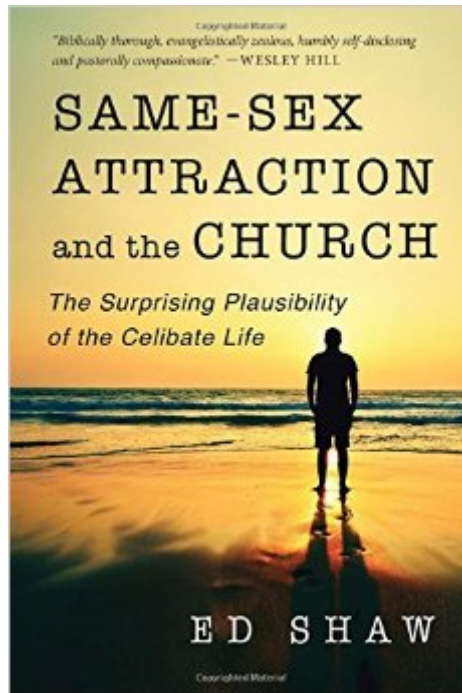


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# Same-Sex Attraction And The Church: The Surprising Plausibility Of The Celibate Life



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ed Shaw is a pastor in Bristol, England. He has same-sex attraction, but he believes that homosexuality is a sin and has chosen a life of celibacy. Same-Sex Attraction and the Church is about the struggle that he has as a same-sex attracted Christian, reasons that he has chosen celibacy, and possible ways that the church can help Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction. There are points that Shaw makes that I have read or heard elsewhere: that same-sex attracted people can help alleviate their loneliness by having friends in church; that, even if

same-sex attraction were genetic, that would not mean that homosexual sex is acceptable to God; that evangelicalism tends to idolize getting married and having a family, which alienates singles and same-sex attracted people who choose celibacy; and that the Christian life is not about people always getting what they want but entails self-denial. Shaw makes these points his own, however, by sharing his stories and experiences. Shaw also wrestles with the question of why God wants marriage to be between a man and a woman. His main conclusion is that heterosexual marriage is a preview of the marriage between Christ and the church. Why does Shaw think that marriage needs to be heterosexual to foreshadow that? Because, for Shaw, God's plan is about the merging of two parties that are different—the divine and the human—and heterosexual marriage is between two different genders. When Shaw makes the painful decision to be celibate for the rest of his life, therefore, he is not just thinking about God's prohibition of homosexual sex; he is thinking about God's broader plan, which gives him hope in life.

Author: Ed Shaw Publisher: IVP Books Reading Level: Leisure Pages: 172 "Church family is God's answer to his own observation that it is not good for a human being to be alone." (106) There are certain topics and issues where people do not even feign neutrality. The growing discussions of same-sex marriage, homosexuality in the church, and the ethics of celibacy are lightning rods for ethical discussions. Close friends and strangers now broach these subjects in both liberating and crippling ways. Unfortunately, lost in the culture wars and some of these discussions are the many individuals struggling within the church. The church needs resources to both engage the culture wars and their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Books like Ed Shaw's *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life* (henceforth, *SSA and Church*) is one such resource. Shaw is a celibate pastor who experiences same-sex attraction. His transparency makes for equally heartwarming and uncomfortable moments in *SSA and Church*. Shaw admits to moments of complete despair on kitchen floors. The liberal church begs him to change his mind on what the Bible teaches. The conservative church is confused on what it wants to say. Shaw has one principal thesis—the church must correct some of its missteps to regain a doctrine of celibacy. Celibacy has become an "implausible" position for heterosexuals and those who experience same-sex attraction because of the church's own direct and indirect teachings. In *SSA and Church*, Shaw provides pastoral stories and counsel to nine "missteps" that "haven't just damaged the same-sex attracted members of our churches, they've crippled us all" (22).

*Same-Sex Attraction and the Church* by Ed Shaw is an important book that is beneficial to the

church and to individual who desires to stay true to the truth of what Scripture says about marriage being between a man and a woman. As a pastor I found this book to honest, helpful, and providing a promising way forward for the church in an area where there does not seem to be a lot of promise. I appreciated Ed's honesty in this book as he shared of his life long struggle to connect his deeply held belief in the truthfulness and authority in Scripture as defining marriage between a man and a woman as the only rightful place for sexual activity, and his same-sex attraction. I found his honesty refreshing and I appreciated the struggle and wrestling (kitchen floor moments) that he laid out clearly for all to see. I also appreciated Ed's honesty in his critique of the evangelical church in the ways in which we have contributed to making the celibate life look nearly impossible. I found this book to be helpful. Ed helped me see the things that the evangelical church, (and I) are doing that makes the plausibility of the celibate life almost disappear completely. Our tendencies to focus on materialism, suffering free, marriage and family idolizing picture of the great life, among others, all showed ways in which the Evangelical church is doing harm towards those who are struggling to live a celibate life. Shaw states, "What will also help me get up off the kitchen floor is seeing other Christian sacrifice short-term happiness out of obedience to God's Word." Elsewhere he says, "So, do you want to make the life of Christians who experience same-sex attraction more plausible? Then do the same sort of counter-cultural things!

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