

## **SHOULD CHRISTIANS DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS GAY?**

Many Christians who are same-sex oriented identify themselves as gay, and the term does not automatically imply an endorsement of same-sex sexual relationships. For example, author and theologian Wesley Hill is a gay Christian who has been prominent in arguing that Scripture does indeed rule out sexual relationships between people of the same sex, and advocating celibacy as a fulfilling way of life. Others have found it helpful to use the term gay as a recognition not simply that they are attracted to people of the same sex, but that their attractions are exclusively so. That is, gay simply describes their sexual orientation.

However, some Christians who are same-sex oriented prefer not to use the term gay to describe themselves, not because they are ignoring or denying their sexual orientation, but because they do not regard their sexual identity as gay. Biblically speaking, sexual identity is defined in terms of male and female, not heterosexual or homosexual. Indeed, some heterosexual Christians have therefore chosen not to identify themselves as heterosexual or straight, for the same reason. This is not a denial of a person's sexual orientation as a fact about them. But gay is not their sexual identity – it is not who they are. Who they are is a man or a woman, created in God's image and redeemed by Christ. For some but probably not most same-sex oriented Christians, this has been a step towards enabling them to consider the possibility of a vocation to marriage to someone of the opposite sex.

Summary: because the term gay does not imply a view one way or the other about sexual ethics, there is no absolute reason to avoid it. For some people, it will be helpful pastorally to use the term to describe themselves, whilst others find it more helpful not to define themselves in that way.

### RESOURCES:

[‘A theological and pastoral reflection on my journey away from a homosexual identity’](#), by Sean Doherty, in the journal Anvil

Steve Holmes, [‘Why it’s WEIRD to be straight’](#)