



Washed and Waiting by Wesley Hill Book Review by Keith Poysti

The premise of this book is that it is unique among books written by Christians who describe themselves as homosexuals. Wesley Hill describes himself as a Christian who has been homoerotically attracted since puberty. He has never had a healing reversal of homosexual desires even though he has fervently prayed and tried to change those desires. Hill also has always seen his homosexuality as contrary to God's "original creative intention for humanity" and his homoerotic desires as a hindrance to his spiritual life. Hill claims to have read many books describing Christians who have embraced their homosexuality as a gift from God and many books where the authors have experienced radical and miraculous reversal. He has not. Hence this book. "This book is written mainly for those gay Christians who are already convinced that their discipleship to Jesus necessarily commits them to the demanding, costly obedience of choosing not to nurture their homosexual desires, whether through private fantasies or physical relationships with other gay or lesbian people."

What stands out to me are the courageous, compassionate, balanced and loving pastors, counsellors, peers and teachers who listened to Wesley Hill's story and did not reject him. I cannot imagine Hill writing this book except for the incredibly supportive people that he encountered. It was very inspiring to read that conservative, American Christ followers can be that willing to sacrificially join a fellow believer struggling with homosexuality on their journey. Impressive.

I also like Wesley Hill's interpretation of I Corinthians 6:9-11 which 2013 study conference speaker Robert Gagnon used to condemn homosexuals to hell. Wesley notes that Paul's emphasis is on the phrase "And such were some of you. You were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Hill goes on to state that regardless of the desires that we continue to battle, regardless of how intense the homoerotic temptations, "You were washed," means you have been cleansed in every aspect of your life and you have been accepted into the family of God. Nothing can change that. Washed and waiting for full redemption. I can relate.

A life-changing experience for Hill when a counsellor asked him: "Do you find yourself holding other males at arm's length for fear that if you come to know him deeply and intimately, it will somehow be inappropriate or dangerous or uncomfortable?" This question led Hill to seek out the kind of friendships that would end up being life-giving for him. This question should haunt us as church leaders as well: "Do you find yourselves holding the LGBTQ community at arm's length for fear that if you come to know them deeply and intimately, it will somehow be inappropriate or dangerous or uncomfortable?"

Solutions. Solutions. Solutions. Hill, like all of us would love to see easy, predictable solutions to discipleship's greatest challenges. I really like that Hill doesn't resort to the miracle cures or 5-step solutions. Instead, he advocates a Christ-like "radical, upside-down pattern of life," where our ethic is based on seeing ourselves as part of God's story of redemption through Jesus Christ, knowing we are loved, being transformed daily into his image. Hill's writing is a fine example of Bonhoeffer's 'costly grace'.

A lot of the book is about gaining strength from other strugglers including famous Christians like Henri Nouwen and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hill talks about dealing with desire, which is a timely message for all Christians, and with loneliness which is also a common modern affliction. Even though this book is written with the Christian homosexual in mind, it is a profound call for all of us to re-examine how we support each other on this journey of following Christ faithfully.