

LEADER SESSION

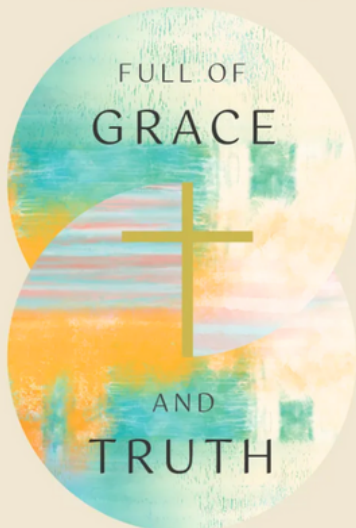
Start from the top down: Equip your church leadership to handle issues of sexuality with grace and truth.

Encourage truthful and gracious attitudes towards sexuality in your leadership.

Vaughan Roberts is openly resolved to submit his own sexuality to the Lordship of Christ. He studied law at Cambridge University before a brief spell in South Africa involved in student ministry. He is Rector of St Ebbe's Church, Oxford. He has written a number of books, including *God's Big Picture*, *Battles Christians Face* and *True Friendship*.



VAUGHAN ROBERTS



The gospel and sexuality
in the global church

Full of Grace and Truth reproduces Vaughan's 2024 address on "Identity and Sexuality" to Christian leaders from 202 countries at the Fourth Lausanne Congress. Together with reflections born from study of God's Word and conversations with many, it provides **a rich biblical vision of how Christians can engage compassionately and faithfully on issues of sexuality** with those inside and outside the church.

Outline

45 mins

Pre-meeting

15 mins

Watch Vaughan's address at the Lausanne conference or read the book/summary.

Warmer

5 mins

Chat through the hypothetical situation

Watch

5 mins

Vaughan's video to church leaders.

Discuss

20 mins

Consider your position

Extra: Scenarios

15 mins

Discuss the true scenarios

Pre-meeting

15 mins



Read: *Full of Grace and Truth*, or the summary. Or watch: [Restoring Biblical Sexuality – Vaughan Roberts | Fourth Lausanne Congress](#)



Book summary

"It is urgent that we help one another respond appropriately to the continuing sexual revolution... For some of us the chief challenge is to grow in pastoral understanding and sensitivity. For others, it is to hold firmly to God's truth and resist false teaching. It was with this dual challenge in mind that I gave my address at the Lausanne Congress 2024."

The culture now views Christian teaching on sexuality as harmful and immoral. If we are to reach people for Christ we must all engage on this topic. But how should we respond?

Foreword

- I have sought to expound and apply the Bible's teaching to a **global audience**.
- Conversation with Christians from other cultural contexts, who share our commitment to biblical orthodoxy and yet have some very **different perspectives to ours, can be mutually beneficial**.
- Many church leaders have been intimidated into adapting their teaching or **staying silent**. Others have held firmly to the Bible's teaching, but have **failed to connect pastorally** with the real lives of many.
- Because shame prevents many Christians being open and honest, often **pastors lack understanding of the struggles** of those in their congregation.

Part 1: CREATION

- GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX AND MARRIAGE
 - God is for sex – Genesis 1:27
 - Sex is for marriage – Genesis 2:24
 - Marriage is for life – Matthew 19:6
- **Western culture sees this as narrow and oppressive** after the sexual revolution which values individual freedom
- The irony is this pursuit of individual freedom hasn't resulted in the opposite of the fulfilment it promised: **loneliness, isolation, confusion**
- To the generation less able than any other in history to answer the question, "Who am I?", **we can offer stable foundations** on which they can build their lives. We can tell them: "You are a man or a woman, made in the image of God, of infinite value and worth."
- **Are we teaching this?** Churches often can say little about this leaving their members to the world's teaching, or they adapt the Bible to the world.

Part 2: THE FALL

- **Sin has corrupted our** sexual desires (Romans 3:23) – which of us could say that our desires and actions have always been pure? (Matthew 5:28)
- If we know our own hearts, **we dare not look down** self-righteously on others, especially LGBTQ+.
- Our Lord Jesus condemned the Pharisees for such behaviour. And Paul teaches that **it is God, not us, who judges the world** in matters of sexual morality (1 Corinthians 5:12).
- We should advocate for Christian values in the world as fellow sinners, with **humility** and love.
- Paul also says that we should "judge those inside" (1 Cor. 5:12) the church **indiscriminately**: There is no justification for focusing only on some sins, while remaining silent about others.
- We must remember that **we are not just talking about "issues", but about precious people**.
- It must be agonising for those who experience a disharmony between the sex of their body and how they feel in their psyche.
- Out of pastoral concern I began to speak publicly about **my own experience** of same-sex attraction.
- Would people like me feel able to open up to others in your church?

Part 3: REDEMPTION

- **Christ's saving work changes everything.**
- **Revisionists** stress inclusion, but say little about repentance, **conservatives** are strong repentance and holiness, but have too often focused only on moral rules and not enough on the relationship which Christ offers, which provides the motivation and power by which we can obey them.
- God is for sex, sex is for marriage, marriage is for life but also, most importantly, **life is for Christ**. This changed everything for me.
- Human beings are creatures of desire – **we must respond, not with moralism, but by inspiring hearts** with the beautiful story of the gospel, which centres on Christ.
- Finding and sustaining **a romantic relationship is not the key to life**. If we forget that truth, we will place an impossible burden on our spouse or friend. **Above all, we were made to relate to God.**
- **Jesus is the perfect example** of being gracious, loving, compassionate and truthful – sticking to Scripture.

Warmer

5 mins

Chat about this hypothetical church scenario

A fourteen-year-old church member who has been coming to church with her parents from childhood is experiencing same-sex attraction.

How might she feel on an average Sunday sitting in church?

Where would she go for support?

What would her biblical understanding likely be?

How might you respond to her if she confided in you?

If she was to tell people at church, what do you think the response would be – at the time and afterwards?

"Some are predominantly or entirely attracted to the same sex...Such people are not just out there in the world...They are in the room whenever we speak on these topics. **Does our content and tone reflect that reality?** Many have felt that they dare not speak about their experience for fear that they would be looked down on or even driven away. **This has too often resulted in the terrible isolation of loneliness and shame,** which only add to the burdens they already feel and make it more likely they will fall into sinful patterns of thinking and action."

Vaughan Roberts, Lausanne
Congress 2024

Watch

5 mins

Vaughan's address to church leaders



Discuss

20 mins

1. How might **our culture be affecting** how we as a leadership see and enact policy's on issues of sexuality?
2. What **blindspots** might we have when it comes to issues of sexuality?
3. Does our church's on-the-ground approach to sexuality **marry up** to our doctrine and intention? If not, how can it better do so?
4. How can our church **be more like Jesus** - gracious and truthful - in its approach?
5. How might our **church family** better understand and live out our biblical position?

Extra: Scenarios

15 mins

Go through these true stories.
Consider:

1. What would need to change about the church culture for these people to get the right help?
2. How can they find refuge in the gospel - what about the gospel would help them feel and act better?



PHOEBE *"I feel so lonely"*

Phoebe goes to church every week with her parents. She has feelings of same-sex attraction that she has never told anyone.

The only time her church culture mentions sexuality is to strongly denounce it as a sin of the godless, so she doesn't believe a true Christian could experience a struggle in this area. This makes her doubt her own faith and causes distress and loneliness as she desperately wants to live a godly life.

JOSEPH *Everyone else seems so godly...*

Joseph has been looking at pornography for a few years. He knows it's wrong and has tried to stop, but never managed for long. Shame has held him back from talking to anyone.

Everyone else seems so godly that he can't imagine any of them understanding, so he keeps quiet. It's only after his wife sees some images on his phone that he ends up speaking to someone at church. By that time his sin has become so deeply entrenched that it is very hard to address.

JETHRO *The shame became unbearable...*

Jethro has never wanted to tell anyone about his struggles with sexuality, but the sense of shame and guilt became unbearable, so he blurted something out to his youth leader. Days later, the senior pastor called Jethro to a meeting and told him that if he truly trusted in the Lord, he would be delivered. The pastor then prayed over him, claiming God's power to release him from the oppression of demons. That was it. **There was no attempt to listen to him and understand his experience; no word of encouragement; no follow up whatsoever.** The conversation was never mentioned again. Jethro now feels more desperate than before, not least because he's experienced no change to his desires.

NAOMI

They are never taught...

New Christian Naomi hesitantly asks a family friend about sexuality. When the friend says she believes the Bible teaches that the place for sex is within the marriage of a man and a woman, Naomi says, almost under her breath as if she's admitting a dangerous secret, "I think that too." She says she is fairly sure her pastors have the same understanding, but **she's not certain, as they are never taught on these issues.** "They don't want to put anyone off from coming to Christ, or cause division in the church, so they keep quiet," she says. The result is that **the members of the church, who are mostly young, are just confused.**

What would it practically look like for a church to have the ideal, Jesus-like approach to sexuality?

How can you create a culture of truth and grace in your church?



**Archbishop Laurent Mbanda,
Anglican Church of Rwanda**

"Here is a much-needed encouragement for orthodox Christians across the world to think together about what it means to be faithful to Christ in the face of the sexual revolution."



**Patricia Weerakoon, Author,
The Gender Revolution**

"This book is a call to all Christians, especially youth, to live a life in keeping with God's good design for sex and gender even when it clashes with the convictions of our sexualised permissive culture."



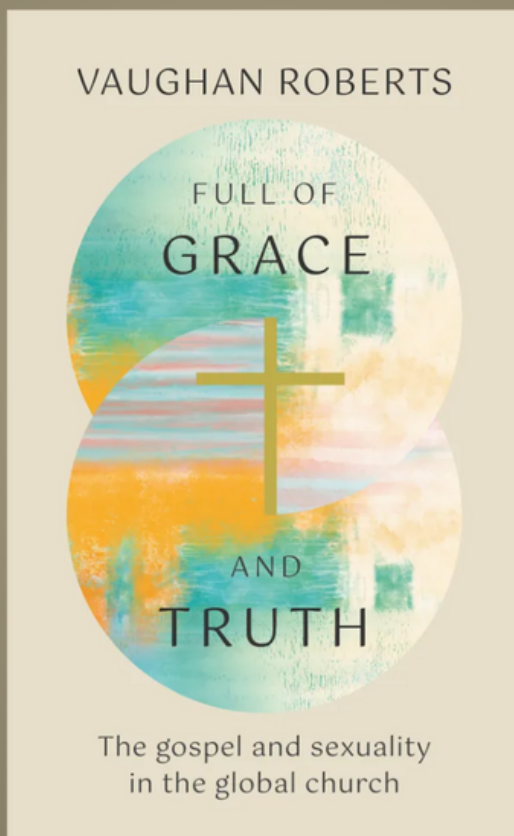
**Sarah Breuel, Founder of
Revive Europe**

"I believe Vaughan Roberts is the best voice on this crucial topic. He speaks to real people from life experience, bringing of the truth of Scripture in an incredibly compassionate way."



**Kanishka Raffel,
Archbishop of Sydney**

"...this book will be of great comfort and practical help to those beguiled or betrayed by the lies of the sexual revolution, and those who walk alongside them as disciples of Christ."



**Chris Wright, Langham
Partnership**

"Vaughan Roberts speaks not only with theological conviction of the authority of Scripture in this matter, but also with authentic credibility as one who is openly resolved to submit his own sexuality to the Lordship of Christ"

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+
Discussion
questions



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