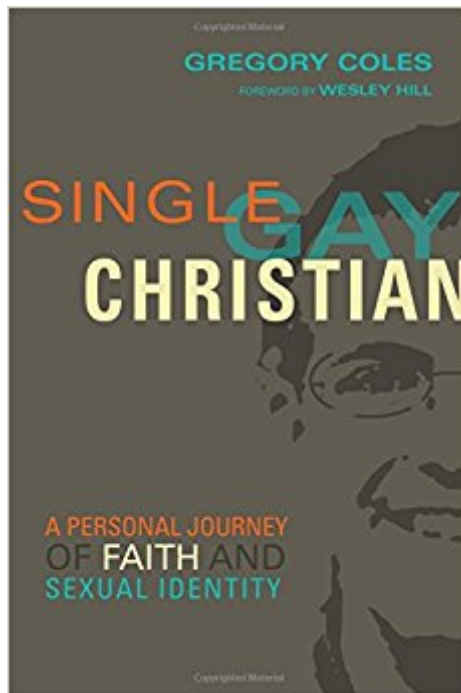




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Single, Gay, Christian: A Personal Journey Of Faith And Sexual Identity



Synopsis

In an age where neither society nor the church knows what to do with gay Christians, Greg Coles tells his own story. Let's make a deal, you and me. Let's make promises to each other. I promise to tell you my story. The whole story. I'll tell you about a boy in love with Jesus who, at the fateful onset of puberty, realized his sexual attractions were persistently and exclusively for other guys. I'll tell you how I lay on my bed in the middle of the night and whispered to myself the words I've whispered a thousand times since: "I'm gay." I'll show you the world through my eyes. I'll tell you what it's like to belong nowhere. To know that much of my Christian family will forever consider me unnatural, dangerous, because of something that feels as involuntary as my eye color. And to know that much of the LGBTQ community that shares my experience as a sexual minority will disagree with the way I've chosen to interpret the call of Jesus, believing I've bought into a tragic, archaic ritual of self-hatred. But I promise my story won't all be sadness and loneliness and struggle. I'll tell you good things too, hopeful things, funny things, like the time I accidentally came out to my best friend during his bachelor party. I'll tell you what it felt like the first time someone looked me in the eyes and said, "You are not a mistake." I'll tell you that joy and sorrow are not opposites, that my life has never been more beautiful than when it was most brokenhearted. If you'll listen, I promise I'll tell you everything, and you can decide for yourself what you want to believe about me.

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Customer Reviews

"Simply fabulous. Wonderfully honest. Superbly written. Deeply inspiring in its powerful portrayal of

one person's struggle to choose Jesus above all. I learned so much from this fantastic story of Greg's both agonizing and exhilarating journey in faith. This is a book every Christian—especially heterosexual evangelicals—must read if we are to learn to love our LGBTQ neighbors, friends, and Christian brothers and sisters the way Jesus does." (Ronald J. Sider, Palmer Seminary at Eastern University)"To say this book is important is a painful understatement. It is the candid, moving, intensely personal story of a gay young man who wants to live his life under the authority of King Jesus and who refuses to accept the comforting answers proffered by different parts of the culture. Superbly written, this book stands athwart the shibboleths of our day and reminds us what submission to King Jesus looks like, what it feels like. This book needs to be thoughtfully read by straight people and by gay people, by unbelievers and by Christians. It is not to be read with a condescending smirk, but with humility." (D. A. Carson, president, The Gospel Coalition, research professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)"Today's followers of Jesus will not be able to depend on a cultural Christianity to anchor their faith. Christian ideas are no longer the majority opinion or law in America. That trend will continue. Christians will begin to experience what so many of our brothers and sisters around the world already know: it is costly to follow Jesus. The Christian of today will need to be able to engage in uncomfortable and nuanced conversations with thoughtfulness, patience, humility, and Scripture—to sit in the tension of gray and complex issues and admit their need for God's wisdom. If not, our world and churches will continue to grow more deeply divided as we retreat further into our tribes out of fear and lack of trust in God's ability to guide us. Before we can speak, we must listen. Especially to those who have been marginalized, pushed aside, and undervalued. This book serves as an opportunity to do just that. To hear from a man who knows and loves Jesus and wrestles honestly with himself and God. Listen to him. Hear his story. Enter into another perspective, a narrative that is often untold." (Andy Mineo, Hip Hop Artist)"Greg has written a book that is a delight to read both because of the beauty of his writing and his main message: that our good God made no mistakes in either making him the way that he is or asking him to live life the way that he is." (Ed Shaw, author of Same-Sex Attraction and the Church)"I found Greg's poignant autobiography not just to be intellectually and theologically honest, but also to be a poetic and wonderfully human book. Single, Gay, Christian is nourishment for the soul of anyone who seeks to love Jesus in our times. It captured my heart as I am sure it will yours. I loved it!" (Debra Hirsch, author of Redeeming Sex)"Greg Coles has poured himself out beautifully in this transparent account of his life with Christ as a young gay man. He asks whether the Bible leaves room for monogamous same-sex relationships and agonizes over how the church will treat singleness and sexual

minorities. His answers are not easy. Especially for him. If you want to be inspired by one man's deep and unfailing love of Jesus, read this book. If you or someone you love is a follower of Jesus who happens to be gay, this is a must-read." (Carolyn Carney, director of spiritual formation & prayer, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship)

Gregory Coles is a contributor to Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal Author Quest* – a collection of short stories published by Grosset and Dunlap (Penguin Random House) – and a top-five finalist in the international contest to "find the next great Dark Crystal author" for Jim Henson Company's book series set in that world. An American author, playwright, and songwriter, Gregory spent fifteen years growing up in the Muslim neighborhoods of Bandung, Indonesia, in the shadow of a golden-domed mosque marked by a spire with a silver crescent moon. The son of two committed Christian teachers, Greg learned from a young age to look for God in the world around him. He read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at age eight, learned to speak several languages, and published his first short story while still in high school. At age eighteen, he returned to the United States to pursue his education, earning a bachelor's degree in communication with emphasis in English literature and graduating as valedictorian of his class. Today Gregory is a PhD student and part-time English instructor at Penn State University.

Greg is a good example of how all people in the church should be vulnerable with each other about their struggles and who we are. He is honest about questioning God and searching for the answers even if the answers were not what he wanted to hear. I am inspired by his bravery to go against the cultural norm and continue living his life for Jesus the way he has been called.

Beautiful. Honest. Raw. A gift to learn parts of this very challenging journey by someone who has been delightful in his ministry and love for Jesus and people.

In full disclosure, Greg Coles is a friend of mine, which means that I was really excited to read his book because I expected it would be fabulous. But I was also a bit nervous to read his book on the slim chance that it would be anything less than stellar because it's an awkward thing to write a less-than-glowing review for a friend. Thankfully, Greg put those lurking concerns to rest, quickly and thoroughly. "Single, Gay, Christian" is quite simply a gift. It is, first and foremost, a beautiful and engrossing story of a young man who has known for much of his life that he is gay, trying to figure out what to do with his sexual identity in the context of

an evangelical Christian community that has not historically known what to do with the likes of him, other than various iterations of rejection and condemnation. What Greg does with candor and grace and humor is share with us the journey that has led him to refuse to accept the simplistic binary options that public discourse would suggest are the only possibilities for someone like him: reject the reality of his sexuality by pretending or “praying away the gay” OR reject traditional Christian sexual ethics by embracing same-sex sexual expression as acceptable to God. Instead of choosing from between those two options, Greg has joined a brave but growing minority of folks who pursue a life as celibate, gay Christians, and this book is the beautiful story of Greg’s pursuit of God and God’s embrace of Greg. This book may not be as theologically and socially groundbreaking as its literary forebear, Wesley Hill’s “Washed and Waiting.” But just as Hill explains in the foreword, it is not even remotely a retelling of Hill’s story. Indeed, Greg’s story is his own, unique in its context and its shaping and its tone. And Greg manages to strike a series of nearly impossible balances, especially given the inherent provocation that his topic and themes so easily produce. The book is deeply theological without being unapproachably academic. It is thoroughly biblical without being preachy or wooden. It is often funny without resorting to cheap jokes or nasty sarcasm. It is very direct without stumbling into pretend certainty or unhelpful dogmatism. It shares Greg’s very real pain and struggle without wallowing in self-pity. It is necessarily critical without being snarky or careless. The tone is gracious, winsome, inviting, challenging, encouraging, and inspiring, from cover to cover. And all of this happens in 144 compelling, accessible pages that probably could be read in one sitting and managed to keep me up much later than I intended over the course of a few nights when I was utterly exhausted. All of this means that you don’t need to be an avid reader, a scholar, or even a Christian to appreciate the book. I am happy to recommend “Single, Gay, Christian” to anyone willing to consider what it might look like for a gay man to love God, follow Jesus, treasure the Bible, respect the church, and pursue obedience through celibacy. You don’t need to agree with any of Greg’s decisions to gain considerable value from reading the book. But Greg has given a gift to the church, a story that will surely help many of us grapple with some preconceived notions we all too readily assume about something we too little understand. I imagine that it might irritate or disturb some, since Greg is unwilling to accept the simplistic answers that the evangelical church has often offered for complex questions related to human sexuality. But he said things I needed to hear, challenged assumptions I’ve always made, and asked better questions I need to ponder. Greg has been one of my heroes

for a few years now, but he's just become one of my favorite authors, too. This book will be a launching point into some significant ways that I am confident God will use Greg to minister to so many of us in the years to come. Whodathunk that I, a married pastor, could learn so much from a single, gay, Christian?

I happened to spot this title at our local library. I was pretty sure what the theme would be, but I was completely, 100% in error. This book is not at all what I thought it would be. *SINGLE, GAY, CHRISTIAN* is the story of a young man struggling to learn how he can be a faithful Christian--a sincere follower of Jesus. The problem is, he has the "wrong" feelings toward men. The author makes it clear that he didn't ask to be gay. In fact, he admits he desperately did NOT want to be gay. The author recounts the many times he prayed to be "Made Straight." Greg desperately wanted to have the "usual" desire for women--but God chose to not answer his prayer. Fortunately, the author found a good soul and a good counselor--a pastor friend, who listened, asked questions, and didn't judge. Most importantly, this wise man told Greg emphatically, "You are not a mistake." The author investigated the Biblical admonitions about sex. He concluded that, in order to be true to the Bible, he would have to lead a celibate life. This puts him at odds with both the Christian community, as well as the LGBTQ community. He doesn't seem to fit in either group. Greg explains that his life as a gay Christian doesn't mean a life without love or intimacy. He notes that one shouldn't confuse sex with true love: "Living without sex is difficult. Living without intimacy is a death sentence." All in all, I found *SINGLE, GAY, CHRISTIAN* to be an important book. The author writes well, and expresses his thoughts clearly and concisely. The author faces tough questions head on. He doesn't dodge the issues. I encourage leaders in the Evangelical community to read this man's struggle to be a faithful follower of Jesus. I thought this one sentence nicely summed up the book: "A life of longing isn't a life without happiness." On the contrary, it's a life rich with detail, alive with wonder and beauty. It's when I am happiest that I long most. And someday, when I look into the face of my Savior, I will taste the fulfillment of an intimacy a thousand times sweeter than any pale earthly imitation. "Well-stated, Brother. You are definitely NOT a mistake."

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