

**SEVEN PASSAGES:
The Stories of Gay Christians**

Stephanie Sandberg
2443 Belfast Ave SE
Grand Rapids MI 49507
616 706 2134
ssandber@calvin.edu

Actors' Theatre, Grand Rapids
Managing Director: Kyle Dutkiewicz
160 Fountain NE
Grand Rapids MI 49503
616 234 3817
kdutkiew@grcc.edu

Notes on Performing the Text:

Seven Passages plays on stage in about 100 minutes and is meant to proceed without the interruption of an intermission.

The anonymous characters may have given themselves a name which is why their name appears in quotes as in “Ben”. Many of the original interviewees chose to keep their material as anonymous either for fear of becoming known or because of the need for privacy.

In the original production, seven actors played the roles as follows:

Actor 1: Jim L., “Ben”, and Randy

Actor 2: Marilyn, Anonymous Woman 3, Anonymous Woman 16, John

Actor 3: Lauren, Emily, Anonymous Woman 8, Megan

Actor 4: Damon, Devin, Alex, David, Mike

Actor 5: “Rick”, Anonymous Man 12, Jason, Pedro

Actor 6: Anonymous Man 13, Peter, AJ, Jim F.

Actor 7: Anonymous Woman 16, Anonymous Woman 17, Kathleen

These are only suggestions for the character/actor breakdown that we know works with the text. At times an actor will have no break between portraying two different characters. This is an intentional juxtaposition and while it’s demanding on the performer, it does work.

At times in the text, there are suggestions of overlapping and echoes, where an actor might become the voice of a father or a mother or a partner. There are only some suggestions of these in the text, but more may be added.

Notes on the use of technology:

In the original production, the set consisted of seven projection screens which slid in and out of one another. We projected scriptural text and images onto these screens, using a live-camera feed in order to create the visual intimacy of the original interviews.

In the second production, there was a minimal amount of technology and the play still worked beautifully, so while we suggest the use of projection from time to time, it is not necessary to the final product.

The most crucial element of production is light which helps to isolate characters or bring them together, depending on the moment. In both lighting designs, the characters were pinpointed either with very specifically focused lights or with follow spots. This created another layer of visual intimacy.

In both productions, we found that it was necessary to create a sense of intimacy of sound. We used very sensitive body microphones for the first production with a careful sound design that kept the balance of human voices just right. In the second production, we produced it in the round in a very small space so that the actors were sitting nearly in the laps of the audience and the intimacy was created just through proximity.

The original score was composed by Michael James Brooks and he can be contacted through me if you are interested in obtaining a copy of his score.

Notes on the use of scripture:

The play is structured around the seven passages of scripture most commonly used as an argument by the church to condemn the practice of homosexuality. The scripture should be treated with reverence, not with anger nor with disgust. What is most clear in the stories of the people in the play is that they love their faith, they want to be members of Christian churches and they love the Bible. For this reason, it is very important that the tone on reading scripture maintain a certain sense of objectivity. We used the themes found in the scriptures as a means of constructing the narratives, allowing peoples' stories to speak in, with, and to the scriptural reference.

The most often-cited translation of scripture in *Seven Passages* is the New Revised Standard Version, although we also cite other translations which are mentioned in the text. Translation issues became crucial during the process of devising and editing this text, so often there are several translations of key words used. We also recited the scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew along with the English translations. The Greek and Hebrew scriptures can be found easily online through various sources, although we suggest contacting Greek and Hebrew language scholars in help with the pronunciations.

Finally, should you have any questions regarding the text or the production, please do not hesitate to contact me. I'd be more than happy to discuss the play with you.

Stephanie Sandberg
ssandber@calvin.edu

Actor 1, Jim L., Anonymous Ben, Randy

Actor 2, Anonymous Woman 3, Marilyn, John, Anonymous Woman 6

Actor 3, Lauren, Emily, Anonymous Woman 8, Megan

Actor 4, Damon, Alex, David, Mike, Devin

Actor 5, Pedro, Anonymous Rick, Anonymous Man 12, Jason, Timothy

Actor 6, Jim F., A.J., Anonymous Man 13, Peter

Actor 7, Kathleen, Anonymous Woman 16, Anonymous Woman 17, Anonymous
Woman 4

Darkness.

Projection or voice over:

All of the words that you are about to hear come directly from scripture or from more than 100 interviews with gay and lesbian Christians in Western Michigan.

Transition to the sound, building, of voices chanting scripture, both the name of the passage and the passage in its original tongue. As the scriptures are chanted, the Hebrew and Greek texts are woven in with the English.

Genesis 2:18,21-25, Leviticus 18:22, Genesis 19:1-9, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:24-27, I Corinthians 6:9-10, I Timothy 1:10, Jude 6-7¹

As the sound continues to intensify, lights come up on seven actors moving through the space at varying speeds. As the scripture reaches it's loudest point, the actors freeze and the chanting abruptly stops as the lights shift to accentuate Actor 1.

Actor 1 :

The word homosexual didn't appear in a translation of the Bible until 1946.

Actor 3:

I try to submit my sexuality, day by day, moment by moment, to Christ.

Actor 6:

Let me put it this way, I don't think that the church deals with this issue very well...in fact, their choice is most often not to deal with it and they hurt a lot of people in the process...a lot of people.

Actor 2:

These passages, these seven passages, these seven terribly isolated passages... they have been used over and over again as a tool of oppression against the undeserving.

Movement, Technology, Sound for a few long beats and then another freeze.

Actor 5:

Here's how I see it. I'm made the way I am. I'm just this way. I'm not going to read and study scriptures that are going to make me feel bad about myself. I'm already having a hard enough time with that on my own.

Actor 4:

...these passages dehumanize. People use them so often without context...

Actor 2:

What words do I want to use?
It's a book that was written to a time and a place
And you can't simply lift
Passages out of the scripture
and apply them literally to other times and places
It's a frequently abused book

Movement, Technology, Sound.....Freeze.

Actor 1:

You know, the average person doesn't know Greek, doesn't do the study
And they just take it at face value, they just trust these translators
Unfortunately, these translators, I mean, they've gotta plug something in there
These words are hard to translate, and translators never go blank
And put a little asterisk, "ah, sorry we don't know what to put in here."

...

So many people are affected by these translations

Movement, Technology, Sound.....Freeze.

Actor 5:

On a general note, I do struggle with these because someone will say that it's only seven verses, but it is still seven verses that have to be reckoned with and not just dismissed. Dismissal is an easy answer at this stage of the cultural argument, but it is not that simple.

Actor 4:

if God just wrote one little sentence in the Bible that said

But gay people who love each other, they're totally okay
If He could just write that down for me
I would be completely happy being gay
Ya know what I mean?

Movement, Technology, Sound.....Freeze.

Actor 7:

I don't think I've ever read those passages or heard them in church, but I can tell you I don't wanna read them. Why should I read something I know is only going to condemn me? I'm a Christian. I follow Christ. That's that. I'm a lesbian. I like girls. That's that. Question is, why can't I be both?

Transition of movement and sound to Jude: Awakenings.

JUDE: AWAKENINGS
SEEKING AFTER STRANGE FLESH

Actor 3:

The Book of Jude, 6-7

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion,

Ensemble:

seeking after strange flesh.

Actor 3:

They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

Jim L.:

Well, I grew up in a wonderful Christian home where faith was just assumed
And it was very genuine, it was very sincere
And so for me those- it was the assumption of my life
I had always been the good kid
Got A's in school, president of the church youth group
Going to prayer meetings and Bible studies
Planning on being a pastor
And then I discovered this thing which is the most ugly, disgusting thing that can be
true of a person
Which is what I thought and believed at the time
So I prayed that God would change me because of course God would want to change
me
Heal me was how I put it at the time

Anonymous Woman 16:

I remember just kind of stealing my mom's Sears catalogs and looking at the women's
sections... the – uh – bra and panties sections. And... knowing.

I was really kind of aware. I didn't really have any contact with... other, well alright. I was aware that I should probably be looking at the boys' section with those feelings. But I was looking at the girls' section and I felt guilty about it. Because of my parents, I guess.

My Dad's told me before that I'm going to hell.

Anonymous "Rick":

Around when I was seven or eight years old I found out that my older brother had said that he was gay. I overheard the conversation with my parents, the yelling match, the abusive words of my father telling my brother that he was going to "burn" for this. They told him that it was his own doing and that he needed to repent and return to the Lord, but my brother walked out of that house at age seventeen and never came back.

Jim L.:

One thing I have to say,
I never thought
Oh, I'm going to hell
okay
I've talked to a lot of people, and that's where their mind went
Or has gone
Um... maybe-- some people actually literally had heard it and they believed it
At my church, it was just never talked about
It was like it was so unthinkable that it was taboo for discussion

Anonymous Woman 16:

I guess I hadn't thought about (my sexuality) outright, but I must have thought about it subconsciously because I didn't choose to act on any of those – but again, it could have been because of my faith. Because I thought that what my parents said about God was the way God was. That, um, it's really a sexist, judgmental, conditional love.

Anonymous “Rick”:

Six years later, when I was twelve or so, I started having real feelings for boys. Here I was, going to this Christian school and nobody would talk about anything sexual at all, and I had all these questions. I did turn to my brother at that point again and he helped me through the feelings, but told me that I shouldn't tell anyone. “Look what happened to me...don't let that happen to you.”

Peter and Jason are a couple and always appear together.

Peter:

The specific circumstance that led to me knowing homosexuality is wrong in my church and in my family's perception

Was that a family in our church, the husband left the wife

Because the husband in the situation, his mom died, and he said to the wife

Peter & Actor 1:

“I've been living for my mom, I've been living to please her, and I've been dishonest with you the whole time, but I wanted to give my mom the perception that I had a family and children And so I've been able to do that, and now that she's gone I can be free to live the way I wanna live, I can be gay.”

Lauren and Marilyn are a couple and always appear together.

Lauren:

When I was in high school, I rarely dated

'course, we moved a lot and I was so terribly shy

That I never made many friends at each new school

And after when I graduated, I met a man who

Was a lot older than I was, was giving me a lot of attention

And I drew to that

And he said he had a lot of money, which made it even better

And (sigh) we had a long relationship, ended up getting married

And my daughter is a product of that marriage.

Peter:

This whole mess
And so the reaction within the church
And because my father was the leader of the church, the reaction within my family
was severe
And so [the husband] was asked to leave the church
And so my
Faith became really private
Because I knew that I could maintain it, I knew that I could have a relationship with
God but still be who I was
But I just chose that I wouldn't talk to anyone about it because I knew what the
reaction would be

Lauren:

[My husband] was very abusive
For probably 8 of the 9 years we were together
And he started yelling at [our] 4-month old baby
And so we left, I left to a shelter, and we had a divorce
I knew I was having those feelings towards ladies, but you just didn't even think
about it because

Marilyn:

There was no option to -

Lauren:

To marriage – no, no

Marilyn:

Consider that part of your life

Devin:

I just immediately tried to view it as like maybe
A stage, or something I had to get through
And if I just kept repressing it and trying to make it go away, then
I would just get through it and move on to a normal, heterosexual life
It didn't go away

Marilyn:

When I first realized it was probably in college
I fell in love with my roommate (laughs)
so then I had to start sorting things out in my own brain, figuring out what was going
on here
Because this was something that I had grown up really not even thinking about much
because it just wasn't talked about, it was something out in San Francisco that those
strange people did and you didn't have to think about it here
And I fairly quickly came to the conclusion that the people who said the whole "this
is horrible and you're going to hell" thing were wrong, they had to be wrong
Because I had always been raised that
God loves me – Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so
It doesn't say unless you're gay
I didn't feel like God was gonna zap me with lightning or send me to hell because I
loved somebody

Randy:

It's kind of weird...I know that plenty of guys have a defining moment, and I have
kind of a slide into first base approach to it...I wound up in jr. high/high school very,
very involved with the church. And the messages I kept getting was "okay, sooner or
later you're going to be dating, and you're going to want
to rip her clothes off, but don't! Hold yourself back! Because you need to have self
control," so I would be like, (heavy breathing), "okay, okay, fine, right, opposite sex,
right, got it, okay," and I'd wind up going out on dates, and I'd be like, "this is easy!
Like, I don't want to rip clothes-What? Whatever!" and because it was like a real
super-Christian environment, sexual pressure was sort of off, it was easy to avoid,
because A, I wasn't feeling it, and B, it was wrong anyway, so doing the right thing
was sort of easy. But even at that point the idea of gay people, even knowing what
gay was, was so outside of my periphery.

David:

When I became aware of an attraction that was in a different direction from the
majority...it was probably about in middle school...I think heterosexual people
would have difficulty describing their realizations that they were straight...so it's
hard to describe it more than that....

Anonymous Man 13:

Naming it is or was just too dangerous or frightening to me. I knew what it was but I pretended that I didn't.

David:

He was very popular, very quiet, very athletic – he had that quality that you just wanted to be around him, you wanted to have some sort of intimacy with him...I don't think I really knew what an intimate, romantic relationship was, I just wanted to be close to him...

Anonymous Man 12:

I remember in 5th grade having a hard time falling asleep so what I would do is listen to talking...so falling asleep I would listen to James Dobson... on the radio. So yeah, realizing I had these attractions...I always thought of it as something wrong with me...and I wasn't quite sure what it was, because I didn't fit the James Dobson... prototype of why someone ends up being gay.

Jim F.:

Even though I (grew up) in New York I had no gay role models, I had no one
Who I knew was gay, personally
And the only thing I understood about homosexuals was when they would
cover on the news the gay pride parades in New York
And ya know, there, the news especially – this is the late 80s – focused on the
extravagant
The drag queens, the dykes on bikes that are topless kind of things
And it just cemented in me even more so an internal homophobia
With which I struggle to this day

Anonymous Man 12:

I didn't talk to anybody about this. I kept it in. I was teased...kids would call me gay or faggot...somehow [my dad] found out, that some kid had called me a faggot. He told me that...he wanted me to take karate, so that I could – like, defend myself. I remember first, being humiliated that he found out that this is what some kids were saying, and then horrified that he would actually think it was true.

Jim F.:

Ya know, life is set up so wonderful in the heterosexual world that they teach you
And you have in place all these things and all these rules already to deal with young
infatuation

And it's simply not there when you're gay

And so I remember just

falling in love with my best friend

At 13

And how completely terrible that was for me, and not being able to deal with it

Ya know, it was fine as long as he didn't look at any girls and it didn't have to be
physical because we were spending all our time together and that was meeting a need
for me

But it was still, I remember when he had his first girlfriend and his first kiss, and he
wanted to come to me as his best friend

And share this experience with me

And I was completely devastated

And it caused me to take some really drastic measures in my attempts to cure myself

Transition of movement and sound to Genesis: Coming Out.

GENESIS/COMING OUT:

In the following portion of narration the word “hospitality” is always said by the ensemble in unison.

Actor 1:

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. ²He said, ‘Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way.’ They said,

Actors 5 and 6:

No; we will spend the night in the square.

Actor 1:

But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. ⁴But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; ⁵and they called to Lot,

Ensemble:

Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.

Overlapping

Actor 2: “have sex with them” (NIV)

Actor 3: “know them carnally” (NKJ)

Actor 1: (he speaks the words from the Hebrew)

Actor 4: “have our sport with them” (The Message)

Actor 5: “be intimate with them” (Amplified)

Actor 6: “have relations with them” (NAS)

Actor 7: “have sex with them” (Today’s NIV)

Actor 1:

Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, ‘I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.’ But they replied,

Ensemble:

Stand back!’ And they said, ‘This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.

Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down.

Jim L.:

What this scripture is actually about...what it’s actually about is hospitality.

Actor 2:

Why do people think this is about homosexuality? There are other Biblical passages that specifically refer back to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah being inhospitality.

David:

(overlapping the last word with Actor 2)...hospitality is a huge concept in the Bible in a way that we today don’t understand- being inhospitable was a huge offense... in the ancient world-travelers were dependent on the hospitality and good will of strangers not just for comfort but for physical survival. [It was]...a sacred obligation.

Actor 3:

(overlapping the last word with David) hospitality...this is what was most important to Lot. He was obeying the severely strict laws of the early Israelites by inviting these two angels in and the men of the city want “to KNOW” them...

Ensemble:

what does this mean?

Jim L.:

(overlapping with the Ensemble) What does this mean? Well...what we know about “knowing” is that there were brutal acts of male rape that were committed and are still committed as part of cultural domination, so it seems that these men of Sodom wanted to brutally rape Lot’s guests....Lot refuses to go against the laws of “hospitality...”

Actor 3:

(overlapping the last word with Jim L.) hospitality...listen to the scripture...he cannot violate the needs of his guests...in this moment he offers up his daughters as a sacrifice...

David:

The first thing that pops up to me is that there is no way that a reasonable person can say there is some sort of sexual ethic going on in that story...because Lot is offering up his daughters to essentially be raped – how do you reconcile that?

Actor 3:

....were we discussing gender rather than sexuality, I’d have a whole lot more to say about Lot.

Jim L.:

If you want to speak about inhospitality, look at the way the church has treated gay people...the rejection...the pain that has been caused...

Lauren:

...it was a disaster...I remember mom crying, starting to scream and dad’s a more mild think about it type of guy,

(they said) that I’d be going to hell

There was no way I could bring something that awful into this house with my daughter

Ya know, what am I thinking, am I thinking of her at all?

So, putting that real guilt...I succumb to that very well

So it was just very

feeling beaten down....that you were the bottom of the world as far as status

Anonymous “Rick”:

[My mom’s] reaction was something like,

Anonymous “Rick” & Actor 2:

“Seriously Rick, if I didn’t know any better, I’d think you were gay like your brother. You don’t want to be seen as one of them do you?”

Emily:

I said, “I’ve been dating a girl.” And my mom just looked at me like, I’ve never seen her look at me that way before, she just look(ed) at me like I am some filthy animal. She just was shocked. She started crying and I just sat there like, this isn’t the reaction I wanted. I needed, I felt like I was telling my family I needed help. I need help...to get over this and get thru this and to understand that this isn’t who I am and this isn’t what God wants for me and I need help with it and instead I got the complete opposite reaction. I don’t know, I have no idea what I was expecting, but I wasn’t expecting that.

Like, my mom couldn’t look at me for a week. Whenever she referred to Sara—she still can’t say her name, she says “that girl.” She could never say her name. (...) It was just really hard because I had never lost the respect of my family like that before. (pause) Nobody talked to me for awhile. There was no support at all. I felt like a thing. I lived in the basement, I felt like a thing that just lived in the basement...

Anonymous “Rick”& Actor 2:

“You don’t want to be seen as one of them, do you?”

Anonymous “Rick”:

That’s it. I never told them. My father died just a few years ago without ever knowing. I knew that he would see me as shameful. My mom suffers now from Alzheimer’s so ...As far as the rest of my family, all of my siblings now know. They all accept it with the exception of my youngest sister. She just keeps telling me,

Anonymous “Rick” & Actor 7:

“as long as you stay celibate, you’re o.k..”

Anonymous “Rick”:

I feel as though she views me as some disgusting thing.

A.J.:

Well, whenever my parents came to visit, I always had to hide anything that would

Give it away

Such as books or posters or magazines or whatever

Well, my dad was just browsing the books on that shelf

And I didn't even remember that I had forgotten to take down

A book with a bright pink binding, called Coming Out to Parents

Anonymous Woman 16:

...they were in their bedroom... and... It was just a very awkward uncomfortable monologue. They were kind of laying there comatose, and I kind of waited for them to say something... I was probably traumatized at that point so I don't remember much... they probably said something, a couple words, but I don't remember what – they weren't affirming, whatever they were, if there were any.... Because I would have.... remembered that.

Anonymous Woman 6:

Well, complete meltdown is what describes it the best. (My mom) kicked me out of the house and now I live with my best friend. I do keep in some contact with my mom and for her sake at church and with her family. I'm happy, but I do have one question... why is it so important to be out?

David:

I feel the whole concept of coming out is strange

Anonymous Woman 6:

Why do I have to be out?

David:

I feel like someone's sexuality is entirely private. I don't feel that heterosexual people need to announce anything.

Anonymous Woman 6:

I just keep a low profile, but I'm not hiding anything

David:

It took me a while to realize that that wasn't a cop-out, not a hiding ... or an excuse

Anonymous Woman 6:

I don't know...I'm just going to tell the people I wanna tell.

David:

I remember an amazing conversation with my mom right after one of my grandfathers died. And we were at the cemetery...walking away from the grave, and I remember she looked at me and she said that she felt so grateful that she's had such a lovely partnership for her life and that she hoped that I was able to find...a partner to share my life with. And I remember thinking in that moment that she knew. The fact that she was using that language...as opposed to saying, "I hope you find a nice girl."... And a couple of days later, she reaffirmed that, but went a step further....and said, "Whether it's a man or a woman, I hope you find that..." I was so floored...it was perfect...in that I didn't feel like I had to have this big elaborate crying.... movie moment...

Randy:

...part of it was coming to terms with, okay, something's going on with me, and it's not being straight...but whenever you look online and look at "gay," you find young, oiled-down, Leonardo DiCaprio types, and that wasn't me, and it all looked kinda seedy and like something I couldn't really respect -- and so I was like, I must be asexual, I must be, superhuman, and I totally believed that for a while because nothing was doing it, you know! And then I discovered what bears were, and those are the chunky, hairy, gay guys, and that's when I started realizing, oh wait a second, that's me. AAah! Okay! And that's when I first came out to myself. And my first inclination with that was, this is fantastic information for me to take to the grave. But I knew I had to tell some people, so I chose four people to tell. And I had no idea how they were going to react, because they were all deep in the Christian right, with me...and one of them came back out to me, um, which was shocking, um, and, um, the other three had reactions that ranged from, like, gritted teeth tolerance to acceptance, to like, okay, whatever.

Anonymous Man 12:

I wasn't ready to say that I was gay but I had also accepted that, you know, I'm a child of God and I don't know why I have this as a part of me, but it's there. Telling my dad was not difficult at all...he had wondered for a while ...I had some bad dreams – I think because I knew I was going to tell my parents – and I told my dad about one of them—how I dreamed he was going to kill me, chasing me to try to kill me... he pulled me to his room and told me ...If this has do with questions of sexuality, you have to know that Mom and I love you no matter what...when you are ready to talk to us. So he had created a space for me to tell him which was such a gift.

Jim L.:

When I came out I was living in a Christian community
I realized people were clueless as to what to say to me
They just wanted to assure me of their care and concern but
That there really isn't any place for relationships
That, of course,
ya know, this is a burden you're going to have to bear
as a single person
and that's still the rhetoric in the church
this is the – ya know, Paul had his thorn in the flesh
sorry, but you have your thorn in the flesh, too, and guess this is it

Damon:

And I told him that I lost my virginity
And he looked at me and I was like, it was to a guy
And his face kinda went blank
Um...he let me tell the story
Probably I think I was crying by the end of it
And his first words to me were

Damon & Actor 5:

Did you use protection?

Damon:

And I answered him
And then he said, um,

Damon & Actor 5:

Did it hurt?

Damon:

As his second question

(nods) Second questions was did it hurt?

And that was the moment that I realized that

Past all of the preacher stuff

Past all of all those things

He was my daddy

And he still saw me as his son

I kept saying Don't blame yourself

because I know that so many parents think like that

But he tried to, ya know, he asked me things like

So, ya know, if you see a girl walkin down the street and she's wearin-

Now remember, my father was pastor, okay?

This is my, this is my father who ministers to people on a daily basis, okay?

And she's wearin little Daisy Duke shorts and a little shirt that's showin her cleavage and stuff

I mean, he's just getting excited

He's like you're telling me that that doesn't, that that doesn't do something to you?

And I was like, so dad, you're at the beach and you see a man playing volleyball and

he's got on those cool, like, surfer shorts that kinda hang down to the waist and you

see the "v" from his stomach and his chest is all glistening, you telling me that doesn't just...do something to you?

And my dad looked at me and was like, yeah, I guess I see your point

Marilyn:

Their first thing was an affirmation that they love me no matter what

their second point was this is not in God's will

And then it stayed kind of under the radar for a while, I think

I tried to give them some things to read which they weren't particularly interested in

And they gave me some things to read which I wasn't particularly interested in

(laughs)

Emily:

My parents, when I go home, they always say little homophobic comments to see what my reaction is. Like I will say something about Ellen DeGeneres, like “I think she’s funny,” and they say, “hey, but you know she just broadcasts herself as this GAY,”—and my dad totally bashes Rosie O’Donnell, and granted, that woman does deserve some bashing, but you know, he’s just like “she’s so gay” and I’m like “what do you want me to say?” My mom has lesbian friends, that’s the thing. Like, she makes her peace with it in the public eye but, not when it comes home, it’s completely unacceptable.

Anonymous Man 13:

I told my dad first because I thought he needed to know. He was always encouraging me to go on dates and that was hurting me so I told him. What happened was that it was the hardest thing I’ve ever done.

Jim L.:

There was no space for this in that community
I mean, not that they hadn’t heard of homosexuality before but that was like
Those ugly, disgusting people out there someplace
Ya know, their own son, their good, Christian seminarian son

Anonymous Man 13:

I took (my dad) to dinner and then after we went for a walk and he asked me what was wrong because that dinner was so awkward and...

I just took this big breath and spurted it all out “I’m gay dad but it’s not your fault but I have to tell you but I don’t want you to think there’s anything wrong with me and I’m not going to do anything stupid and I don’t want you to be upset and please just hear me out because I don’t understand what’s happening to me and I need some support and I need it from you so please just listen...”

...and he was just stunned...like uh silently stunned and he sat down on this park bench and didn’t say anything for what felt like forever...

Jim L.:

But then after a few weeks, they started doing all kinds of little things to reach out to me just

Just say that they still loved me and they still- Ya know, they weren't rejecting me, they just wanted to assure me of their love.

At this point, Actor 1 (playing Jim L.) becomes the father of Anonymous Man 13, playing out the scenario described.

Anonymous Man 13:

... didn't say anything for what felt like forever... and he...wait...I sat down next to him and cried...just kinda quietly and (I will never forget this)...he reached over and put his hand on my head and slid it down my neck and around my shoulder and just pulled me to him.

Transition of Movement and Sound to: Leviticus: Survival/Abomination

LEVITICUS: SURVIVAL/ABOMINATION

Actor 6 speaks the Hebrew as Actors 2 and 5 speak the English.

Actors 2 and 5:

You shall not lie with a man as with a woman. It is an abomination. If a man lies with a man as with a woman, both of them has done what is detestable. They shall be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

Jim L.:

Well, it's obvious why some people like those passages because it's the only place in the Bible where there's a clear command all the other references are kind of...indirect

David:

.... holiness code issues, maintaining a pure body of God...to try to transfer that to today, and to pull out one – doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. It's almost a theatrical thing –

Randy:

Yeah, Leviticus, I mean, that's sitting right next to the verse about not eating shellfish,

David:

There's a shock value in the word abomination – in that choice of translation.

Randy:

[This scripture] is not talking about two guys in love, at all! I mean to extrapolate and say that it does and that that's somehow some divine mandate, you have to say, then, that eating shellfish is part of that. You have to! And evangelicals have a way of rolling their eyes and saying well no that's not what that means, wha-sha-yes it does!

Anonymous Man 12:

I mean these are the same laws that say...stone a woman if she's raped

David:

There are SO many other issues that the church needs to deal with. Like the role of women... race relations, slavery... war... I've heard so many convincing arguments that Christians should really be addressing the issue of poverty—that there are way more instances of that in the scriptures than about sexuality ... I think that homosexuality has been singled out largely because of fear...

Alex:

I went to London. The guys in my suite made me a sign, it said "Welcome back Alex!" It was nice and pretty and they put it out in the hallway. Well, the day after I got back someone wrote "FAG" on the sign. I was like, okay. I was kind of curious to see what would happen in response to this and I left the sign up for about 4 days and eventually somebody crossed it out, but nobody in residence life said anything and they walked by the halls several times...they had to have seen it...it was this colorful sign and big red permanent marker on it...nobody said anything to me. So I talked to the dean of residence life and she was appalled that it had happened and that nobody had done anything...they went on a witch hunt to find out who wrote fag on my door. I was really pissed. I was furious. If someone had written "Nigger" on my door, they would have done something a lot faster, but the fact that it was "fag," nobody did anything.

Jim L.:

it's so odd to me that people – that thinking Christian people still use it because when else do we turn to Leviticus for moral direction
no one ever turns to Leviticus for anything else
The vast majority of laws we certainly don't follow
most Christians don't even know they're there
so why is it legitimate to pick out two laws indiscriminately and say they apply today
it doesn't make any sense

Damon:

I remember this moment
down the street from the house where I grew up there was this gay club
Called MenJo's
Yeah, like Men J-O apostrophe S
I don't know where that came from, but

It's a great name for a gay club
So we're driving home one day, and my dad sees
This club and the people are kind of pouring out into the streets
And I don't really remember exactly, because I didn't really want to look over at them
But my dad started to just mumble
Not really to us
But just out loud, that

Damon & Actor 5:

It's an abomination
That those homos
It's an abomination

Damon:

And I remember that moment
I never said anything
He wasn't talking to us
He wasn't trying to teach us this "life lesson"
Um...but I remember that moment, I remember him saying that

Marilyn and Damon :

it was something out in San Francisco that those strange people did and you didn't
have to think about it here

Damon:

But I was raised in a very Pentecostal church
a church of spiritual warfare
Ya know, am I to let myself be who I am? Or crucify my flesh daily?
It was this constant battle in my head.

Marilyn:

I knew enough not to broadcast it
So I learned to not be completely who I was....I had to hide basically
I was accepted in the church as a single person, I could sing in the choir and do
whatever
but there was a whole chunk of me I could not reveal...
because then I'd be ostracized or booted out or whatever
so I had to live this dual life.

Lauren:

It was pretty much the same with me too
Going to choir, that was fine, just
don't get close to anybody, don't go to bible study, don't get in any little groups

Marilyn:

Don't get into situations where you may get too close to somebody
So it limited what we could participate in
how much we could give as Christians to others
because you have to avoid those places where somebody could ask you about your
personal life

Lauren:

And you didn't really feel like you were there in the pew
Or singing....I didn't feel a real part of that church
I'd see these people going by and say, I wonder what they'd think if they knew
Would they still want to sit by me in choir?

Marilyn:

And then once in a while you hear a sermon on homosexuality.

Lauren:

Then you slink down

Marilyn:

Try not to look obvious
Try to not look embarrassed or fidget or react in any way.

Lauren:

Yeah, yeah

Marilyn:

Then be nice to people afterwards and go about your merry way and try not to have
any discussions with anybody.

*Anonymous "Ben" is never seen on stage. In the original production, he was only
heard in voiceover or seen in silhouette.*

Anonymous “Ben”:

The passages in Leviticus do cause me some alarm even though I understand that this is Old Testament law, I still see the words written out so clearly that I can't easily dismiss this. Meaning that I am contradicting myself because I don't follow all the other Old Testament law, but I get hung up on this one.

Anonymous “Rick”:

I got a counselor in college and I told him, but he was a Christian counselor and he thought that I should try to change if I could. I asked him about how and he suggested that I go into a therapy program with a group called Hope for Change ministries. This was similar to Exodus International, if you know anything about them. So I went to this therapy, both individual and group, for a whole year.

Jim F.:

I couldn't deal with the groups, and so I went to personal counselors

Mike:

my Dad and I went to the first one together because that's what they recommended. Oh...so frustrating when I look back on it.

Anonymous “Rick”:

I went on three or four of their weekend camping retreats in addition to attending one hour of therapy and two hours of group session every week.

Jim F.:

And sometimes I was seeing up to 3 counselors at a time,

Mike:

There were two or three sessions and that was it

Jim F.:

80 to 100 dollars a pop

Anonymous “Rick”:

I had to save up a lot of money in order to do this, so I worked two full time jobs that summer and put all of the money toward the cost of this therapy. I couldn't ask my parents. I just couldn't.

Jim F.:

I wouldn't even put it in [to my insurance
Too afraid of Becoming known And even then it wasn't as much of a coming out as it
was a dealing with
With same sex – I couldn't use the h-word, never the g-word
Same sex infatuations
Classified by myself as if it were a disease

Mike:

a lot of what he said did not make any sense to me psychologically. So not only was
what he was saying not very helpful but he almost, I feel, put a roadblock between
my dad and I that had not been there

Jim F.:

In (reparative) therapy, it's all about naming
If you name yourself gay, you've given in
I had gone there, but my fear was so strong

Mike:

Because he spent most of the time saying “this is mostly because of your relationship
and it not being good.” That made us fear that maybe, that really was true.

Jim F.:

I was physically shaking as if I was naked in the Arctic
My teeth were chattering, it was such a violent thing
And the thing with those kind of therapies
It's just if you're already low, it brings ya down lower

Mike:

I love my dad, I've always loved my Dad. He was never like, gone from my life or,
hurtful to me...I knew that he loved me, and I know the guilt in him from that was
probably the worst thing about it, because I could see it. And these days that pisses
me off.

Jim F.:

Because not only now was I – felt even more distanced from God, even more stuck in
my situation, but I was a failure

That I didn't have enough faith

Mike:

the [counselor] would say that we would talk about the possibility of my being abused and whatever, and I kept raising my hand a little bit and being like, I actually was never abused- And I kept trying to say, I'm not repressing it! I actually had a great childhood and I was never abused!

Jim F.:

The way I've always described it, even though counselors have picked this apart Was I felt like I was this 6 year old boy, hiding in this closet from an intruder

Mike:

This guy...(sigh with exasperation) one of his ideas, and I kid you not, after talking about abuse...one of his ideas and ways that he said that my childhood could have been better, and that my relationship with my dad could have been better, he said that before puberty, if my Dad had allowed me to walk around naked with him a lot in our house, and possibly showered with him, and if my dad had allowed me to touch his penis and ask him questions about the male body, while naked with him then I would have a better relationship with him. That was unreal to me!

Jim F.:

But the alternative was like death, and that's how I saw it
If anyone found out, it would be the end of me
And if not by someone else's hand, then by my own

Anonymous "Rick":

By the end of that year, I had convinced myself that I was healed

Jim F.:

I tried sleeping pills, But I woke up
I had a suicide note under my pillow.

Anonymous "Rick":

Wrong. I slid right back into my own true feelings within one week, and maybe faster. I was embarrassed, frustrated, and I yelled at God quite a bit. "Why did you make me this way?" No answer. I wanted a miracle, but it didn't happen.

Jim F.:

I was convinced that this whole thing was merely God trying to get my attention
And as soon as I got my life right with Him and dedicated my life to Him
Capital “H” and always male) Then everything would work out

John:

One always has the nagging thought that
Ya know, what if the conservative position
Is right on all of these things?
Ya know, maybe

Anonymous Woman 17:

I met the person I’m with now...uh...I’ve known her since 87 or 88 and obviously
we weren’t at first in any relationship...that took years... she grew up in a very very
conservative ...um...And we’re going to this church and just thought...we’re tired of
living like this...this...and what should we do about this...should we be celibate...or
should we never see each other again...or is this o.k. and just needed some support
and somebody to know and uh So she and I went to the pastor...and I had known him
for probably 15 years. I’d known him a long time...it was a good relationship...I
knew his wife and his kids.... When we went to him he was very curt and very
matter-of-fact. And basically said,

*(Actor 4 speaks chorally with Anonymous Woman 17, but does not act out the role of
the pastor.)*

Anonymous Woman 17 and Actor 4:

it is an absolute abomination to the Lord...there’s not much we can do if that’s how
you’re made but to act on it is completely wrong. You’d be living in sin...it is an
abomination

Anonymous Woman 17:

So what should we do about it?

Anonymous Woman 17 and Actor 4:

You should both read, memorize, Psalm 103. And that’s what you’ll do and meditate
on that...pray on that...that will give you your answer.

Anonymous Woman 17:

And I thought...he said to memorize and my partner is very faithful....brought up well...and she did....we both tried for awhile...so why Psalm 103?
Do you have a bible?

Ensemble:

Bless the Lord all my soul and all that is within me
Bless his holy name
Bless the Lord all my soul and forget not all his benefits

Anonymous Woman 17:

I think from that he was saying, the Lord's giving you what you need and you don't need this you just need to be able to discern and distinguish what are his benefits and what are not his benefits...at least that's how I took it.

Ensemble:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities...

Anonymous Woman 17:

so I'd be forgiven

Ensemble:

Healeth all thy diseases...

Anonymous Woman 17:

I'm sure that's why that was in there...because IT IS a disease...right?

Ensemble

Redeemeth thy life from destruction.
Crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies....

Anonymous Woman 17:

And I mean I think some of this was meant to be comforting that he's there for you...I just found it really interesting that the minister was not there for us...I mean he never ever ever brought it up again or came and just said "how you doing?"

...and one of the things we had asked him for...if we're then going to live celibately...we need someone to be accountable to ...we need someone to be able to talk to and uh...that never ever happened.

I think he was so...um...disgusted or...abhorrent....or um...

The...of all things this is not one thing he wanted to deal with...

Peter:

(My family) had met Jason
And they had met him as my friend
And they always liked him
(my mom) said

Peter:

Jason seems like a really good friend for you
And he seems like the kinda guy you can really work well with
Peter:
And she said,

Peter & Actor 3:

I've been praying for you to have a friend come along that would meet so many of your needs like that
That's artistic, and that you can bounce ideas off of, and work altogether

Peter:

And so I thought, (smiles) hey
(they both laugh)
He's a gift

Jason:

But that whole
mindset went out the window when
he came out to them
I doubt she even remembered saying that, or she probably remembered it--

Peter:

I reminded her of it.

Jason:

--and felt guilty for even asking that because
Obviously she was asking for the wrong thing if this is what God brought into his life

John:

what if the conservative position
Is right on all of these things?
Ya know, maybe
And that's where I have to rely on grace

Jim L.:

in the Christian view, when Christ came
a new era was instituted

Anonymous man 12: Christ comes and by the power of the spirit there is the idea
that the law is done.

*Image Projected in light of a cross. Movement and sound transition to: Romans:
Natural vs. Unnatural.*

ROMANS: NATURAL VS. UNNATURAL LOVE THE SINNER, HATE THE SIN

David:

The natural versus unnatural argument...unnatural equals homosexual equals evil...I think a lot of scholars agree that these people (in scripture) gave up their natural selves which was to be heterosexual in favor of something they were not and that was inherently sinful...but it's a different ball of wax to me when you're dealing with people who are trying to live out how they were created

Jim F.:

So when Andy and I...

It was kind of a traumatic situation to begin with, it was a camping trip

On the highest mountain in the Catskills and it was like

Like treacherously cold

Through some church group activity we were doing

It was like the Christian boy scouts

And they had to go camping in, like, winter...

It was so, so freaking cold

And Andy only had –he had a slumber bag

from Coleman, ya know, that looked like it should have Fred Flintstone or He-Man on the side of it

and during the night, I felt something tapping me

but it was really him, shaking violently, because the bag let the heat out, it melted the ice underneath him, and he was soaking wet in cotton in such terrible weather

and so I freaked out and I changed him into dry clothes and put him in my – I had a mummy sack rated -20

and I was like terrified, and at the same time I was next to the object of my affection

I had fallen in love with him, we were best friends for months prior

And without even thinking, I kissed the back of his neck

And he turned around and I was just like oh my God

And I was thinking of an excuse, because my mom's a nurse in real life

And I was gonna say, my mom said the best way to tell temperature is with your lips, because the blood vessels are closest to it

But instead he kissed me back

And it didn't matter that it was so freaking cold, that our tent was about to fall down because of the wind, and that Andy almost died

It was just

I knew
It was so obvious, it was
Everything fit, everything was perfect
And I was so happy
I'm fortunate to have pictures of the next morning
Because we had brought a camera up with us
And I'm just still totally beaming
The smile from ear to ear kind of thing
Ya know when I would kiss my girlfriends, it would be like oh my god, did she just
eat peanut butter?
Or, ya know, just total detachment
It was an act, it didn't involve the heart

Actor 2:

Speaks the Greek of Romans 1:24-27 as the ensemble speaks it in English as follows:

Actors 4, 5, 1 :

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading
of their bodies among themselves,

Actor 7:

because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the
creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

Actor 3:

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged
natural intercourse for unnatural,

Actor 6:

and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were
consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and
received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

Actor 2:

The passage in Romans is the real clincher. Paul's words are clear that men and
women gave themselves over to "unnatural" desires by laying with same-sex partners.

Jim L.

And I have to say that for years, I struggled with that passage personally because
We're kind of trained to see – we're kind of enculturated to see this passage as a
description of gay people
It talks about these people who were filled with lust
Exchanged natural relations for unnatural
I can see where someone would say
Oh, Paul's describing gay people
But Paul isn't setting out to give us a moral teaching on sexuality, on being gay
It comes in the context of an argument he's making
And the argument is basically,
We've all turned away from God
All human beings

But actually what is more in some ways to me more
important to realize
I don't see how I or other gay people experience any more lust than heterosexual
people do

Anonymous Woman 8:

I tried... These were disaster dates... awful uh... I went out with this one man for six
months and I... yeah... I had sex with him just to prove that I could I guess... and
uh... that was it... that was ... I don't know how to say it... detestable. At least not
right ... just bad. I didn't go out with him anymore.

If you want to talk about giving yourself over to unnatural desires... that would be a
good example I think. I also remember that I had to drink a lot ... tons... of wine in
order to want to be with him so... I knew that couldn't be good... that I basically had
to be drunk in order to want to be close physically.

Anonymous Man 12:

I think one of the analogies I found helpful is the idea of adoption... because I think in
the Catholic church technically all sexual acts are supposed to be
open to conception... and so I think that... adoption isn't "natural"
necessarily – it's not the way it should have been, but because we live in a
broken world... I think the same thing is true with homosexual

relationships....that might not have been what was intended, but that's not really the conversation anymore because brokenness has entered... and I think there are still options for having family...even if it's not "natural."

Damon:

Nina Christine DeGaul

I met Nina in a

A really awesome class because everyone started bonding and she and I were the only two people of color

In the class

And she knew I was gay, because everyone else knew I was gay

And I just found myself wanting to be around her all the time

And so I thought about it and prayed about it

And so we started dating

And I was just like, well Lord, when you close a door you open a window

I was just convinced that this was it

That she was my answer out of this place

I mean, we weren't sexually active, she and I, but

Any...any physical contact with her wasn't doing it for me

And I was honest with her about those days

Nina, just because we're dating doesn't make me not gay any more

And she asked me

Damon and Actor 7:

(Actor 7 speaks chorally with Damon, but does not act out the role of Nina.)

do you love me?

Damon:

And I was like, yeah

And she said,

Damon and Actor 7:

that's all I need to know

Just stay honest with me

Damon:

So by the end of this relationship

We had basically gotten engaged

we broke up the first time because of
A young man who I was kind of growing
emotionally attached to
And then the second time we broke up, we broke up because she
saw this Oprah episode
How Oprah has changed all of our lives
About people getting married for the wrong r—
Just because they were on the path of that trajectory and never stopped to see if that
was really
Where they wanted to go
And she called me, and she was just like

Damon and Actor 7:

I finally understand what you mean now when you say
you can't promise me
That you'll never do that to me

Damon:

And that was the truth –
And so
We let each other go
that was the first time I had to realize that
I was going to have to live the rest of my life like this
That it was no longer something that I could possibly hide
like it's okay because I'm living this normal Christian life
and I have a wife and kids
And so I'm a good gay person, because I'm not practicing or whatever
There is no person that is a window out of it

Anonymous Woman 16:

I'd met a good friend at [college], and I enjoyed the company. I found that we were
spending most of our days together anyway. He knew all my little secrets, and still
loved me. We had connections with intellectual, and spiritual, and emotional – and I
don't know if I could find a woman that would have... I mean just because I could
maybe find the physical with her, I might not find the emotional or the intellectual, or
whatever. And I guess the more history I build with [him], the harder it is to believe
that and try and find something else, because then you have to build a whole new
history, and that's hard.

I had a really lousy honeymoon. (laughs) We went to Barnes and Noble and picked up a copy of Mars and Venus in the bedroom and some... the guide... the great orgasm guide. And I was just miserable, and standing next to [my husband] as he paid for it, and the clerk was really embarrassed. I had this shiny new ring on and my nails were still done, and it was pretty obvious. But that didn't work either. And it just got more and more depressing the more things we tried, that it wasn't gonna happen.

Jim L.:

What's this exchanging natural relations for unnatural things?
Ya know, gay people aren't - haven't exchanged anything
For me to marry a woman or to have sex with a woman,
That would be exchanging something,
that would be unnatural

Pedro:

Well, six months before the wedding (laughs) I just freak out!!
Oh no, now what? As my wedding day is getting close, it's like things were just kind of falling apart inside of me. what about when it doesn't work, after that first night, what am I going to tell her? Well I've got another headache? So like, I just panicked right there, I just had to tell her.

Something is happening, I don't know, I think it's just too much, and I don't think I'm ready to go on. Period.

Right after I broke up with her, my best friend from school, from university came out to me. I never ever think that he was gay! Oh, I freak out! I my gosh, you're weird, you know, freak out. I stopped speaking to him for probably two months. In the meantime, I been faithful to church, to God. So after two months, I realized that I was one of – that I was just like him, too. So then I call him and apologize for what I have done....And I go Well, after all I am not unusual ...I happen to be just like him and I think it is fine, you know! And then two or three months later I came out to him too. He told me, "I knew you were gay." (laughs)

Anonymous "Ben":

I'm forty-seven years old and I've been married to the same woman for 22 years. We have two children.

I went all the way through junior high and high school going out with girls only because that was what I was supposed to do. I liked being with girls anyway and found more acceptance there. That's where I met my wife. She was my best friend. The best I ever had and still have.

We attend a non-denominational church. Every Sunday I look around at the faces of all the married men around me with their families and their children and I wonder if there are others like me.

Most of the pain that I have comes out the lack of physical intimacy I have with her. We don't have sex anymore, but we do cuddle. I don't know if that's enough for her but I know it's not enough for me. I want more and I don't know where to get it. Meaning I do know where to get it but I can't because of my duties in life as a husband, as a father, and as a Christian.

I have had dreams about dying, about my wife dying too and seen what that would look like. Meaning that I am happier in my dreams than in my waking life, whether it's me or her that is dead. That's shocking to hear myself say that, but it's what I have been dealing with for almost all my life.

I recite the scripture to myself constantly,

Ensemble with Anonymous "Ben":

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Anonymous "Ben":

My study of the bible gets me through when it's too hard.

There are times that I've come close to telling my wife about everything. I read online this story about a man who told his wife and it had such a terrible ending. I keep that story as a reminder in my head all the time.

I did once write my wife a letter that I keep hidden away from home but I can't give it to her ever. I know that I am doing the right thing...no matter how hard the day to day trials might be. I live in a contradiction where I simply tread the course and remain faithful to my God and to my family.

Jim L.:

There's no reference to the possibility of love, of
Same sex loving relationships. It's all talked about in terms of lust.
Exclusively in terms of lust.
So whoever [Paul's] describing, whoever these people are
They certainly don't seem to be me or the other gay people I know.

John:

Well, I guess to me it seems like a very artificial
Dichotomy
I can say that I will live a celibate life and not be a practicing homosexual
But my mindset is such that
I relate to other people as a gay person
I don't relate to them as a non-sexual person
I don't relate to them as a heterosexual person
When I meet another man
There is an involuntary assessment of
Something that has to do with sexuality
Just as a straight man when he meets a woman
Where that relationship could go, and where that relationship can't go
And...and that's true for homosexuals
And to say, just because I'm not going to jump into bed with that person
Or just because I am going to jump into bed with that person
Um...makes me or doesn't make me a practicing homosexual
I am a homosexual
Period
But that's not the only thing that defines me
Are you only a practicing heterosexual when you're having sex with a woman?
Or are you a practicing heterosexual 24/7 because that's the way you
View the world, relate to the world, relate to people?
I don't think you can dichotomize it that way
Ya know, are you right handed only when you're writing or eating with your right
hand?
No, you're right-handed 24/7
Or you're left-handed 24/7
You can't be a practicing right-handed person and a non-practicing right-handed
person
It's who you are, it's how you reach out to the world

Jim L.:

Pretty much every denomination has its statements
On homosexuality
And they all basically say the same thing
Which is some version of...

Ensemble:

(in canon – Actor #2 is the last to speak)
Love the sinner, hate the sin.

Jim L.:

Um...and, ya know they say they want to be loving, I think they think they want to
be loving
But they want to be loving under conditions that none of them would ever put up
with.

Movement and sound transition to: Timothy/Corinthians: Oppression.

TIMOTHY/CORINTHIANS : OPPRESSION MALOKOS AND ARESENAKOITAI

David:

One of the seven passages, the one in Corinthians has two contentious Greek words in it malakos and arsenokoitai

Jim L.:

The original NIV had for those two words which are problematic, “male prostitutes” and “homosexual offenders”

Actor 2:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes

Actor 6:

Malakos

Actor 3:

nor homosexual offenders

Actor 7:

Arsenokoitai

Actor 5:

nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

David:

A major reason why many Christians don't deal with these passages They feel like I'm not a scholar I don't know Greek, so how can I truly understand the New Testament?

Peter:

That's the beautiful thing about the Bible

[It's] a living and breathing document

Jim L.:

This Corinthians passage, then
Because of the way it's interpreted
Appears to be so clear
It's a whole list of people who will not inherit the kingdom of heaven

David:

I think a lot of Christians think that by delving into issues of translation and cultural context, it's directly questioning the authority of the Bible, but I see it more as being responsible, seeking out the heart of the matter.

Jim L.:

There's wonderful scholarship that says
We don't really know what these (two Greek) words mean
In this context

David

These two words, these concepts seem to be talking about sexual activities that even now we would say...that's immoral – prostitution, pederasty...things like that...not a committed same-sex partnership.

Jim L.:

The TNIV, or Today's New International Version of the Bible, has (changed the translation of arsenokoitai to) "practicing homosexuals."
Historically speaking, there wasn't even a term for that
In the Greek language
I'm really saddened by that.
So many people are affected by these translations.

Anonymous Man 12:

I was one of the student leaders [at a Christian retreat} ...and there was a kid, he was struggling with homosexuality, and he thought I might be able to help him. I just pointed him to talk to someone else... I still look back at that sadly.

Anonymous Woman 16:

We started going to this church, which was across the street from where we lived at the time. And um, I've never had a warmer welcome. And the people, they weren't this hypocritical, playing that they're better than they are. And I'd never experienced that. We went to the night service, and then I just cried and cried and cried. And was just loved and accepted, and it was okay that I was where I was. It was okay to be whoever you were. And I think that's made all the difference.

Damon:

I do feel that opposition, I do feel
Especially from older people in the church
That kind of push against
What I am
But pshh – I ain't worried 'bout them
Whatever, I don't care
I'm not really worried about what they think about it
Because they're not my God
And they don't have heaven or hell to put me in
And if you don't wanna be a part of my life, that's your fault
Sorry
We'll go somewhere else
That's fine
'cause God is not just only in this church
He's in another church down the street
And if they're not there
We'll start church in my basement
'cause He'll be there, too

Anonymous Woman 16:

The whole church doesn't know, but my small group knows. The first time I didn't tell the whole group, just the first couple, so I told them. And it was really hard, I couldn't say the word gay. I had to say non-heterosexual, and I was just bawling. It was a mess. It's gotten a lot easier.

Damon:

I think I haven't (come out) to [my home church] because I'm still scared

I don't – I don't wanna be kicked out of my church
Ya know what I mean?
I have that kinda tough I don't care what they think, but
I don't wanna go
Ya know?
I don't wanna feel unwelcome
I mean, I feel welcomed even though I hear this opposition against gay people
And even though I think a lot of them assume that I'm gay
And are praying and praying for my salvation
They still show me so much love

Jim L.:

I was worshipping at my home church, developing this ministry for gay and lesbian people
Pastoral care, counseling, leading groups, speaking in the community
By this time everybody knew I was gay, and the people at my church were wonderful to me
They still elected me as an elder
And I was still an ordained minister in my denomination at that point
But I kept thinking in the back of my mind,
What if I brought a boyfriend to church?
Then would they be so wonderful?
People wanted to believe that I really believed the church's traditional teaching condemning
Gay and lesbian relationships
I didn't
Believe it

Actor 5:

You know, this is the topic that will wreck my relationships

Jim L.:

So I kept quiet on that for a while, and they were making assumptions
I let them hold those, thinking that, well, over time – ya know, it takes people a while to come to new perspectives, and we need to keep the dialogue going and I don't wanna cut that off

Actor 5:

It will wreck my relationships with the church.

Jim L:

but finally they said, Jim you have to tell us what you believe about relationships
And that's when it all fell apart.
They released me from the ministry.
I felt so hurt
Because my own church didn't stick up for me
I felt like,
I'm not asking you to change your perspective, I'm just saying Can you make a space
for me so we can
Continue on this road together?
And they couldn't do it
They just couldn't do it
I left
I never set foot in my home church again
Which I continue to grieve
I kept believing, ya know
I'm the eternal optimist.
I feel like I'm in exile
The exiled optimist

David:

From the individuals in the church, I don't usually feel a sense of oppression. From the institution of the church, I do... But it goes beyond the "love the sinner but hate the sin" kind of attitude...it's an oppression that is much deeper and much more personal than that – I feel like they are avoiding the issues – that's the oppression I feel.

I think that Christians are just so ...so afraid to talk about it, because they think that "talking about it" means they need to adopt a liberal standpoint...it somehow implies that your whole Biblical foundation is going to fall to pieces...I think it's an understandable fear, but I think as Christians we're called to engage the issues that are affecting our body ...and the world at large.

Anonymous Man 13:

The most important scripture is the parable of the good Samaritan. It's ultimately a story about care, sacrifice, self-sacrifice, defying societal standards. I think for many years that I assumed that people thought the worst of me and I thought the worst of them. Then, one Sunday, I HEARD this story and it brought me a sense of healing. I have come to see myself that I am both the Samaritan and the man on the road.

David:

I... have been hurt, have been deeply hurt by the lack of dialogue...we are (and I don't mean to falsely martyr us) but we are...the person struggling on the side of the road.

Anonymous Man 13:

I am both...I am the one who should help and the one who needs help.

David:

And the Church, for the most part...the church is walking right by.

Pedro:

I been Catholic all my life, while I grew up in Mexico, but when I move to (Michigan), I dated someone who was HIV positive at the time. I talked to the Father at the Catholic church that I was going at the time. Immediately he told me to stay away from that, there was no way –

Actor 1 and Pedro:

that's a sin – for what a person has done.

Pedro:

and he says,

Actor 1 and Pedro:

“You need to be away, just - no”

Pedro:

And I said to him But Father, it's not what Jesus and religion and Catholic tell us to do it – I mean how could I – I could be his friend and perhaps help him if – tomorrow he gets sick or, he may need something....I mean I am here by myself on my own, I am thousands of miles away from my family if I – have a heart attack or get sick who's going to give me a glass of water who's going to take care of me? No one. So I want to help him.

Anonymous Man 13:

I wish people...uh...all people would try to be both....feel the victim and the savior.

Pedro:

He told me, "That's your problem...I suggest you not to...." I was in shock. I left his office and I never came back to the church. I decided to going to the Christian – the um, Reformed church – Hello! But I went there in order to worship and pray with God. I didn't go to the reformed church and say Hey I'm gay! No. But I needed to find a new place to worship.

Lauren:

I had gone to my pastor at my reformed church and talked to him
he was very affirming and loving and wonderful
He also told me
I probably shouldn't tell anyone else, cuz the elders he knew would not be so affirming
And I said, well I don't want that, because this is where my daughter and my family go
And I'm not going to have them uncomfortable

Marilyn:

We could not go to church together
And when it came to a point where they said I could no longer take communion
I never went back
I said I don't want to commit to another church until we are together and we can commit to a church together

Lauren:

Right, we had to find our spot

Marilyn:

and introduce ourselves as a couple

Lauren:

We are so

Conservative

We did not feel comfortable in a church that was way out there

We needed something more

Standard

Marilyn:

We didn't want to think about being gay every time we went to church

We just wanted to be us

Lauren:

(Overlapping with Marilyn) We just wanted to be us

Anonymous "Rick":

I have learned to swallow [these feelings of oppression]. I know that this is unhealthy and wrong, but what else am I going to do?

I attend church... Every week. It affects my life in profound ways.

I wish that all people could experience and know the true meaning of community that comes from a wonderful church.

John:

Am I comfortable in my church?

In many regards, it's a "don't ask, don't tell" kind of a situation

people who are elders, who are leaders in the church

Have all been very supportive

I feel called to be there in some regards.

Most of the gay people I know

Who grew up in the Christian Reformed church

Have migrated to one of the gay-affirming churches in town

Others I knew have left

under some painful circumstances

Anonymous Woman #4:

Everyone always thought I was a boy...it wasn't a lot of fun growing up.

We went to mass every week, that was the one thing we were like required to do and to be involved in the uh youth stuff at church and at catholic school and stuff and I just never felt very accepted there either. I was really alone and stuff 'n kids called me names...I always feel like the worst name is dyke...I don't know why...it just is.

I hated myself so much growing up and there was just nothing...not anywhere...for me...not at home or church or school. My dad used to hit us and berate us make us feel very tiny and I don't think he ever ..uh...ever liked me at all. ...he called me names and hit me and stuff.

I would barely be surviving. When I was seventeen I gave myself some of my own scars when I tried to end it. You can't tell anymore, but I carved the word into my wrists...the thing I hated about myself.

I was in a foster home for the last year of high school. My foster home parents...they uh took me to this church where I was once again just made fun of by the youth group kids...not any acceptance.

I couldn't be comfortable with myself at all.

But something hit me at that church...through listening to the pastor and stuff and stealing a Bible from the pew and reading it...I don't really know how to describe how it reached me, but I felt just this one touch of grace through listening in silence and reading the bible in the dark with a flashlight under the sheets of my bed.

And that's my religion...just me and the Bible.

Those passages about being gay...I don't know how they have anything to do with me. I was created this way...I can't change that although I'm desperate to change it...every day of my life...desperate to change. Can't. So here I am.

John:

The walls that the church has constructed between themselves and gay people
the very well-lit back exit door
that they encourage gay people to use

and the kind of spiritual damage that does
The number of gay people I know
who just adamantly hate the church
because of how they were treated, because of how they saw other people being
treated
with all of that, the church loses moral authority
it has no business
no right to call people to a moral lifestyle
when it has showed them the exit door.

Jim F.:

If you want the most extreme of it
I basically would follow
Anything that I saw on television or read in books regarding
Well, I considered myself as a sexual deviant
So I would look up things on
pedophiles or anything else of treatment that would be used on them

So what I originally used to do
I used to just punch myself and that kind of thing
But I was bruising myself so badly that I began to raise the suspicion of my teachers
And so that's when I turned to electric shock

I believed that it was definitely going to cure me
I would try to keep track of my infractions at school
I was keeping track of them on a piece of paper
And in my prayer journal,
And when I got home, trying to be the teenage scientist
I would recall my feelings, and the person I was thinking about, and then administer
the shock

My philosophy on life is that you need suffering
The more suffering you go through, the greater your character

Randy:

I remember there was some book that was dealing with this...it was like, "A Christian Response to Homosexuality, those icky people." And toward the end of it it said something like if a gay person has exhausted all other possibilities and they just can't control their baser nature, then they should try to be in a relationship and conduct it in the most honorable way

possible. And that's pretty degrading now, but at the time it was like, this chunk of light, like, oh, alright! That could happen! And I think I just started moving towards that light a little more, faithwise.

Anonymous Woman #3:

I was married for seventeen...n...no...eighteen years....God I'm so afraid to talk about this...when all this began. My husband and me were members of (a) church here and we, ya know, we uhdid everything we were supposed to do...the rallies, the conferences, the prayer mettins, the everything. We went through a...a lot of stuff when we uh found out uh...th....that we couldn't have children. I thought there was something evilly wrong with me and so did he and so did our pastor....for many months I went to healing prayer meetings...always went down to the front to have hands laid on my tummy just pr..prayin for a uh...a uh baby to be possible in me. Eventually it worked... Nine months and we had a little girl.

Then it was...uh...when she was sixteen...She was always a good Christian girl...bible meetings and worship and raising her hands...could speak in tongues when she was four...that sort of thing. And when she was sixteen I found, by mistake when I was makin' her bed a letter from a girlfriend of hers at school. And it weren't normal ya know. it said things like sexual things 'n I knew somethin' was up.

considerin' that my husband was raised real particular; he wouldn't even French kiss me. I knew he'd kill her, so I went, real skeered to my pastor's wife and she went immediately to her husband the pastor and fore I knew it everyone knew because they had set up a prayer chain. They said it was a demon possession and.. and I thought the same and so when we confronted her it was at church... we laid hands on her and she cried. She told me she was wrong and felt dirty.

None of it worked. We thought it had 'cause uh...she hid it real good.

Maybe looking back I was a little suspicious, but I didn't want that turmoil again.

she just seemed so depressed and I asked her about it and she told me that she was a lesbian and couldn't fight it and...it was a big blow up...we kicked her out of my house that Christmas and never saw her again...alive – about uh two years later she took her own life. She was 23.

[My husband] took it real to heart and couldn't forgive. And two years later he had a heart attack...and he died too...I wanted to die too.

I ended up in a lot of therapy for a long time...where this is all backward is how I finally myself came out as a lesbian earlier this year.

guess I always knew ...like uh there were signs along the way. But I repressed all of that until now...I just remember never really liking men...

So...yeah...here I am.

Female Ensemble Echos “ So here I am ”

(My daughter) left something in her suicide note that has always been with me since then. She said, “I feel like an exposed body in winter.” And I feel that too...now...and probably always will. That's what it's like to fit into to the church and to be this....to be lesbian. “a body exposed in winter.”

And I'm still in love with Jesus Christ through all of this but I...uh...at least not now I'm not going to church because there's not really an accepting one where I am right now...but I'm goin' ta move soon...and uh to start over...all over...

Movement and Sound transition to: Genesis: Covenant/Creation

GENESIS: COVENANT CREATION

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

The Hebrew and English is read simultaneously by Actors 3 and 7 as they walk across the space toward one another, reciting the scripture to one another. (They become Kathleen and Megan)

Megan and Kathleen are a couple. Throughout their interview, the ensemble “plays” their children.

Megan:

(My parents) have very strong feelings against it
Ya know, a lot of my mom’s position was she didn’t so much come out and say that it’s wrong, like my dad and my brothers did, my mom was just more like
Well, I just worry what that life’s going to be like for you
And are people going to be nice to you and are they going to accept you
And, you know, some of those more motherly type concerns

Kathleen:

But they’ve come a long way with the grandkids

Megan:

Yeah, I think having the kids
Was a big turning point for my parents
Because
There’s kids now (laughs)

(interrupting the scene of Megan and Kathleen which is now frozen)

Jim L.:

God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve...
...oh, I’m so tired of hearing that.
That’s where the argument starts
That God created human beings to be heterosexual

...and people conclude that well, there's no affirmation in Scripture for gay relationships
therefore we should have no affirmation for gay relationships.

Megan:

Dill, babe, that's really noisy
If you have to shake it, you have to go to the other room to shake it
So probably my family has been the most oppressive

Kathleen:

I would say the church has been the most oppressive

Megan:

But has that been your experience, do you have direct experience with that?

Kathleen:

I would say that a lot of religious people want to bash it down my throat that I'm doing the wrong thing
And they think I chose it, which gets into a whole 'nother conversation
And the most supportive has been my family, but that's not how it started out
But I'm really not out anymore

Megan:

Well, you're selective, right?

Kathleen:

I'm selective, right
I was way more out before
I would wear the shirt that said I'm out and like, the pink triangle
And yeah, gay pride
But no, I don't do that anymore
I just don't want to have to deal with explaining myself

(interrupting the scene of Megan and Kathleen which is now frozen)

Devin:

I've been doing the AIDS walk since I came to (college)
And one time I was so struck when I saw

these two men pushing a stroller with a child and holding another boy's hand
and what struck me so strongly was the normalcy of it all
and I thought
that's what I want something that... that lacks any carnival aspect or any type of
thing that the stereotypes are associated with

Megan:

I'll get him some Cheerios, I think he might be hungry

Kathleen:

I wanna be a mom, I wanna be a person, I wanna be athletic, funny
I mean, I don't know what, I just
I'm not just gay, I'm a lot of other things

(interrupting the scene of Megan and Kathleen which is now frozen)

Jim L.:

This is kind of a personal statement –
I would love to have my own children
I would love to have my own biological children
With someone else who is also...
I see the way – how people adore their children
And I long for that...
I grieve the loss of that...
There's really no way for a gay couple to conceive children as a couple together

Megan:

Obviously we choose friends who accept us and love us for who we are
And know that it's not the main issue in our life, and we talk about other things
We don't hide who we are
our neighbors know that our boys have two moms
Our intent is never to hide it, because that doesn't do anything for our boys, either

Kathleen:

That's right

Megan:

Dillon, honey, that's really getting noisy

So if you're going to roll it, you need to go to the other room, cuz otherwise you're going to need to hold it

Dillon/Ensemble:

But mom –

Megan:

What?

Dillon/Ensemble:

(Unintelligible whining)

Megan:

In the kitchen, it'll roll in the kitchen

Kathleen:

Sure, it will – try it

Megan:

It won't roll on the carpet very well, but it'll roll in the kitchen

So obviously we choose the people to hang out with who are supportive of us and supportive of our kids, cuz that's an important message to give our kids

Emily:

The image that's hard for me is the idea of God looking down and seeing me holding hands with another woman and being really happy about that. And you know, I always have that conversation in my head too, does me having these desires, does this mean that I am supposed to be celibate? Ya know, I have that. And I'm like, well, you know it's just not right that someone can't be happy and have a full life and they have to always be alone just because they love somebody that, I don't know, doesn't have the right biological makeup.

Jason:

The more people who are honest with themselves and come out

That will be one more personal story that

Somebody who thinks that it doesn't exist or that it couldn't happen to them
Like let's say, my parents –
It's not that they dreaded it, they just didn't even think about it
I'm sure that when you have a baby, your first thought isn't is he or she gay?

(interrupting Peter and Jason)

Jim L.:

Well, 'course I really made it easy for them,
For my family
Because I never dated anybody, I didn't bring the boyfriend home
Or the partner home and that's
That's where it gets difficult for families
I've seen other families where
Ya know, they can be supportive when it's, sort of "theoretical"
But when the son or daughter says, can I bring my boyfriend or girlfriend home
for Christmas dinner,
that's when the tension arises

Damon:

My dad told me that
Salvation and our walk with God
Is personal
And that we are to go and reason with God
And that what me and God work out for me
No one else has to understand
And no one has to have it look the same way
And he said
You're my son, and it will always be my house
And so when the time comes that you may
'cause I told him I was like, ya know I'm worried about coming home for Christmas
And ya know, my uncles and other people not welcoming my husband or my partner
In the house
And he said
It will always be my house
And you will always be my son
And when we get to that
Don't worry about that

Those were his words
He didn't say what he would do
But he said
It will always be my house
you will always be my son
that was enough for me
And that's helpful for me
That makes those quiet moments when I'm talking about a boyfriend or something
And those moments that seem a little awkward
I can kind of push that off and say, that's okay
That's okay

Jason:

I'm all for gay pride, but there's a difference between
Just jamming it down somebody's throat and
Being gay and being a coworker or a friend or a brother or a
Somebody in your church community
So I think it's more our responsibility to be out and be normal

John:

as the church
Attempts to impose unrealistic expectations and strictures on gay people
It sets people up for
Very unhealthy behaviors in terms of sexual expression
The recent example of the minister from Colorado
Who's living a double life
That takes it to an extreme
But that kind of a division between two parts of your life

Jason:

And I kind of feel the same way about Ted Haggard
Maybe he would be a great pastor
Bringing the word of God into the world
But he could be an openly gay man, not having to resort to prostitutes, not having to
resort to drugs, not having to lie and do all those things
So I think, in a way, the church creates the bad gay
Um, society creates the bad gay

Peter:

And I wouldn't promote blaming it on anything
If you place any system of blame
You have to also take into account that at some point, someone chose to lie
Because I think the first time that you decide to lie
I lied for a number of years
And I tried to do it in a way that was protecting people, not hurting people, and
didn't result in more lies, and it's still wrong for me to do that
And I apologized to my parents – first for lying and second for, ya know

Jason:

But you didn't have anyone, like, personally relying on you, that those lies caused
like, the ruining of their life...

Peter:

--no, but I'm saying like when more people openly understand what this is about,
people will be less likely to lie, and that's a positive outcome
But I do think that the first mistake a lot of gay people make is lying
And that relates to more and more...problems

Jason:

And I'm trying to make a difference between lying to your parents and lying to your
Children and wife, you know what I mean?
Your parents, it's their fault if they don't accept you, it's their choice not to accept
you
With when you're bringing an innocent wife and an innocent child into that world,
that's your fault for doing that
So it's like I don't feel like lying to your parents is hurting them, lying to your
parents is only –

Peter:

But it's still lying

Jason:

--you didn't lie to them
They never asked you if you were gay, and when they asked you if you were gay,
you said yes, so you didn't lie to them

Peter:

I lied about circumstances, and...

Jason:

anyway, whatever

I'm just saying that there's a complete difference in who you're lying to and who's responsible for that pain

You were protecting them from that pain, you finally gave them the pain that they were going to have because of their own beliefs, and now they're going to have to get over it

A family that you bring into the world – with your wife and kids – that's pain that they're going to have to live with for their whole life that they didn't even have to that they shouldn't have had to...

Peter:

They didn't choose to participate...

Jason:

...yeah

Peter:

Agreed.

Anonymous Man 13:

I walked about ten steps away from God during all of this time and it took me some time to turn around and take those steps back. I'm better now...closer to God than I was before. All my meaning about who I am and what I am is in Him. It's difficult to say what God meant for ...how he meant for gay people to live out their lives.

John:

Bottom line, I really don't think the rules are any different for gay people than they are for straight people

And the...the optimum expression of sexuality is in a committed relationship

Um...what's good for one is good for the other

So

Anonymous Man 13:

But because I don't have any real answers to that question and no real inclination to partner up with anyone...I'm going to tread this path.

I think it was during my first year of graduate study when I made this commitment to be celibate. And I'm not a non-sexual person. I do have desires and ...uh...desires (laughs) what else do you call them? Not lusts, but natural needs. I'm not in denial about those feelings, but I do deny myself that possibility of pursuing that.

John:

I think for a gay person as for a straight person
If you want to develop a long-term committed relationship
There's a dating process, there's a getting to know one another process
There's a point at which – or points at which intimacy develops
Without the social structure of marriage that the church is
adamantly working to withhold from gay people
we have to find our own methods, our own social structures
and that makes it very easy to throw all constraints to the wind
and anything goes
and for those of us who aren't willing to say anything goes
then you've got to find another path
and kind of create
your own set of appropriate behaviors and mores

Anonymous Man 13:

Because I'm not sure what God wants and I haven't been led in any particular direction so I just stay put. My job is pretty important to me and to the people who come to me for counseling, so I'm not unfulfilled in that way.

Lots of people walk through their lives unfulfilled in some way or some other way or another. Like people who never have a satisfying job or feel good about their spirituality or enjoy their spousal relationship. I do feel quite fortunate in the fact that I have two of those things fulfilled. I don't necessarily have to have everything.

The thing I want to be able to say to myself is that I'm all right with who I am at any given moment. And I am.

Marilyn:

After we had gotten to know each other pretty well
And it was pretty obvious to both of us, I think that we were

Lauren:

That we were...

Marilyn:

Meant for each other

Lauren:

Yeah

Marilyn:

So we just bided our time and then in 2001
We had what we called a covenant celebration

Lauren:

Cuz we were already committed to each other

Marilyn:

We didn't want it to be a commitment ceremony because we had made that
commitment many, many years ago
But it was a walk down the aisle ceremony

Lauren:

Yeah, it was very, very

Marilyn:

Weddingish

Lauren:

(Overlapping Marilyn) Weddingish
My mom and dad and sister came to it
My brother and sister-in-law and their two kids from New York came
My daughter did not come
And that was terribly hurtful
It still is, even though it's past. Makes me...

Marilyn:

Still makes you cry

My parents

agreed to come but to, not in the capacity of the parents sitting in the front row,
blessing the relationship

They came in pretty much at the last minute and sat at the back and when it was done
they went through the line and gave hugs and left

They didn't stay for the

Lauren:

the reception

Marilyn:

But that was the best they could do

And they asked us, they said when we sat down and talked to 'em

They said that they could not bless this commitment, this relationship
they could not in their hearts bless that...and they said..

Both:

“Do you still want us there?”

Marilyn:

And we said, yeah, we'll take you in whatever capacity you can do it

And they said, “Well, we can't sit in the front, we jus-”

And we said that was fine

I mean not fine, but

Both:

We'll accept that

Lauren:

We'll take what we can get

But Marilyn's uncle from California was a part of the ceremony

Marilyn:

who's very accepting, very liberal

he also had a son who was gay who committed suicide

one of my cousins
and he is very supportive, he offered right away to come in when he heard about the ceremony

Lauren:
Said, I will be there

Marilyn:
To represent my side of the family

Lauren:
And his ex-wife was there
And one of Marilyn's cousin's was there, with her husband

Marilyn:
And my sister and my niece and nephew participated in the ceremony
They were very supportive
So we had representation from both sides, we just didn't have everybody we would've loved but...that's the way it goes.

Lauren:
And a lot of wonderful friends
The photographer, the videographer, and the caterer, and the cake people, and huh!
The flowers
New outfits

Marilyn:
Didn't exactly pack the church, but we had fun

Lauren:
Yeah, we did

Marilyn:
Scared to death, but we had fun

EPILOGUE: THE FUTURE

Jim L.:

I felt like the whole culture was saying “it’s not okay to be who you are. It’s not okay to be who you are.” But I really held on to that verse in John 10 verse 10:

Ensemble:

“I came so that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

Jim L.:

I just kept holding on to that hope and I kept pursuing that, because I knew I wasn’t experiencing that life.

Actor 6:

I want to live in community. I want to be part of the church.

Actor 2:

The church has always been a place of solace to me...a place of quiet...

Actor 3:

Yeah...I go to church. But the real church for me is here (points to her heart). I know that’s not exactly true, but that’s where I’m a Christian...right there (points again).

Actor 4:

I’d like there to be a place for gay Christians to exist in all churches, in all denominations.

Actor 5:

I’d like to be accepted for who I am, a child of God, fearfully and wonderfully made, gay, but still made in the image of God.

Actor 7:

I want...to be able to go to church potlucks and school games together without the stigma.

It’s time for that change to happen.

Jim L.:

I really think there’s a reason to be optimistic

I speak in college classes, Christian college classes
All the time
14 years ago, when I started speaking in classes
I started asking
How many of you personally know someone that you know is gay?
2, 3, 4 hands would go up
Now I ask the question and it's exactly the reverse
Now it's only 2, 3, or 4 hands that don't go up
So within a 14-year period of time, there's been this dramatic shift
In how many college students know someone that they know is gay
And that is dramatically affecting their attitudes
That this is not an issue anymore
This is their family members and friends
And then they're putting the pieces together, and they're thinking
This is my cousin...

(quickly in canon)

Actor 7:

...my brother...

Actor 4:

...my sister...

Actor 6:

...my uncle...

Actor 2:

...my classmate...

Actor 5:

...my apartment mate...

Actor 3:

...my dorm mate...

Jim L:

this is somebody I care about, this is a real person that's just like me

I can't place on them demands that I could never live with, it makes no sense

Actor 7 (as Anonymous Woman 17):

And frankly there's a big part of me that if I was heterosexual, I don't think I'd be very tolerant of homosexuals. I'm just being honest, because of the norm in culture. So I feel like I have a lot of empathy for people who don't get this. I don't feel angry at them – my therapist says I should get angry, that this is an injustice, that this is wrong how people treat you – but I just say that I understand.

Actor 4 (as David):

I would like to be in a place where I and other gay people wouldn't have to fear talking about their identity – to be civil and loving about it. I find so much in the rhetoric that is dehumanizing to define somebody by their sexual activity. It's so focused on the sex act, and it really impedes the dialogue. I would so love to be able to sit in my church and be able to talk about myself, ask questions of others – have a holy connection.

Actor 6 (as Anonymous Man 13):

I am made the way I am. What do other people, other Christians, want me to do about that? I would hope that they would want me to act responsibly with the gift of who I am. I would want that from them... I do want that. If you're straight, I want you to be responsible with that gift of who you are and who you love and how you treat them. If you're gay, I want the same thing from you. That's what creates healthy societies. People being responsible with who they are.

Actor 3:

I mean, if I call myself a gay Christian or a bi Christian, what am I really saying? No, I'm a Christian. That's what I am.

Ensemble:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female in Christ.”

Actor 5:

I think that's really the theology that Christ exemplified in what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to have a theology that's focused from below, which deals with the human need...and anybody who thinks that just being with another human being and loving another human being isn't human need is not of this planet.

Actor 2:

When somebody goes through life with, ya know, constant depression, for example, their productivity, their way – there’s just so much more they could be doing. They could be so much happier, they could be – they could be engaging with the world more, they could be contributing more. Those are the more subtle ways that the church is – the church and the larger community is missing out on the gifts of people.

Jim L.:

Now it is true

When I asked the students, the students in these classes.

How many of you personally know someone who’s gay

Like I said, 2 or 3 or 4 will not raise their hand

But when I ask

How many of you have talked with that person, or those persons, about their being gay?

Then the percentage goes way down

So there’s a lot of people who haven’t really had that heart to heart

Talk where they’ve really listened

A lot of them, well, they know somebody but they haven’t really sat down and said “what’s it like for you?”

And that’s a scary thing for people of the church to – it seems like, I don’t know why It seems like it must be a really scary thing for people to actually just say

Ensemble:

Tell us your story

– we really want to hear.

Lights Fade as the Music rises.