GENDER STUDIES IN REVIEW

A Review of Wesley Hill. Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2015. 160 pp. \$14.99.

Derek Brown | Pastoral Assistant Grace Bible Fellowship Silicon Valley, California

t is impossible to quantify the worth of a good friend. Intimate, meaningful friendships are among God's greatest gifts, and Christians in particular have a calling to both enjoy and steward such gifts. But how might a Christian who wrestles with same-sex attraction find close friendships in the church? Does his or her sexual orientation produce an obstacle to intimacy with members of the same-sex? These are the questions over which Wesley Hill, assistant professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, gives extensive reflection in his latest work, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*.

CONTEMPORARY MYTHS AND THE CURRENT STATE OF FRIENDSHIP

But before delving into the problem of friendship for celibate Christians beset with same-sex attraction, Hill asks a more basic question in chapter 1: Has not friendship been eclipsed in our late-modern society and in the church? Hill observes three widely accepted myths that have shaped our contemporary understanding of and approach to same-sex friendship. The myth that "sex wholly explains the depth our most profound relationships" (10) has fostered—especially among men—the fear that romantic love may seep into their same-sex friendships. The myth that one's "ultimate significance" (11) is found in marriage and family has furthered the idea that friendships are subservient to the more important relationship with one's spouse.

The contemporary myth that freedom—understood primarily as independence from committed relationships—is what allows a person to find genuine happiness has struck "at the very root of friendship" (14). Once someone embraces the myth of freedom, sacrifice—an indispensible ingredient for friendship—is ruled out by definition. Given the pervasive and devastating effect these myths have had

on the place of friendship within our contemporary Western context, Hill is "convinced that all of us could benefit from a recovery of friendship as a genuine love in its own right" (22). Hill's reflections on the three "myths" currently eroding friendship are apt, and I'm sure few would contend with his desire to retrieve a more robust vision of friendship within the church.

A RECOVERY OF FRIENDSHIP

In chapter 2 Hill steps back in time to find historical precedents for a version of friendship that is more profound than most of us late-moderns are used to. There was a time in the medieval era, for example, when same-sex friendships were publicly recognized by the church and sealed with recitation of vows. These relationships were not romantic, but they were intimate, committed, and expected to endure. Reflecting on the fact that such rituals no longer have a place in modern society, one of Hill's college students wondered if their disappearance was a good thing given the danger of such relationships becoming "ingrown, obsessive, and unhealthy" (40). But Hill sees another, more serious danger stemming from the neglect of friendship; namely, "the burden, not to mention the attendant temptations, of isolation and solitude crated by the absence of human closeness" (40).

For the sake of all Christians, then, regardless of sexual orientation, age, or marital status, Hill hopes for a return to "vowed spiritual siblinghood" within the church (41). Again, like his assessment of the contemporary state of friendship, Hill's general insight and vision here are commendable. I will return to his idea of vowed friendship in a moment.

Part 1 closes with chapter 3 in which Hill turns to the Scripture to show how the gospel transforms friendship. Christ draws men and women into a spiritual family in which temporary physical familial ties serve as a parable of and yield to the eternal bonds spiritual siblinghood. Christianity call for the "abandonment of friendship" but its "revolution and redemption" (61).

Part 2 is called "Living Friendship" and consists of chapters 4–6. In these chapters Hill reflects on how a recovery of friendship might be expressed in the church. Here he begins to narrow his focus slightly on the question of how "celibate gay Christians" can participate in the restoration of true friendship among believers. In chapter 5, "Friendship is a Call to Suffer," Hill includes a personal story of a relationship he lost after one of his best friends got married. In this story the reader is brought face-to-face with the grief that someone like Hill experiences when they lose close friends. If marriage isn't an option for someone with same-sex attraction, then the loss of close same-sex relationships portends, at least in the moment of loss, a lifetime of loneliness.

Hill concludes his book with "some patterns that more committed, more sibling-like friendships may take" (106). Christians should first admit their need for friendship (106–107) and focus on strengthening the relational bonds we already have, preferably in the church. These friendships will, in turn, transform the community (109–113) and become the context within which Christians can practice hospitality to strangers (112–115). Finally, counter to the modern tendency to bounce from community to community, those who desire the cultivation of true friendship should be willing to remain, either physically or emotionally, with their friends, making the necessary sacrifices in order to express their commitment to friendship.

THE PHRASE "GAY CHRISTIAN"

As I've already noted, much of Hill's work in *Spiritual Friendship* is commendable. The appraisal of the current state of friendship, his desire for the church to return to a vision of deeper and more committed friendships, and his reflections on how Christians struggling with same-sex attraction may find satisfying relationships within the body of Christ will help the church reassess our approach to friendship and how well (or poorly) we are serving the single men and women of our church, especially those who struggle with same-sex attraction. Given these commendable qualities, there are a few weaknesses in Hill's book that undermine his aim to promote a biblical vision of friendship.

First, there is Hill's use of the phrase "gay Christian." Despite the critiques he received for his use of the phrase in his previous book, *Washed and Waiting*, Hill retained this expression throughout *Spiritual Friendship* to refer to those who have trusted Christ and struggle with same-sex attraction. While he states in *Washed and Waiting* that he does not intend by this phrase to suggest that one's identity is ultimately determined by his or her sexual orientation, it is difficult to see how this can be so: Doesn't the very structure of the expression suggest that being gay governs one's identity as a Christian rather than vice-versa? Hill claims elsewhere that the use of the word "gay" does not, in the common parlance, necessarily refer to someone who *indulges* homosexual desire, but only to one who *has* homosexual desires. Actually, it appears to me that when people outside the church use the word "gay" in reference to someone with homosexual desires, they are including both the desires and the sexual fulfillment of those desires. Could it be that Hill is redefining the word "gay" in light of his Christian commitments and then claiming that his redefinition is the common one?

Furthermore, in *Spiritual Friendship* when Hill refers to gay and lesbian Christians who "choose celibacy" (98) he implies—unintentionally, perhaps—that one can remain a Christian *without* choosing celibacy. In this case, the phrase "gay Christian" is worlds apart from "celibate gay Christian," with the former qualifying as a genuine contradiction in terms. But others have already dealt thoroughly with Hill's use of this phrase, so I will quickly move on to my next point of concern.¹

VOWED FRIENDSHIPS: A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE

Second, like Hill's college student mentioned above, I hesitate, for different reasons, about the idea of vowed friendships. Hill argues that he and many other Christians need "something more" than relationships that consist mainly of "a weekly night out or a circle of people with whom to go on vacation" (42). He continues,

We need people who know what time our plane lands, who will worry about us when we don't show up at the time we said we would. We need people who we can call and tell about the funny thing that happened in the hallway after class. We need the assurance that, come hell or high water, a few people will stay with us, loving us in spite of our faults and caring for us when we are down. More than that, we need people for whom we can care (42-43).

Hill believes that "recovering the historic Christian practice of vowed friendships can help with all these needs" (43). Yet, given the legitimate desires expressed in the above paragraph to love and be

^{1.} On the use of the term "gay Christian," see Owen Strachan, "Should the Church Speak of 'Gay Christians'?" *JBMW* 19.1 (Spring 2014): 4–7.

loved by others, we have to ask if, historical examples notwithstanding, it could be that God never intended friendship to receive public recognition in the same way that marriage does? In other words, although friendship, like marriage, requires commitment, sacrifice, and genuine concern for another, it seems that for the sake of both institutions, friendship cannot carry the same theological weight as marriage in terms of public ceremony and recognition.²

This is not a claim that married persons are superior to unmarried persons or that friendship is unimportant and dispensable. Rather, I am arguing that theologically, marriage is given a place of prominence in Scripture because it points to a greater and final spiritual reality. Yes, we are and will remain brothers and sisters within the family of God in his kingdom, but corporately we are Christ's bride and our status as bride and bride-groom will be publically acknowledged with a wedding celebration (see Rev 19:9). Christians, regardless of marital status, are directed by Scripture to exalt and revere marriage, not for its own sake, but for that to which it ultimately points us. While precious and expressed profoundly in our relationship with Christ (see John 15:13–15), friendship does not reside in the same theological category as marriage. Each are kept distinct, and for important eschatological reasons.

With regard to public rites, it seems that the recognition Hill desires for friendship has already been put in place in the church by Christ himself. But this celebration is not the identification of exclusive commitment between two people (something reserved only for marriage); it is the acknowledgement of a covenant between all of Christ's people in a particular local setting. Specifically, it is the Lord's Table observed among a community of believers, not public vows between a same-sex couple, that endows friendship with rich significance. In Christ we are brothers and sisters and our sibling bonds are held fast by the Spirit. As we take the bread and the cup these bonds to Christ and to each other are reaffirmed and strengthened, for we are reminded that we all are partakers of grace and the free gift salvation through the death of God's Son.

Hill is right to lament that our contemporary practice of friendship often fails to express itself in light of the realities pictured in the Lord's Table, but the answer is not in establishing a separate

^{2.} While Hill only refers to the story of David and Jonathan to offer a model of intimate male friendships, it's possible that one could turn to the covenant between these two men in order to muster biblical evidence for formal vowed friendships. To my mind, however, this episode does not give us warrant for establishing the practice of vowed friendships within the Christian church for two primary reasons. First, the covenant was a private commitment between David and Jonathan; there was no formal recognition their commitment to one another by the community. Second, David and Jonathan's relationship is unique and must be read in light of the redemptive-historical timeline—i.e., through their friendship, Jonathan effectively relinquishes his kingship to the true heir.

While this story can tell us something about same-sex relationships, there is good reason why we do not find direct reference back to this episode by Jesus or the New Testament authors as a template around which same-sex friends should forge their relationships. Covenants, up to this point in the biblical narrative, were predominantly between God and his people. David and Jonathan's covenant, then, should probably be read in light of these covenants so that King David serves as a type of Christ (the true King), and Jonathan, in his response to David, shows us how God's people should respond to the true King. If this is a legitimate interpretation of this story of David and Jonathan, it is interesting to note that, given the status afforded marriage throughout Scripture, that David and Jonathan's covenant was private. A public recognition of an exclusive covenant of friendship between two men would confuse the distinctive significance of marriage in Israel, and ultimately undermine its greater theological implications as well.

category of vowed friendships and ceremonies that resemble marriage; the solution will be found in drawing Christians—married and single—to understand in deeper and deeper ways the covenant that *already* exists between them because of Christ and their commitment to the local expression of his Church. By forging our spiritual siblinghood through his death, the giving of his Spirit, and the establishment of the Lord's Table, Christ has already given us everything we need to nurture intimate, satisfying, healthy same-sex (and other sex) friendships within the church. Our first step in retrieving a biblical vision of friendship will be to make better use of existing, God-ordained resources, not go searching for something else.

A THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE AND FRIENDSHIP: WHY IT MATTERS

The reason why this theological understanding of marriage is vital for a recovery of friendship is because how we conduct ourselves in our relationships involves more (though never less) than our outward sexual conduct. While the church must be ready to exalt the obedience of those who remain celibate despite their homosexual desires, we must also ask what how a maturing Christian man or woman who struggles with same-sex attraction should increasingly view their relationships with members of the same-sex. Should a celibate Christian who experiences same-sex attraction, like Henry Nouwen, want "more" from a relationship than his male friend—who didn't experience homosexual desires—could give (94)? What is this "more" that Nouwen sought, and should he have sought it? Should it be sought today? Are vowed friendships the place where these desires for "more" should be fulfilled?

These are, in my judgment, important questions for they require us to consider how Christian maturity in the area of friendship and same-sex desire will express itself both outwardly *and* inwardly. Even given the historical precedent of vowed friendships, I don't believe we have biblical warrant for such practices, nor should we give the impression that longings for same-sex intimacy, though celibate, should find satisfaction in relationships that, apart from sexual expression, resemble marriage.

CONCLUSION: MORE WORK TO BE DONE

When I read in *Washed and Waiting*, I smiled with admiration at Hill's commitment to celibacy despite his own same-sex desires. Now, reading his second book on this subject, I grieve with him as he expressed the pain of loneliness and unfulfilled longing for intimacy. With his latest work, Hill has given us a deeper awareness of the ache with which many single Christians—especially those who wrestle with homosexual desire—often live. I join with him in a call to the church to recover a biblical vision of friendship for the sake of all Christians, and I am moved to consider how I might improve my own relationships and my vision of friendship for the good of Christ's people.

Unfortunately, *Spiritual Friendship* resolves the longing for friendship in place unwarranted by Scripture. Writers who take inspiration from Hill and seek to craft a vision of Christian friendship will need to give closer attention to how marriage and friendship relate *theologically* while also helping us answer the question of how spiritual maturity expresses itself inwardly and outwardly among Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction. More work can be done and should be done for the sake friendship, marriage, and the glory of God.

A Review of Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Marriage, Sex, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong.

Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015. 256 pp. \$24.99.

Colin Smothers | Operations Director The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Louisville, Kentucky

n the midst of the deafening, gale-force winds of the spirit of the age, someone has stood up, cleared his throat, and said, "We cannot be silent."

We Cannot Be Silent, the title of Dr. Albert Mohler's newest book, represents decades worth of academic and cultural engagement by one of the leading lights of our time on the topic of the sexual revolution and its consequences. While all the world seems bent on appearing the sexual revolutionaries, Mohler, in Churchillian fashion, has fired a shot across the bow and issued a call-to-arms to the church.

SOUNDING THE ALARM

Mohler begins his book by likening the effects of the sexual revolution to the effects of a devastating hurricane. In many ways, we are living in the aftermath of a massive moral and cultural storm that has hit in three waves: the sexual revolution beginning in the 50s and 60s, the subsequent gay rights revolution, and the ongoing transgender revolution.

With same-sex marriage now legal in all 50 states, churches and Christian communities are still trying to sort out how to respond properly with the gospel. And in the mean time, the hurricane siren is blaring, warning of the impending destruction coming in the wake of the ongoing transgender revolution.

"[T]he transgender revolution, even more than the movement for gay liberation, undermines the most basic structures of society" and undercuts "any understanding of human identity based in the Christian tradition, the trajectory of Western civilization, and the worldview that has shaped today's world" (69). According to Mohler, "the transgender revolution represents one of the most difficult

pastoral challenges this generation of Christians will face" (69).

If this sounds apocalyptic to you, it is because Mohler intends it to. Our situation is indeed dire, and we need to heed the alarm.

IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

How did we get here?

Ideas have consequences, said philosopher Richard Weaver, and Mohler shows us just how consequential they can be. Supreme Court appointments matter. Books can change the world. Mohler understands these currents and undercurrents at work in the world and demonstrates his singular ability to confront them.

Mohler showcases his omni-competence when he sets each wave of the sexual revolution in its legal, moral, cultural, societal, and religious context. For instance, in his second chapter, Mohler identifies four 20th-century advances as the culprits that led to the eclipse of marriage in Western Civilization—birth control and contraception, divorce, advanced reproductive technologies, and cohabitation—citing along the way the political commentators, cultural elites, court cases, and influential books that have shaped the world where those realities are commonplace. Mohler's vast literary knowledge is on full display in the endnotes, where J. Gresham Machen, *The New York Times*, and Flannery O'Connor appear side-by-side. The bibliography alone deserves its own Amazon Wish List.

A river is formed from many tributaries. Mohler has traced the sexual revolution upstream and provided us with an aerial map of the landscape. One particularly noteworthy tributary is the evangelical church's silence in past generations on cultural shifts like no-fault divorce. Mohler does not want that to be the epitaph of our generation.

The ongoing sexual revolution is a war with many fronts. But Mohler demonstrates what it looks like to push back—not by dismissing opposing ideas outright as non-threats, but by seeking to understand their presuppositions, strategies (see especially Mohler's chronicle of the gay rights strategy on pg. 36ff), and worldviews. And then he engages them head-on.

We need to know how we got here. And then we need to chart a way out.

BUT THERE IS HOPE

After rehearsing the rise of each wave of the sexual revolution, Mohler turns his attention to another revolutionary force—the Word of God. And here, planting his flag, he finds hope. After giving a thorough biblical-theological overview of sex and marriage, Mohler issues this clarion call: "Christians must look each other in the eye and remind one another of what is now required of us—to speak the truth, to live the truth, and to bear witness to the truth whether we are invited to the White House or treated as exiles. The rest is in God's hands" (151).

But should Christians attend a same-sex wedding? Are people born gay? If a transgender person gets saved, should they undergo surgery to change back to their birth gender? Mohler knows that these questions are where the rubber meets the road, which is why he devotes an entire chapter (chapter 10) to answering these and dozens of other pressing questions. His answers are pastoral, practical, and Christ-centered; and they demonstrate that there is indeed hope in the gospel.

WE CANNOT BE SILENT

LGBTQQ2IA. Transgenderism. PGP's. In the face of these and other confusing concepts, we might be tempted to remain silent. But God is not silent. He has spoken, and therefore we cannot be silent. Mohler has given the church an example of what it looks like not to be silent. We Cannot Be Silent belongs on the shelf of every Christian who wants to give voice to their conviction that, while the revolutionaries may have won some battles, Jesus Christ is still Lord over the cosmos—including over human sexuality and marriage—and he will ultimately be victorious.

Let's not be silent.

A Review of William Paul Young.

Eve: A Novel.

New York: Howard, 2015. 320 pp. \$16.00.

Tim Challies | Author, Blogger, Pastor Toronto, Ontario

n the positive side, I think [William] Paul Young has become a markedly better writer since *The Shack*. On the negative side, he continues to use his writing to undermine and redefine Christian theology. By my reckoning, that's a net loss. Where *The Shack* was meant to revolutionize our understanding of God, his new novel *Eve* is meant to revolutionize and rescue our understanding of the relationship between men and women. And it is no less troubling.¹

Now, obviously *Eve* is fiction, which means it can be tricky to determine exactly what the author actually means to teach through his story. There is a lot in the novel that is complex and symbolic and that awaits the author's authoritative interpretation. But what is clear is that Young's novel is a retelling of the creation narrative through which he means to right a great wrong.

The story begins when a shipping container washes ashore on an island that exists somewhere between our world and the next. John the Collector finds a young woman named Lilly trapped inside. She is beaten, bruised, broken, and only barely alive. With the help of others—Scholars and Healers—he helps her to recover, to remember who she is, and to understand her importance in history. Lilly, it turns out, is a Witness, one who has the privilege of watching past events unfold so they can be properly understood and interpreted in the present time. Her privilege is to witness creation and the fall into sin, and in that way to provide an account that corrects all our false understandings.

What she witnesses varies significantly from the account we are accustomed to hearing. A sampling of the differences includes:

She sees that the world began with a big bang and that this involved the passing of billions

^{1.} This review was originally published at Challies.com. "Eve," accessed October 23, 2015, http://www.challies.com/book-reviews/eve.

of years ("I can't believe all I saw happened in six days." ... "What you witnessed, especially the Days of Creation, likely took billions of years."). (Note: In the book's acknowledgements section Young thanks Hugh Ross and Reasons to Believe for helping him "craft the days of creation in a way respectful to both the text and to science," suggesting he may hold to the day-age view and, perhaps, the existence of an historical Adam.)

- She sees Jesus create Adam as an infant from the dust of the ground, and sees God personally nurse Adam from his breasts ("Here in my arms and nursing at my breast is the highest expression of my creation." "Mythology is responsible for many odd ideas. ... Did your Storytellers think that Adam was created as a young man with no capacity, a brute ready to be programmed?").
- She sees that Adam falls into sin before Eve was even created, and that the naming of the animals is an infuriating kind of penance for Adam ("Spinning away, the young man raised his fists and screamed fury into the sky, one word. It reverberated and echoed back as time and place and beast stood still. 'Alone!'").
- She sees that Eve is not taken out of Adam as much as she grows within Adam and is birthed from him ("Adam's belly grew, expanding with a pregnancy. ... In nine months God fashioned the feminine side of Adam's humanity, the female who slept within...").
- She sees that Adam and Satan (in the guise of a snake) conspire together to take advantage of
 Eve's naïveté, so that Eve is an innocent party in her own downfall ("She had been betrayed
 and now was being blamed by Adam for what he had conceived in his own heart.").
- She sees that God is triune and genderless and, therefore, best referred to with gender-neutral, third-person pronouns ("God turned Their face to the woman and gently spoke with words of sorrow...").

In short, she sees a whole new and "corrected" view of humanity's origins and depravity. Through this character, Young means to show that the story of humanity's fall into sin has been co-opted and perverted by men in order to gain power over women. Eve's role in offering Adam the forbidden fruit is a fable men use to dominate and control women.

"But it's all just a story," you say. True, but in this case, Young insists that his story, and the truth it contains, is the result of decades of thought and research. He insists that the truth embedded in this story has the power to free us from faulty interpretations of the Bible that have long corrupted human relationships. In an interview with *Publishers Weekly* he says, "Ultimately, the inspiration for *Eve* is the Scriptures themselves. The more I studied and pondered and conversed, the more I was driven back to Genesis and the iconic saga of Beginnings, and it was there I began to find answers to the big, system-shaking questions I was asking. Eve is my attempt to express some of what I discovered." In that way he plays a character within his own work—the character(s) he calls the Scholar.

Now, it's not like the book is all bad. In fact, there are points where it is downright moving. Young's descriptions of God's joy over his creation, and especially his joy in the creation of man, is powerful and stirring. Man's response to God's love is equally sweet. Young's compassion in describing the agonizing abuse endured by Lilly can only come out of the heart of an author who has himself suffered. And the story, while perhaps too complicated at times, is well-written and well-told.

And yet it is, in the final assessment, a troubling, faulty, and even dangerous story. There is much

I could say here, but for the sake of brevity, let me target the book's big point.

Whatever else Young means to accomplish in his work, it is clear that he means to undermine the traditional accounts of creation and human depravity. As he reinterprets those two doctrines, he then reinterprets the relationship between the sexes, teaching that any pattern of authority or submission is necessarily a product of sin. Even Adam naming Eve is, in Young's retelling, a display of his longing for power and dominance over woman. Young goes so far in his desire to show the sinful dominance of man that he eventually elevates woman over man, femininity over masculinity, as if one is the antidote to the other. "[Women] is Adonai's invitation to embrace frailty and softness, to be whole and unashamed, to return fully from his turning." In this way man's solution for sin is not only the promised offspring of the woman, but woman herself.

Ironically, Young's insistence on complete egalitarianism is inconsistent with his own story. His Witnesses, Scholars, and Collectors are all equals, yet each with his (or her) own *role*. Young's world and his story only work when each of his characters freely and joyfully plays his or her role. In the same way God, in his creative work, assigned separate roles to men and women. In God's world no role is better or greater or higher than another, but each is critical to the story he is telling.

God tells us that God created men to take positions of leadership within the church and family, and for women to joyfully submit themselves to this leadership. In this way God provides a much fuller display of who he is and what he is like. His image is shown not in uniformity but in complementarity. After all, the relationships within the Trinity display this very same pattern of leadership and submission. What is ultimately at stake here is not the relationship of man to woman, but our understanding of God as he displays himself in our relationships.

Behind Young's retelling of this portion of the Bible is the question of the Bible's authority. The only way he can teach what he teaches is by radically altering the biblical narrative. So has the Bible been wrong all along? Is the Bible only a figurative count and *Eve* a faithful interpretation? Were the authors such a product of their time, place, and culture that they biased their work with chauvinist ideas? As the dust settles, what exactly is true anyway? Read *Eve* and you won't have much certainty.

In that same interview with *Publishers Weekly* Young says, "There are also some who will read it and won't 'see' her, sometimes because the timing isn't right and their life's journey has not granted the gifts inherent in suffering, or because their assumptions are too overwhelming and powerful to allow them to hear." More condescending words have rarely been uttered. He seems unwilling to consider that perhaps it's not that our assumptions are too overwhelming, but that God's Word is too clear.

A Review of Denny Burk & Heath Lambert.

Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change.

Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015. 83 pp. \$9.99.

Cody H. McNutt | Senior Pastor First Baptist Church Covington, Georgia

enny Burk and Heath Lambert are no strangers to the ongoing cultural dialogue regarding sexuality. As professors, pastors, and published authors they have proven their knowledge and compassion when dealing with this thorny subject. In 2013, each published a book on issues related to sexuality. Lambert penned *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* and Burk released *What is the Meaning of Sex?* Colleagues at Boyce College and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the two have now partnered to write a helpful and concise volume about sexual orientation titled *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change*.

SUMMARY

The book is divided into two parts: the first dealing with the ethics of sexual desire; the second with how those experiencing same-sex attraction can experience transformation by the power of the gospel.

More specifically, chapter one attempts to define orientation and argue that it is not morally neutral. In chapter two, the authors address sin, temptation, and desire with great biblical and theological insight.

Chapters three through five treat issues regarding personal transformation and change. They carefully debunk myths and stereotypes that are often used to assail evangelicals, and thus they help serious Christians to consider what Scripture says to those experiencing same-sex attraction.

EVALUATION

With great precision, Lambert and Burk begin by defining their terms. Without capitulating to secular thought, they employ the American Psychological Association's definition of orientation. While some may rush to critique the authors for their starting point, they succinctly offer disclaimers and argue this as necessary to understand "what people commonly mean by the term sexual orientation" (20).

For those who may just be wading into the often murky waters of this debate, Burk and Lambert provide clear summaries of what the liberal, revisionist, neo-traditional, and traditional approaches to same-sex desire and behavior entail. One of the fine marks of their work is how they engage those with different positions, especially the revisionist Matthew Vines and the neo-traditionalist Wesley Hill.

The authors remind the church that the issue of sexual orientation is a theological issue, not simply one of social construction. Finding help in church history from the anthropology of the Reformed tradition, they cite the historic Princeton theologian Charles Hodge. And they turn to the contemporary voices of Sam Alberry and Rosaria Butterfield in their understanding of how our sexual attraction does not make up our "identity" (36–38).

As they survey the landscape, these men hear the voices of those who argue that while homosexual behavior is sinful, orientation is not. They combat this claim and help the reader to understand that this subject is intensely theological. At the same time, it is an issue "with immediate practical and pastoral implications" (41). Following Augustine's doctrine of sin, they affirm "both evil desire and evil deeds must be regarded as thoroughly sinful" (44).

While critics say that desire may be sinful depending on its "intensity" or its "chosenness", Burk and Lambert exegete Jesus' use of the word *epithumeo* in the Sermon on the Mount and persuasively argue that the key issue is about the "object" of desire (46). Making the biblical-theological connection between Jesus' word and the seventh and tenth commandments, they argue the importance of rightly understanding the sinfulness of same-sex attraction. For it has implication for ministry, counseling, and discipleship, and more (47–48).

In addition to biblical-theological argumentation, the book is filled with earnest compassion. For after three chapters of biblical exposition, the final two chapters, they provide routes of repentance and paths of godly pursuits (81–100). For them, the goal is not a transformation from *homos*exuality to *heteros*exuality, but from unrighteous impurity to holiness impelled by faith in the gospel. While they continue to correct wrong assertions and answer false attacks, they emphatically assert that change has nothing to do with a reparative therapy but a reoriented view of God. It is this radical approach to transformation that may catch some Christian off guard and will prayerfully bring liberation to many struggling with same-sex desires.

Finally, the practical advice given to all believers in the final chapter is worth the price of book. Few take the time to hold us to account, to call for our own repentance, and to provide a clear and loving way forward. Burk and Lambert have done the church a great service here. They have reminded church leaders and their members to be friend those struggling individually and corporately, to listen compassionately to them and pray for them, to evangelize and counsel in truth, to stand against oppression, and to receive them as family when God saves them (110–114). This is a needed exhortation for the church of Christ in our day.

CONCLUSION

As the literature on homosexual behavior increases, from Christians and secular writers alike, it is almost impossible to keep up. The church relies on pastor-theologians like Denny Burk and Heath Lambert to help us navigate our cultural terrain. These men have boldly stepped into a part of the conversation with theological nuance or pastoral wisdom. This was the "need" perceived by the authors, and thus the "goal" of their work: "to consider the ethics of homosexual desire" (13). They convincingly, yet caringly, show how faithful believers must consider orientation and desire to also stand opposed to God's Word and his will.

This work should be required reading for all believers, especially pastors and church leaders, so that we may know how to minister more faithfully to those struggling with same-sex desire. *Transforming Homosexuality* is a book that when read seriously will give help to those who struggle with same-sex attraction. And for everyone, whatever the form or focus of our indwelling sin, Lambert and Burk teach us that when anyone feels Christ-like transformation is impossible, they need only turn to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For there in the promises of God's grace, they will hear the sweet and powerful voice of the One who raises the dead and lives to intercede for us.

Book Review of Thomas Bergler. From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 192 pp. \$20.00.

Scott Corbin | Assistant Operations Director The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Louisville, Kentucky

n the Spring of 2012, American religious historian Thomas E. Bergler dropped a bomb on the playground of evangelicalism with his *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. In *Juvenilization*, Bergler lays forth an incisive critique of several Christian subgroups: mainline Protestantism, the Black Church, Roman Catholicism, and Evangelicalism. His major thesis was that, in an effort to try to reach youth for the world in the early-to-mid 20th century, the various groupings surveyed actually served to "juvenilize" their youth and thus poison the well for future theological and ethical development.

While all of the critiques served as fascinating case studies, the chapter that stood above them all was his chapter on Evangelicalism. In it, he offered a withering critique of certain patterns, practices, and innovations that did more harm than good for the evangelical enterprise in the long run. Because of the juvenilization that occurred, the rise of things like the seeker-sensitive movement and other forms of individualistic spirituality would reign supreme within evangelicalism, serving to be a fertile ground for the propagation of Christian Smith's "moralistic therapeutic deism." Instead of local churches being a place of formative transformation, the churches began to parrot youth camps and tent revivals—those ministry practices whose original intent was toward pushing youth and non-believers inside the walls of churches. The tail had begun to wag the dog.

Thomas Bergler's *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* served as a catalyst for a much-needed conversation and self-assessment for Christians, especially evangelicals. Yet, questions began to be raised about how helpful Bergler's book was. "After all," many would say, "what good does it do to raise a criticism but not offer any practical suggestions for moving forward?"

It was that question that animated Bergler to write a follow-up to *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity is

Bergler's response to critics who raised the "so what?" question in terms of American Christianity's juvenilization and what to do about it. Coming in at right under 150 pages, *From Here to Maturity* is a quick survey over some of the issues and what those looking to do—to turn the boat from juvenilization to maturity—might do about them. The book is not meant to be an in depth analysis, but a "practical guide to fostering maturity in local congregations" and to "help church leaders looking to foster maturity in their congregations" (xiii). This is a welcomed aim and I'm glad Bergler set out to do just that.

SURVEY OF CONTENTS

In his first chapter, "We're All Adolescents Now," Bergler runs through some of the issues that he covered in *Juvenilization*, but goes further by looking at the contemporary scorn that many Americans have toward adulthood and growing up. The chapter is devastating. Not only does he recognize that "growing up" isn't what it used to be, he also realizes that "both the journey to adulthood and the destination has changed" (4). Through a variety of factors including, but not limited to, early puberty, institutions that target youth specifically, advertising that praises youthfulness and scorns adulthood, delayed marriage, consumerism, and so forth, we see that maturity simply is not what it once was. Not only is maturity something that is no longer desirable, it's something that many—including the church—don't even really think about. What's more: spirituality is conceived entirely within categories of identity creation, individualism, and a "what's good for me" pastiche spirituality. This is the landscape in which many pastors find themselves ministering.

After exposing the issues, Bergler's second chapter, "Growing Up Into Christ," explores the biblical and theological foundations for maturity in Christ. Through exegesis of the relevant texts—Ephesians 2, Philippians 3, Matthew 28—Bergler shows that the gospel of grace does not free us up to licentiousness or careless living, but calls us to maturity in Christ. "Excluding transformation from the gospel detracts from the glory of God in Christ because it implies that God . . . could not figure out a way to actually fix us to any significant degree" (32). Instead of being Christians who "love the idea of being a child of God," we should remember that God disciplines us (39). The vision for holistic Christian discipleship, according to scripture, is for disciples of Jesus to love one another, serve one another, and seek to grow up into Christ who is the head of the Church. This is something that should be preached on, called for, and desired by those in the church.

Bergler's next chapter, "Helping Adults Mature," is a practical discussion of what it might look like to implement some sort of strategy for Christian maturity within local assemblies. While it's exciting to see Bergler set forth a system for overcoming juvenilization, for various reasons this chapter doesn't seem to deliver. Maybe it's because Bergler is trying to write for a broad constituency, but his transdenominational hopes seem to blunt the force of some of his arguments. For example, in talking about mentor / mentee relationships he speaks of things like "listening to God" and "talking about your spiritual life story." In discussions such as these, I found myself more confused than helped. In fact, this seems to be one of the central weaknesses about *From Here to Maturity*: it serves no good to lay out foundational principles with squishy, plastic phrases like "listening to God," "standing firm," "practice in community," or even "missional living." In fact, for those who have experienced the juvenilizing tendencies within evangelicalism, plastic phrases such as these only serve to further juvenilize, deceiving disciples into thinking they are progressing in sanctification when in fact they're only offering up

empty words and phrases that have a veneer of godliness.

In his fourth chapter, "Reaching the Tipping Point: Youth Ministries That Help the Whole Church Mature," Bergler focuses his sights specifically on youth ministry and what churches can be doing to change the culture of their youth ministries. Indeed, Bergler asserts that "if I am right about how juvenilization works, then it is crucial for churches to help teenagers catch a vision for spiritual maturity. Otherwise, they may get stuck in spiritual adolescence and become the next generation of mature adults." (81) This is a noble aim, though it may strike some—especially those approaching congregational life from a more family integrated approach—as an odd way to approach issues of juvenilization by focusing so much on what makes juveniles themselves "stick." Bergler highlights some of the issues from chapter one and shows that in order to reach emerging adults, there must be a plan of attack. With the aid of social science research, Bergler calls for churches to consider ways in which they, as congregations, can best set youth on a trajectory toward spiritual growth.

In his fifth and final chapter, "From Here to Maturity," Bergler sets out a four step plan for congregations to move toward spiritual maturity. Through observation of practices, Bergler raises some key issues for church leaders to evaluate. For example, part of the issue for juvenilization in previous generations has been from a lack of consideration about the medium by which one wishes to communicate the gospel. As an example, Bergler explores the nature of music in congregational worship. This proved to be a very helpful chapter, especially when considering the formative nature of practices—for good or for ill. Bergler also has scores of diagnostic questions for pastors and church leaders to consider throughout.

CONCLUSION

The Juvenilization of American Christianity has proven to be one of the more impactful books I have read in the last five years. In it, Thomas E. Bergler raised issues which helped me diagnose things that seemed to be at variance with orthodox Christianity; for that I am very grateful. While From Here to Maturity raises similar issues it hopes to overcome, I couldn't help but feel a little underwhelmed. Strangely, it seems that some of the practices that he encourages congregations to undertake would only continue to undermine his central goal: maturity in congregations. It's possible that by writing to a "big tent" audience some of the language and suggestions he employs seems to blunt his argument.

Instead of focusing so much on principles, maybe it's that in aiming for maturity we let the words of Scripture confront us as individuals and congregations—each with our own cultural idolatries—and are called to an ethic that shames the wisdom of this world. Maybe overcoming juvenilization, while difficult, stands to be as simple as hearing and obeying Saint Paul's words when he says, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." Churches which take seriously the authority and primacy of Scripture will not help but aim at such a goal as simple as that.

A Review of Kevin DeYoung. What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality? Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 160 pp. \$12.99.

Trent Hunter | Pastor of Administration and Teaching Desert Springs Church Albuquerque, New Mexico

hat does the Bible teach about homosexuality? Whether someone believed the Bible to be true or not, that question used to have an obvious and simple answer: homosexuality is sin. For some today the answer is no longer so obvious. But for all of us the answer is no longer that simple. A transformed context means that more needs to be said, and said with greater care, understanding, and with a more thoughtful vocabulary. The question before us is no longer, "What does the Bible *teach* about homosexuality?" but, "What does the Bible *really* teach about homosexuality?"

This is the subject of Kevin DeYoung's new book framed with that question, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* His book is divided into two parts. Part 1, "Understanding God's Word," carefully expounds the relevant passages. Part 2, "Answering Objections," addresses popular challenges to the traditional understanding of homosexuality. DeYoung writes as a pastor who believes that the Bible is "inspired, authoritative, unbreakable, and fully trustworthy" (15). Other writers share this conviction, but DeYoung's book is unique for its narrow agenda, broad appeal, and pastoral delivery. These three features will organize my review.

ONE MAIN QUESTION

I originally expected this book to address a variety of issues. Yet, while DeYoung acknowledges as many as thirteen questions he could address from politics to same-sex attraction, his aim is purposefully narrow (16). To be specific, DeYoung writes to make plain the Bible's teaching concerning homosexual sex acts (15, 16). This is an even narrower aim than the title might suggest. This question, though, is foundational. As DeYoung puts it, "once we answer that question, we can move onto a thousand points

of application" (16). Given what's at stake, this question should not be assumed so quickly by pastors, teachers, and parents about those under their care (19).

And while this question might seem simple, it actually occasions a careful examination of no less than seven crucial texts, including: Genesis 1-2 and 19, Leviticus 18 and 20, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1. Together, these passages yield a framework for more than an ethic of homosexual sex, but of human sexuality, marriage, and the problem of sin, a doctrine basic to the gospel.

There are other books doing a faithful job of addressing this question along with a variety of other questions. And there are authors that deal with the biblical texts and contemporary challenges with technical rigor and length (28, 41, 47, 112, 113). But, to date, we really haven't had a book at the popular level that does this in a way that is both thorough enough to be intellectually persuasive and simple enough for "ordinary" Christians to read and distribute (19). To say it differently, DeYoung is doing at the popular level what Robert Gagnon did in his exhaustive academic work, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*.¹

MANY DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Writing to be heard on this subject requires sensitivity to the diverse assumptions and experiences held by the book's readers. For this reason, one of my first questions in picking up any book on this subject is, who can I give this to? Will the author chase away a person with overly harsh statements? Will the author assume too much, raising more questions than he answers? Will the writer loosen the reader's confidence in the clarity of Scripture by making the matter more complicated than it is?

Thankfully, DeYoung is a student of the Word, but also his audience; or better, his audiences. He even devotes half of an appendix to the topic how different people hear this discussion (148–149). For the purposes of framing his book, he identifies three kinds of readers (17–19). The *convinced* are settled or mostly settled on the traditional view. The *contentious* are set against the biblical view. The *confused* aren't sure what to believe. Were DeYoung tackling a myriad of questions his book may have been irrelevant to the contentious or not sufficiently helpful for the confused. It may seem counter-intuitive, but by narrowing his subject matter, DeYoung has actually broadened the appeal of his book.

For most readers, Part 2, "Answering Objections," will peak their interest. There, DeYoung addresses a variety of claims and questions, including: "The Bible Hardly Ever Mentions Homosexuality," "What about Gluttony and Divorce?," "You're on the Wrong Side of History," and "The God I Worship is a God of Love." In answering these questions, DeYoung explores a number of other issues along the way: the necessity of speaking up on this issue (77), and the origin of homosexual desire (110-112), for example. While centered on a single question, the book manages to scratch a lot of itches before it's done.

BRINGING THE BIBLE TO BEAR

DeYoung writes to make the Bible clear, evident in his judicious use of extra-biblical material to support but never distract from the Bible (36, 53–54, 73, 81–86). But he understands that with the Bible's clarity comes responsibility for its reader. He is, after all, a pastor, and this issue is fundamentally

^{1.} Robert Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002).

spiritual in nature. Hopefully, every reader will hear a Word concerning salvation. The Bible's salvation story, calls to repentance, comforts with the kingdom of heaven, and instruction on the Christian life are all there (9-14, 98-100, 134).

For those who are *confident* in their position, DeYoung encourages question asking, long listening, and weeping with those who weep (17, 75, 110, 147). Understanding the sinfulness of homosexual sex should engender a humility that recognizes the problem of sin common to us all. People's stories and experiences should matter to us if we're to help them, even if every experience must be brought under the interpretive authority of the Word (18, 21, 116-117, 132).

The *contentious* will not escape DeYoung's direct and unequivocal statements about sin. Here's an example of how he begins one chapter: "Let me be blunt: the Bible says nothing good about homosexual practice. That may sound like a harsh conclusion, but it's not all that controversial" (79, cf. 74, 87, 115). This confidence is grounded in the demonstrated clarity of Scripture and the Bible's own handling of sexual sin (74). DeYoung will admit complexity, but he does not concede the Bible's clarity (59). The *confused* will hear God's voice on the matter and, so we can pray, realize what's at stake for marriage, Scripture, and souls when the sinfulness of sin is denied (74, 77, 130–131).

MORE ON SHELLFISH AND THEIR CREATOR

If I could recommend one improvement, it would be to clarify further the relationship of Leviticus to the Christian in chapter 3. Christians are often accused of reading the Bible selectively, keeping commands about sexuality while neglecting commands about shellfish, for example. DeYoung offers six excellent points, but I'm not sure it satisfied the objection. In various and qualified ways he said that Leviticus has significance for Christians, but did not adequately explain how one adjudicates the relative contemporary application of different commands. Rooting commands concerning sexuality in creation order was mentioned but not developed. Yet this is a simple way of showing how certain commands carry over to Christians while avoiding the somewhat tricky New Testament application of the Levitical law as a whole. This small critique, though, shows how well in my estimation the book accomplished its stated aim.

What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality? is an excellent book for anyone looking for a clear or clearer answer to that question. For other questions there are other books, and DeYoung makes some recommendations at the end of his (151–153).

Many subjects could be addressed. This subject *must* be addressed. Souls depend on it. So does every other question we're asking.

A Review of Eric Metaxas. Seven Women: And the Secret of Their Greatness. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015. 256 pp. \$26.63.

Kimberly Campbell | Wife, Mother, Blogger Marietta, Georgia

s I scroll through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram feeds I feel compelled to compare my life to the lives of those I follow. I wonder why my Pinterest pizza rolls just don't look like the gourmet picture that I pinned just days earlier. I wonder how parents get their toddlers to sit perfectly still—and smile—for the best family photo of the year. And I think if we knew the whole story behind those feeds that we so closely monitor, we would be more content with our own lives and not be so covetous of the lives that we see on screen.

Biographies offer you insight into the featured person's life—their birth, death, and everything in between. I love how biographies don't just focus on the grand and glamourous, like we often do on Facebook, but also introduce you to the pain of life that the person endured.

As a follow-up to his book *Seven Men*, Eric Metaxas has given us a compelling collection of notable women in *Seven Women*. He engages us with the lives of seven very different women who were all categorized as those who changed their world and were faithful to Christ.

FIERCELY FEMININE

But, something else about these women engages us and first engaged Metaxas. And that is the unique task of living *as women*: women who love Christ and display a fierce femininity. The author shares the struggle he had in choosing which seven women to write about. He didn't want to choose women because they "should somehow be compared to men" (xiv). He goes on to tell his readers why he chose the seven he featured in his book: "What made them great has nothing to do with their being measured against or competing; their accomplishments are not gender-neutral but are rooted in their singularity as women" (xv).

Although it wouldn't be helpful for us to compare ourselves with these featured women, it does help us to examine their lives with the help of the author. By considering their faith we can examine our lives to see if there is any area of growth the Spirit would bring about in our character.

THE SEVEN WOMEN

Not all of the women mentioned in this book are ones familiar to most of us. I learned a great deal about some of these women, which is just one of the many reasons I found this book so intriguing and captivating. Here are the seven.

- Joan of Arc was a single, heroic, leader against military injustice. She would die before she reached twenty years of age—and die a horrific death of a martyr at that.
- Susanna Wesley was a wife and mother of many children who would live into her seventies and see most of those children die before she did.
- Hannah More was a single woman of influence in the world around her and fought against injustice in all areas of life until her death in her late eighties.
- Saint Maria of Paris, a poet, mother, and church reformer, would be over fifty by the time she died and much later be recognized as a saint in the Orthodox church.
- Corrie Ten Boom, one of the more familiar of these ladies, lived a full life of self-abandonment for the good of others in the name of Jesus.
- Rosa Parks, who left this earth not too long ago, fought injustice in America and held at her
 core her relationships, especially with her husband.
- Mother Theresa, fitting that she would be the last of the seven in this book, had a saying that epitomized her life and the life of the others in this volume: "Faithfulness, not success" (167).

Three characteristics stand out to me about these women. These traits manifested themselves in different ways, but each had an indelible mark on these women's lives. The first one concerns the pain they experienced. Often in social media we only see the good. As I read the lives of these women and was introduced to the pain in their lives, I often was grieved for them and wonder how they remained steadfast.

Another trait I saw was faithfulness. These women knew what was entrusted of them to do and they did it, despite the rage against them. They mothered, fought, loved, and supported. And thus displayed strength in their unique calling as women.

And finally, I noticed that these women all fought against injustice. Each of them faced different facets of injustice, but they all experienced it acutely in their world. From slavery, to racism, to the poorest of the poor, they knew that the God they served and loved was the author and perfecter of justice. They wanted to be His fingerprints on their world.

SEVEN WOMEN WHO GAVE LIFE TO OTHERS

Each of these women exuded life through pain, faithfulness to God, and a commitment to righteousness and justice, all the while still modeling femininity. You could say that all of these women offered

life to those around them. Even as Eve was the mother of all living, these women were life-givers to those around them. Their influence as women of faith, their heroism, and their faithfulness has influenced other women to display these characteristics in their own lives today. May we seek to live out their example in our lives, as beautiful women following a faithful God who calls us to love Him and love others.

A Review of Matt Chandler.

The Mingling of Souls: God's Design for Love,

Sex, Marriage, and Redemption.

Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2015. 224 pp. \$15.99.

Jonathon Woodyard | Master of Divinity Student Bethlehem Seminary Minneapolis, Minnesota

elationships are messy. That doesn't mean that they are not worthwhile. Relationships are a tremendous avenue for growth and joy precisely *because* they are messy. This is surely the case in the context of marriage. Marriage is the union between two sinners. And entering into this often-messy marital relationship should be done carefully, patiently, and wisely.

Matt Chandler, the lead pastor of The Village Church in Dallas, TX, writes *The Mingling of Souls* with Jared C. Wilson in an effort to help us think about romance, dating, marriage, and sex. Chandler roots his discussion in the Song of Solomon. This is a fantastic aspect of the book and would pair well with focused reading in the Song. Furthermore, the book is laden with wisdom. Though Chandler is relatively young, it is obvious that God has granted Matt wisdom beyond his years. He speaks about the complexities of attraction, the ins-and-outs of dating, the peculiarities of courting, and struggles of marriage winsomely. These are reasons enough to take up and read what Chandler has written.

Given our cultures infatuation with relationships and sex, one would think it would be easy to access wise counsel for these issues. Yet, though there are innumerable books, articles, and other resources, it seems there is "a profound lack of wisdom and practical know-how" (11). Chandler sets out to fill the gap.

ATTRACTION

Chandler begins with a discussion about attraction. The move from the "natural feeling of being drawn [to someone]" (23) and finally moving towards marriage is full of complexity. For instance, attraction often arises because we see a physically desirable characteristic in another person, but physical beauty can be deceptive and often fades away (26). Being attracted to someone because you find him or her a

delight to the eyes is a good thing, but "our romance—sense of beauty itself—must run much deeper than physical attraction" (27). In other words, we need to go "deeper than the surface" (32). A person may please the eyes, but are they a person of character? Chandler gives some practical advice for answering that question (31–47). Are they submissive to authority? Does the person commit to things, like a local church and local church leadership? How do they respond in suffering and pain? Looking past the surface, to what lies beneath, helps us think carefully about someone we find a delight to the eyes.

DATING AND COURTING

After giving appropriate caution to how we think about attraction, Chandler begins to talk through wise approaches to dating and courting. Though these two ideas may be collapsed into one in our culture, Chandler helpfully shows the differences. Two people who are attracted to one another physically will likely find ways to "hang out." And, if these two people like what they see in terms of character qualities, there will likely be a desire to move the relationship beyond friendship. For Chandler, this means two people begin to get know each other at a deeper, yet appropriate, level. If there is a mutual desire to pursue this dating relationship (52–54), it seems life giving (55), and godly people have given an approving nod (56–58), then start hanging out in healthy ways. These "ways," however, will look vastly different from the rest of society. Christian dating is a stark contrast to the hook-up culture we find ourselves in.

For Christians, "dating ... has a specific trajectory" (68). We do not awaken love until it's time (Song 2:7). But we are moving towards that "time" by clarifying our intentions in dating. At this point Chandler says two people should consider courtship. Courtship means entering into, "I think this is the one" territory (72). It's a season of life where two people are sorting through their issues. They share their fears, dreams, struggles, and joys. Chandler writes, "This is why courtship is deeper than dating—because it is dangerous, vulnerable, and awesome all at the same time" (77). This is a helpful part of the book. Move towards the commitment of marriage, but do so wisely, patiently, and with intentionality. The two chapters on dating and courtship combine to elevate the seriousness of the pre-marital relationship. Relationships are messy, and they are not a game.

MARRIAGE

Entering into marriage relationships is entering into a covenant. "The way our culture tends to depict the working marriage relationship resembles less the covenant of grace and more a business arrangement" (101). Chandler helpfully shows the need to look at marriage as a covenant, not a contract. It is a committed relationship the community has rejoiced over, and in which the husband sacrificially leads his wife. Once the wedding bells have sounded, and the couple enters the bedroom for the first time, Chandler offers some guidance. Throughout the book he has highlighted that sex is a good gift from the Lord and "can draw you closer to God" (142), if approached in a godly manner.

Chandler has bestowed a good amount of wisdom and he isn't finished. He helpfully walks the reader through practical ways to navigate relational tensions. Since "the flesh will always be there" (144), a couple must think carefully about how they respond when disagreements arise. Furthermore, any couple that's going to finish well must "keep putting logs on the fire" (179). Dating your wife or

GENDER STUDIES IN REVIEW

husband is not something that can go away once you've said, "I do." Instead, if you want to finish the course of marriage and hear a "well done" at the end, then you must keep pursuing each other till the last day dawns.

EVALUATION

This book helpful roots the whole idea of marriage in the gospel of Jesus. The gospel is never far away from Chandler's mind and is found throughout the pages. The fact that marriage is a picture of Christ and his church (Eph 5:2–33) colors much of what we read. The handling of a difficult Old Testament book is fair, with bridges from the ancient text to the modern world built with care. In short, this is a holistic book that is not only biblically and theologically careful, but is intensely practical. It is a welcome resource. It would benefit the average layperson, while serving well in pre-engagement, pre-marital, and even marriage counseling contexts. I highly recommend the book.