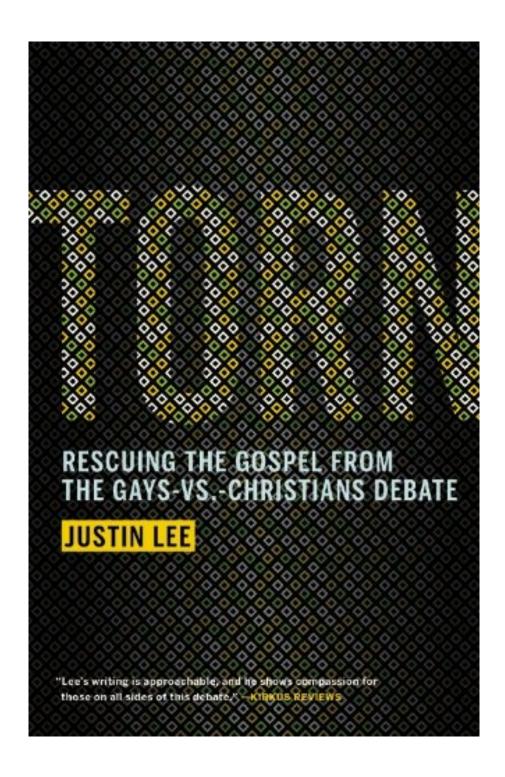


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As a teenager and young man, Justin Lee felt deeply torn. Nicknamed "God Boy" by his peers, he knew that he was called to a life in the evangelical Christian ministry. But Lee harbored a secret: He also knew that he was gay. In this groundbreaking book, Lee recalls the events--his coming out to his parents, his experiences with the "ex-gay" movement, and his in-depth study of the Bible--that led him, eventually, to self-acceptance.

But more than just a memoir, TORN provides insightful, practical guidance for all committed Christians who wonder how to relate to gay friends or family members--or who struggle with their own sexuality. Convinced that "in a culture that sees gays and Christians as enemies, gay Christians are in a unique position to bring peace," Lee demonstrates that people of faith on both sides of the debate can respect, learn from, and love one another.

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Most helpful customer reviews

136 of 144 people found the following review helpful.

Gentle, compassionate, and personal.

By Kolwynia

I am deeply grateful to find such a kind and tenderhearted approach to this subject. Justin Lee's book is part autobiography, part Bible study, and part call for grace and empathy to those on both sides of the issue. No matter what your personal views, you will find something valuable in Justin's account of his own journey and

desire to reconcile his sexuality with his relationship with God. His writing is unassuming and down to earth in a way that anyone can relate to. One moment he is referencing Holy Scripture, the next South Park or The Princess Bride.

As a straight Christian who never had to go through a struggle like Justin's, it was pretty easy for me to ignore the plight of gay Christians. In fact, there was a time when I didn't think there was such a thing! I wish someone had placed a book like this in my hands a long time ago.

Justin writes with compassion and love. This is not an angry book, but a gently passionate one. If you are expecting to be preached at, you will find yourself pleasantly surprised. Justin is honest about the things he faced that confused or hurt him, the questions he had, and why he came to the conclusions that he did. He also makes it clear that the church is a diverse place where not everyone is going to come to the same conclusions he did. And that's okay.

(If you are familiar with the Gay Christian Network, the organization that Justin is a part of, and their compassionate Side A & Side B approach to the controversy, you will find that same level of empathy on display here. If not, the idea is that some Christians believe that God is fine with homosexual behavior and willing to bless same-sex couples the same way as he would couples of the opposite sex. And some Christians believe that God does not want people to engage in sexual activity with members of the same sex under any circumstances, so gay Christians who want to please God have to live celibate lives. The approach of the GCN is that people who hold either point of view should be treated with the same amount of respect, even if you disagree with them. I am personally fond of this approach because it promotes tolerance and empathy without requiring people to leave their values at the door.)

I appreciate Justin's study of scripture in the chapter Back to the Bible, where he describes his own in-depth study of the scriptures that are normally used to show that God opposes homosexuality. I personally come from a similarly conservative regard for Scripture, so it is wonderful to see someone who isn't going to scrub a passage just because it doesn't say what he wants it to. Justin's study is not someone looking for loopholes in the Bible that he can squeeze his sexuality into. He comes across as someone who opens the Bible with a genuine question in his heart: "What does God want from me?"

For Justin, the journey to answer that question ends in the realization that it is possible to be both gay and Christian, and you do not have to compromise your faith in Jesus or His Word just because you are gay. Some readers may not be convinced by his arguments, but I believe that even they will be glad to read the book and see how and why he came to the conclusion he did.

For some, this is going to be the most important book they ever read, other than the Bible itself. In a society divided by a Culture War, those who try to hold on to their faith and their sexuality are being pulled apart by outside forces as well as internal conflict. They need someone to tell them that they are not alone, and that God is not their enemy. I have yet to find a voice that speaks on the subject with so much understanding and love, yet remains as uncompromising in his faith as Justin Lee.

I highly recommend this book to anyone.

Final Grade: A

99 of 107 people found the following review helpful. The book I've been waiting for.
By Brian J. Henry

Alright, so it's only been a day, but I devoured this book. I cannot recommend it enough. It's the book I've been waiting for, and thought I might have to write one day, but now it's here. I'm not the most eloquent with words but here's a mini review.

The main topic of this book is really the misunderstandings perpetuated by churches, and their consequences. Despite their good intentions, ignoring the facts on these things leads to more harm than good, and ultimately turning people away from the faith. This book sets the record straight on whether it's a choice, the difference between orientation and behavior, the purpose (and dangers) of ex-gay ministries, and other things that have been seriously and unfortunately ignored.

Justin Lee, the author, is very respectful to both sides (Side A affirming same-sex relations, and Side B affirming celibacy), though he himself is Side A, and lays out his beliefs on the "clobber passages" in a chapter towards the end.

Its mostly focused on what the church is doing wrong as far as reaching out towards gay people, why it's wrong, and how churches and Christians can do better. He makes a serious point in his conclusion that churches who expect LGBT folk to be celibate need to be better at supporting them, instead of only hearing "gay" and starting to preach at them before they understand the situation.

All the while, chronicling what it's like to grow up gay having been raised as a strong Southern Baptist, the pain and the guilt and the struggles, why am I like this, what can I do, etc. Giving a great understanding for what it's like to be gay AND Christian.

It's a vital book for anyone seeking to understand all the sides of this debate better.

49 of 54 people found the following review helpful.

The Truth That Set Me Free...

By Amazon Customer

I just finished reading Justin Lee's book called Torn and all I can do is sit back with tears in my eyes and a heart filled with hope at the amazing potential for good that this book could bring to a church divided.

This is a book for those who are just trying to understand how a good Christian boy or girl, growing up in a bible-believing fundamental church, and raised in a Christ-loving and Christ-following home, could possibly have turned out to be gay.

This is a book that brings understanding for the mom and dad who just listened in dumbfounded horror to their son or daughter "come out" to them, fearfully confessing to them that he or she was gay.

This is a book for the truly caring pastor, deacon, or Sunday-school teacher who suspects or discovers that the young man or young woman they watched grow up in their church is fighting with feelings of same-sex attraction or who openly confesses they are gay.

This is a book that will help the person who has a friend or family member who confides in them that they are gay understand how to react in the same way Jesus and Paul would have interacted with them.

...and possibly most importantly, this book is a door of hope for you, the gay Christian who loves God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and yet unwittingly find yourself fighting feelings of attraction for the same sex... feelings you never asked for, feelings you never chose, and feelings you definitely never wanted... this book is for you.

Mom, did your little boy just come to you in tears telling you that he thought he was gay? Read this book! It will help you understand and react in a manner befitting the gift God entrusted you with.

Dad, did your little girl come to you sobbing with fear and shame, confiding in you that she was gay? Get a copy of this book and don't put it down until you turn the last page! It's definitely going to help you.

Do you want to dig deeper into God's Holy Word to study and understand those verses of Scripture the church has historically used to condemn homosexuality? Then please read this book! It can lead you to greater understanding and grace whether you agree with Justin's conclusions or not.

Next to our Holy Father's Word, this book is quite possibly the most important book of our time that everyone who calls themselves Christian should read. I cannot recommend this book enough for the church of the 21st century.

This book has the potential to bring wisdom and enlightenment to every child of God that could result in bridging the gap of fear and condemnation between the church and her gay children... and the gay population in general. It's that powerful!

This is a story about feeling torn between unwanted desires and the desire to live wholeheartedly for God and how reconciliation between one's faith and orientation can occur.

As I read along with Justin and his struggles to live fully for God and crucify his same-sex feelings, I found myself reliving my own fear and anguish of growing up with a terrible secret that I could never tell anyone... yet in tears and trembling with fear I finally did.

This book may help you avoid spending the hundreds of hours and dollars that I spent in an ex-gay ministry, desperately doing everything within my power to choose not to be gay... but to no avail.

I remembered the feelings of despair I felt when my ex-gay counselor finally was honest with me and informed me that I probably would always have feelings for other guys and how dejected I felt hearing his words and knowing I would probably never truly be straight... but at least he respected me enough to be honest which is more than most ex-gay leaders choose to be.

I thought about the hours, days, and years of my life that slipped on by as I spent them praying to my omnipotent God, begging Him to change my feelings of attraction for the same sex... and how He never did. And I remember the time I sensed the Holy Spirit gently impressing upon me the words that set me free: "Child, you acknowledge I am Almighty and all powerful! Knowing I have the power to change your feelings, don't you think that if I really wanted you changed that I would have done so by now?" (It took weeks, even months for me to clue in to the fact that it really was the Holy Spirit leading me to light and not the devil trying to deceive me, but I finally listened to Him and found my freedom.)

Justin talks about how he found his freedom too as he shares his story with us in this book... and as you read about his journey to a freedom he once couldn't have imagined, maybe you too will find the answers to a freedom you may seek; whether you are a parent or a friend of someone you love who is gay, or as one who finds themselves with feelings of attraction for the same sex.

I wish with all my heart my parents or pastor would have had a book like this to read back when I was struggling to come to terms with being gay while maintaining my devotion to God at the same time. Maybe a lot of pain and anguish could have been spared.

That being said, read this book with hope and remember... you are greatly loved.

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