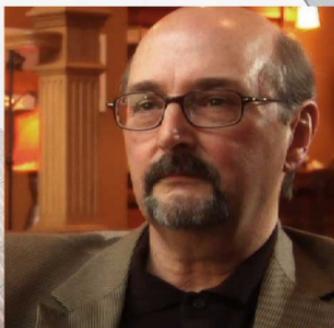


VOLUME

3

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON HOMOSEXUALITY





Hello fellow spiritual explorer,

This isn't your ordinary small group curriculum.

Recycle Your Faith Discussion Starters are just that—*discussion starters*. Inside this facilitator's guide you'll find information we've found helpful in facilitating open-ended conversations. We've also included sample questions to ask your group, but every discussion will be unique. It's your job as the facilitator to create a safe place for people to share their real-life experiences and points of view. I've had to learn to resist the temptation to control the outcome of the discussions I've facilitated and I continue to be amazed where the conversations take me. Using the tips and starter questions found in this guide, I think you too will be surprised by the beauty and variety of the people in your small group. May you all be encouraged by how God shows up amidst differences in opinion and belief.

Enjoy the journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Spinks". The signature is stylized and fluid, written over a light gray rectangular background.

Craig Spinks
Recycle Your Faith

Practices we've learned that lead to open-ended conversations

Facilitating *Recycle Your Faith* (RYF) Discussion Starters is different than what you might be accustomed to—you're primarily a participant, not a leader. You are responsible for hosting a conversation, not for arriving at "the right answer." The beauty of conversation is that it's dynamic—you'll be surprised by where it will lead.

To fully prepare for each group session, watch the videos beforehand, thinking through how you'd respond as a participant. Your thoughts and experiences will inform your response to the video, just as your group members' thoughts and experiences will. Anticipating reactions will help you frame the conversation so as to avoid the deer in the headlights moments we all experience as facilitators.

You're primarily a participant, not a leader.

Here are a few things we've learned that keep conversations moving and honest:

Protect the Space.

Your primary job as facilitator is to protect the space so that you and others can learn together. Encourage people to share honestly—RYF videos are provocative and spark many thoughts—but you have to gently encourage people to participate.

Equity of Voice

If one person is monopolizing the conversation, redirect to other people. The following conversation stems can help you do this diplomatically:

- "That's interesting, does anyone else have a different take?"
- "How else could we think about that?"

On the flip-side, here are a few conversation-busters (we've learned the hard way!):

Don't Preach

People do not join a small group to hear a sermon. Church services take care of that! Keep the focus on the group members, not on yourself—protect the space!

Don't Shut People Down

At times you may encounter someone in your group who doesn't share a common perspective with the rest of the room. Try not to shut this person down or discount their thoughts and experiences. This will help maintain a sense of safety in your group.

Recycle Your Faith videos are inherently provocative. They will stir up past experiences and challenge deep-seated beliefs. This is good! This is real-life. Disagreements will inevitably emerge in your discussions. Try not to correct people on things you disagree with. Instead, try asking them to further explain why they think or believe that way. After facilitating hundreds of groups like these, we believe strongly that sitting with differences requires spiritual maturity. Aristotle once wrote, "It's the sign of an educated person who can entertain a thought without accepting it." We think Jesus agreed and embodies this sort of spiritual agility.

Dialogue, not Debate.

Dialogue is about *learning*, where as debate is about *asserting* (literally, “I’m right and you’re wrong”).

Recycle Your Faith seeks to create an environment where differing opinions are welcomed. Unfortunately, differences in opinion are too often accompanied by a natural tendency to debate rather than participating in open dialog, so we’ve found these few general guidelines helpful:

DIALOGUE, NOT DEBATE

Seek Understanding Rather Than Influence

When you feel the urge to try to change someone’s views, try asking a question instead.

Be Respectful

When sharing your thoughts, don’t attack another person’s point of view or be condescending.

No Name-Calling

Name calling just pushes buttons and provokes debate.

Relax

Dialogue is not easy. Try giving others the benefit of the doubt and try not to compare your best with their worst. Taking a deep breath helps hold the space—really.

It might be a good idea to review these guidelines with your group prior to conversations that might get heated, and remind them of the guidelines when things do get heated. But more importantly, be sure to model these skills yourself. It really is amazing how far that will go!

Customize Away!

On the following pages you'll notice that the *Recycle Your Faith* videos are grouped by topic. They also include some sample discussion questions and suggestions for how much time to allot. We recommend that you use one or two videos per gathering (see the sample breakout below for using videos over four weeks). We've arranged the videos and framed the conversations in the way we think best, but feel free to customize it to fit your needs!

Four gatherings: Show videos 1, 2, and 3 in the first gathering.
 Show videos 4 and 5 in the second gathering.
 Show videos 6 and 7 in the third gathering.
 Show videos 8, 9, and 10 in the fourth gathering.

Please do utilize the activities and questions as you see fit. Many times, one question can be enough to carry the whole evening, and other times it's good to have more questions, especially for the more shy groups. We've attempted to give you all our *best* questions, but, again, use them at your own discretion.

We've also included some background information for each video that will remind you of each video's content. Whether you use this background information to set up your group's viewing of the video is entirely up to you. We've done it both ways with equal success.

Finally, there are specific times we've found it helpful as facilitators to encourage a silent think-time and sub-groupings (groups of 2 or 3) depending on the questions, prompts, or videos. Throughout the guide we've highlighted these places with brackets and facilitator notes. Feel free to make use of those notes as you see fit.

The Divisive Topic of Homosexuality

If you were to search the internet for websites and books discussing homosexuality, you'd primarily find two kinds of resources:

- those against homosexuality
- those advocating for it.

It's rare to find a resource, like the one you're holding now, that gives both sides equal time. It would appear that neither side is willing to give any ground to the views they passionately oppose. If you or someone in your group has strong opinions on this topic, this small group bundle will not be easy because both sides of the debate are presented.

Let's pause here to make something clear: While different views are presented, this discussion starter bundle by no means presents all perspectives. The stories told in these clips are intended to do two things:

1. They are intended to stir up conversation (which they most certainly will).
2. More importantly, they are intended to help you and your group put yourselves in the shoes of someone you disagree with.

Not only are the views of four people presented, but the experiences that have shaped those views are also explored. As you hear these stories, help your group members put themselves in the interviewee's shoes and walk around a bit.

Facilitating a respectful conversation on this topic poses a significant challenge. People have opposing viewpoints and will naturally attempt to steer the conversation toward debate. If you're not mindful of this tendency, it could get messy. As a heated argument gains momentum, here are a few helpful tips you can use to keep the conversation focused on respectful dialogue:

- Challenge your group to **focus on interests not positions**. If we truly want to sit with differences, then curiosity (interest) has more purpose than positions.
- **Advocate and inquire**. It's normal to advocate for a strong belief (it's human), but that needs to be balanced with inquiry. If we only want to win, then we're no longer listening (and learning).
- Encourage participants to **ask non-leading questions of those with whom they disagree** and be sure to model this yourself (as the facilitator). The golden rule applies—treat others as you would like to be treated.

- Try to **keep the conversation focused on people and stories rather than issues**. As people make blanket statements, ask them to tell the group about an experience they had where that happened. Keeping the conversation personal will reduce personal attacks based on viewpoints. *[Facilitator note: One of the easiest ways to help a participant shift from a generalized statement to something concrete is to say, “Ken, that’s interesting. Can you give us a specific example where that is/was the case?”]*
- Some group members may feel a need to resolve this conversation and come to a consensus. However, the purpose is not reach a conclusion or to change people’s views, but to gain a better understanding of other’s perspectives. To keep the dialogue moving, you might need to be more assertive than you’re used to and cut to the next topic or video.

Some may ask what’s the point of having this conversation if it’s not going to change anybody’s mind. It’s a good question, and the answer is the key behind what makes this resource different than others:

This Recycle Your Faith Discussion Starter bundle is intended to challenge Christians to participate in a respectful dialogue about the topic of homosexuality in order to better understand the issue and love the people. Homosexuality is one of the most divisive topics in Christianity and negative reactions to it often divide families and split churches. Without respectful dialogue, any opportunity for understanding and healing will be subsumed by pain and broken relationships.

It does not have to remain this way, however. If you care about this heightened sense of division in the Church and between the Church and American culture, then this is the right small group bundle for you.

One last thing—too often this conversation happens without the gay community being invited to participate. If your group is only made up of straight individuals you might consider inviting someone who is not straight to join your conversations—the more the better so that the gay person will not feel targeted or like “the token representative” of his or her community. It may feel a little awkward, but for the most part gay men and women welcome the opportunity to be included in these conversations.

VIDEO 1



Video Title:	“Homosexuality: it’s not a simple topic”
Topic:	If you think this is simple, you’re probably living in a bubble
Length of Video:	3 min. 00 sec.
Discussion Time:	Allow at least 20 minutes

Before opening up a can of worms, you might want to preface the conversation by setting the tone and laying down a few ground rules. Read the previous pages for some ideas.

PLAY

Play “Homosexuality: It’s Not a Simple Topic”

There are lots of different ideas and perspectives when it comes to the topic of homosexuality, this first video will help set the stage for the following gatherings by communicating the complexity of the topic and introducing the main perspectives we will explore in the rest of our gatherings.

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

People in your group will probably want to launch into a debate or argument immediately following this video. Keep the conversation focused on the question below and save the more detailed discussion(s) for later clips.

[Facilitator note: To set a contemplative, respectful tone, you may begin this question with something like, “Let’s observe silence for the next two minutes as we think about...”]

- There is a wide range of opinions in Christianity about homosexuality. Have you found this topic to be fairly simple and black-and-white, or has it been more complex? Why?
- Which of the four perspectives in this video do you resonate with the most? Explain.
- Which do you find the most difficult? Explain.

VIDEOS 2 and 3



Video Titles:	“Help Confused as Hate” “Rewind: Clint Cline”
Topics:	Are Christians who are against homosexuality only trying to help? Hierarchy of sin
Length of Videos:	9 min. 00 sec.
Discussion Time:	Allow at least 30 minutes

PLAY

Play “Help Confused as Hate” and “Rewind: Clint Cline” back to back.

Clint Cline is the creative force behind many political ads throughout the United States opposing same sex marriage. In these videos, he talks about how and why he tries to communicate in a way that doesn't incite hostile reactions.

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

- People in the gay community often say that they feel “hated” by Christians. Christians often say that they hate the sin, but love the sinner.
 - If love is being interpreted as hate, is it really love?
 - Do you think it's possible to oppose homosexuality without it being taken as a personal attack?
- For straight group members: Do you know anyone who is gay?
 - What has it looked like to love this person?
- For gay group members: Would you mind sharing two stories—
 - One of a Christian whose love felt like love?
 - One of a Christian whose love felt like hate?
 - What was similar and different between these two people?

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- For those who view homosexuality as a sin: Christians are perceived to view homosexuality as a greater sin than other sins. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- For those who don't view homosexuality as a sin: How do you respond when Clint compared homosexuality to pornography?
- Clint suggests that anyone who supports homosexuality (regardless of your sexual orientation) is causing harm. Do you agree?

VIDEOS 4 and 5



Video Titles: “Rewind: Kathy Baldock”
“Reconsidering the Bible and Homosexuality”
Topics: The rules change when you know someone
What does the Bible say about homosexuality?
Length of Videos: 9 min. 49 sec.
Discussion Time: Allow at least 30 minutes

PLAY

Play “Rewind: Kathy Baldock” (4 min. 16 sec.)

It’s been said that “the rules change when we learn peoples’ names.” That’s what happened when a conservative evangelical woman, Kathy Baldock, started hiking with a lesbian woman. Let’s listen to their story.

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

Kathy shared a story about how her interactions with a lesbian woman caused her to reevaluate her position on homosexuality.

- Which (if any) of your relationships have caused you to look differently at a particular issue? (It doesn’t have to be specific to homosexuality.)
- Why do you think the rules change when issues are personified?
- Many would see Kathy’s shift as “back-sliding”—would you agree?
 - Why or why not?

PLAY

Play “Reconsidering the Bible and Homosexuality” (5 min. 33 sec.)

It’s one thing to flipantly change positions on something like homosexuality, but it’s another thing to prayerfully consider that change while researching all the evidence. For Kathy, it was important to know what the Bible says about homosexuality. In this next clip, she talks about her new understanding of the verses typically used against homosexuality.

continued on next page...

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

For Kathy, the Bible held a lot of weight in determining what she believed.

- How much weight does the Bible hold in your understanding of homosexuality?
- Have you ever heard these passages explained the way Kathy explained them?
- How do you respond to Kathy's interpretation of these passages?

CONTINUE

Idea for Further Discussion:

Go through each of the Bible verses used against homosexuality. Read and discuss the various ways these passages are interpreted, using the books *Homosexuality* and *A Gay Gospel?* as resources (more information on these and other books can be found at the back of this guide in "Additional Resources").

Genesis 2 – Adam and Eve

Genesis 19 – Sodom and Gomorrah

Leviticus 18:22

Deuteronomy 23:17

Romans 1:26-27

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Timothy 1:10-11

Matthew 8:5-13 – Roman Centurion

VIDEOS 6 and 7



Video Titles:	“Rewind: Adam Hood” “Homosexuality is a Sin”
Topic:	Is homosexuality something that can or should be changed?
Length of Videos:	11 min. 14 sec.
Discussion Time:	Allow at least 30 minutes

PLAY

Play “Rewind: Adam Hood” and “Homosexuality is a Sin” back to back.

Adam Hood’s views changed 180 degrees after an encounter with God in San Francisco’s Castro District. Once a distinguished gay man, he’s now on fire for Jesus and has very strong views against homosexuality. Let’s listen to Adam’s story.

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

Adam’s views are quite strong.

- How did you respond to what he had to say?
 - To what extent does knowing his back-story help you understand his views?

A part of Adam’s story is that drugs, promiscuity, and homosexuality went hand in hand.

- Do you know any gay people who are not into drugs and promiscuity?

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Adam mentioned that he didn't think what he was doing was wrong while he was gay, but is now convinced that it was wrong.

- If the old Adam was approached by the new Adam, to what extent do you think he would have listened?

Christian ministries aiming to change the sexual identity of their clients are often criticized for trying to change something that many consider to be God-given traits.

- To what extent does the nature/nurture debate factor into your views about homosexuality? Explain.

VIDEOS 8 and 9



Video Titles: "On the Wrong Side of History"
"Rewind: Rich McCullen"
Topics: How the Church should respond to homosexuality
The Church's involvement in lawmaking
Length of Videos: 9 min. 35 sec.
Discussion Time: Allow at least 30 minutes

PLAY

Play "On the Wrong Side of History" (3 min. 57 sec.)

In 2008, the state of California passed Proposition 8, which overturned a previous California Supreme Court ruling that gave same-sex couples the constitutional right to marry. Since most of the funding for the campaign came from Christian Churches, one church in San Diego felt it was necessary to apologize to California's gay community. The Lead Pastor at that church, Rich McCullen, tells the story.

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

Rich's church went out of their way to make a statement to California's gay community.

- Do you think it was necessary?

Other churches in California went out of their way to make sure that the same-sex marriage law was deemed unconstitutional.

- Do you think that was necessary?
 - Why or why not?

PLAY

Play "Rewind: Rich McCullen" (5 min. 38 sec.)

Rich's back-story provides more insight into why Rich cares so much about this topic.

continued on next page...

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

- Does knowing that Rich is gay affect how you view his earlier story?
 - If so, how? If not, why not?
- Would you go to Rich's church?
 - Why or why not?

Rich makes a point of saying that he is a pastor who happens to be gay and that he doesn't want to pastor a "gay church."

- What do you think he meant by that?

VIDEO 10



Video Title: "Running From Religion"
Topic: Revisiting why
Length of Video: 1 min. 46 sec.
Discussion Time: Allow at least 20 minutes

PLAY

Play "Running From Religion"

Beratta Gomillion is not a Christian and probably never will be after the negative experiences she's had with Christians. As you watch this last clip, consider how homosexuality has put a wedge between Christians and non-Christians.

DISCUSS

Discussion Questions:

- Does it sadden you to hear Beratta's story? Why or why not?

Beratta's story is not uncommon in the gay community.

- Do you think positive experiences with Christians will ever become the norm?
 - What will it take for this to happen?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Love is an Orientation

By Andrew Marin

Homosexuality

By Pastor Romell Weekly

A Gay Gospel?

By Joe Dallas

The Outsider Interviews

By Jim Henderson, Todd Hunter, & Craig Spinks

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEES:

Clint Cline is the President and Creative Director of Design4 (Design4.org) Marketing Communications in Plant City, Florida.

Kathy Baldock is the co-host of the I 43 Talk Show on AffirmingChristian.com and blogs at Canyon Walker Connections (CanyonWalkerConnections.com). Kathy Lives in Reno, Nevada.

Adam Hood lives in San Francisco and blogs at 24 Hour Bride (24HourBride.wordpress.com).

Rich McCullen is Lead Pastor at Mission Gathering (MissionGathering.com) in San Diego, California.

Beratta Gomillion is the Executive Director of the Center for Human Services (chs-nw.org) in Shoreline, Washington.



For more *Recycle Your Faith* Discussion Starters
and to watch free weekly videos visit:

RECYCLEYOURFAITH.COM