those with attraction to the same sex. The book is a welcome vehicle for discipleship for the whole church to help us to bear one another's burdens." (Russell D. Moore, president, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission) "Ed Shaw has written winsomely and helpfully about what I consider to be the biggest discipleship issue facing the church: sexuality and identity in Christ. This is a book for the entire body of Christ, not just those who are same-sex attracted. Shaw accurately diagnoses nine false beliefs prevalent in our

churches that have undermined a biblical view of sexuality and made it seem implausible. Yet the book left me hopeful and optimistic that the church can and must replace false beliefs with life-giving truth and love." (Betsy Childs Howard, The Gospel Coalition, "TGC Editors' Picks: Top Books of 2015," December 2015)"As a pastor, a counselor, and a church member I can think of no other book that is more important for the church to read today! It is sensitive, direct, practically-oriented, fresh, and thought-provoking." (Dave Dunham, Pastor Dave Online, July 24, 2015)"In Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life (IVP, 2015) British pastor Ed Shaw says giving "Just Say No" advice to those with same-sex attraction (which Shaw himself has) is insufficient. He rightly says evangelicals must show that the celibate life is plausible and reasonable and that those with SSA can attain satisfaction abiding within God's rules instead of by breaking them, or else young Christians especially will fall for emotional appeals from gay advocates. . . . He offers ways of gaining true intimacy apart from sex, and true godliness by overcoming suffering rather than avoiding it." (Marvin Olasky, WORLD, March 19, 2016)"Ed Shaw shares his story and perspective in this book with deep sincerity, conviction and honesty. He makes a profound contribution to the conversation about same-sex attraction. I am so glad I read this book and I wholeheartedly recommend it." (Amy Orr-Ewing, Director of Programmes for the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA) and UK Director for RZIM Zacharias Trust)"Shaw unpacks nine missteps the church needs to correct to convey the plausibility of the faithful and celibate lifestyle. This is the best book available on helping the church minister more intentionally to those among us who struggle with same-sex attraction." (David Dunham, Leadership Journal, Winter 2016)"This book is an important one because of two reasons: a) (Ed) is a man who experiences same-sex attraction, though refraining from same-sex relationships. Thus, I believe he has much to offer in the conversation. b) In identifying nine missteps that surround this important modern-day discussion, Shaw lays out one very important misstep on both sides: believing our sexuality determines our identity. I agree wholeheartedly!" (Scott Lencke, The Prodigal Thought, December 29, 2015)

Ed Shaw was educated at Durham University, the Cornhill Training Course and Oak Hill Theological College. He is the pastor of Emmanuel City Centre in Bristol, England, and part of the editorial team at livingout.org. He has worked for churches in Durham and London and was the student minister at Christ Church Clifton for six years before joining Emmanuel in 2009. He loves his family and friends, church and city, music and books. Vaughan Roberts is rector of St. Ebbe's Church in Oxford, England, and author of God's Big Picture and Life's Big Questions. He is also a popular speaker at

Spring Harvest and a founding member of "9:38" which encourages people to consider full-time gospel ministry.

One of the best Evangelical books I've read in a long time. I believe it is a must-read for every Christian. Having experienced the same situation as the author it has helped tremendously. His application of steps to get the church back on track is by far the best critique I have read yet. His whole spiel is to get the church to love like a family again. As John in his first letter says over and over again we need to love our brothers as family. We need to show Christ's love to our brothers and sisters. I am looking forward to his next book.

In the past few months I've read several books that deal with the debate within the Church about gay Christians. Do we affirm gay marriage or hold to the Bible and its traditional interpretation of marriage? There is a part of me that would like to affirm gay marriage--it seems easier to articulate in our culture and makes Christianity appear more loving. However, when I read the affirming arguments, I can't shake the feeling that their interpretation of scripture and theology are just wishful thinking. Ultimately, I see that the affirming argument boils down to the discomfort of saying that the Church should deny a class of people the right to marry; who are we to insist someone else must be celibate? Within our culture, such a prohibition seems archaic and unloving. Although I disagree with the affirming side's conclusion that gay marriage is ok for Christians, I am grateful for their desire to show love to a group of people that have often been excluded from the Church. I am thankful that their debate has reminded us that the grace of God extends to all. Most of the books supporting the traditional view do a thorough job of showing what scripture and centuries of Christian theology say about same-sex sexual relations. Unfortunately, they struggle unevenly with the question of how can the Church hold to its traditional teaching AND be loving to a group of people who didn't choose to be same-sex attracted. This book by Ed Shaw answers that practical question beautifully. He frames his answer around nine "missteps" that the Church has made mainly because we've adopted cultural values rather than what scripture has said. For instance, do we believe that our identity is defined by our sexuality or by our relationship with Christ? Do we believe that sex is the only way to find intimacy? Do we believe that happiness should determine our morality? As American Christians, we have believed our culture has been Christian, so we're often naive or complacent about adopting certain social beliefs, (at least until there is something extreme that riles us up). Shaw makes a compelling and highly readable case for the Church to live differently than our culture. The world is supposed to know we're Jesus' disciples by how we love

one another. Putting Shaw's observations into practice would certainly go a long way toward accomplishing that goal. Making sure that our individual churches are truly families, truly communities that support and encourage each of us in our pursuit of living lives that please our Father would help more than just our same-sex attracted brothers and sisters, but also our singles, and our widowed, and our divorced, and our married. And it would likely attract those who are weary of the emptiness of our culture's values.

While I do not experience same-sex attraction I do find myself celibate and childless in my late 30s as a result of following the Bible's teaching on marrying a believer. The churches I have attended have unfortunately been extremely isolating after I reached 25, largely due to their excessive focus on the biological family. As a result, in the past year I've deeply struggled with the cost of following Christ. I had my own "kitchen floor" moment recently and, after trying to find something online to help me feel even slightly better, ran into an article which mentioned this book. It was so incredibly encouraging to me and was such a great reminder of the truths I already knew but badly needed to be reminded of. Ed is honest, open and real. I so appreciate his willingness not to be trite on how difficult being single, childless and celibate in this culture can be, no matter the reason, but at the same time remind all of us of why we chose to follow Christ and how worthwhile it is now and certainly will be in the future! This book has been a huge comfort to me.

Awesome book written from the perspective of a pastor who has a struggle with same sex attraction. I love how he unpacked the Scriptures and biblical doctrine here as well as presenting some specific challenging scenarios for himself and others. Definitely a good read no matter your background and especially a good read if you are attracted to the same gender and wrestling with what the Bible says about how you should conduct yourself.

Insightful discussion of the issues facing same-sex attracted Christians and their relationship with their church from a pastor with personal experience. Does not dodge the difficult issues.

The risk was worth it Ed. There is an alternative to marriage that is rich and fulfilling without having to surrender to an immoral lifestyle. This is a must read for anyone struggling with a marriage-less life, or an alternative life style.

Best book I've read on the subject so far.

Ed Shaw deals plainly and openly with a issue that needs to be understood by believers. He handles the subject with a solid biblical perspective yet a call and equipping for compassion for those who struggle with same-sex attraction.

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