



The Evangelical Covenant Church



Show Notes for
Embrace Webinar #5

Guiding Families of LGBT+ Loved Ones

with Bill Henson

Webinar summary:

Bill Henson is founder and president of Lead Them Home, creator of Posture Shift and author of *Guiding Families of LGBT+ Loved Ones*. In this webinar designed for pastors and parents, Bill speaks to how to care for LGBT+ people by increasing family acceptance, enhancing church inclusion, and nourishing faith identity. He highlights the impact of trauma, suicidality, and “relational gaps” LGBT+ youth face when coming out. He offers guidance to parents and pastors on how to respond with Christ’s love. Full webinar and resources available at <https://covchurch.org/embrace/webinar-5/>

Key takeaways and timestamps from webinar:

(3:40-4:55): Christians are called to be “missionaries” to LGBT+ people. It helps us to remember that this is a marginalized people group whom Christ loves.

(6:43-8:49): Overview of Lead Them Home goals, which shapes the *Guiding Families of LGBT+ Loved Ones* curriculum: 1. **Secure family:** increase family acceptance. (Note: acceptance doesn’t equal approval of all choices.) 2. **Safe church:** enhance church inclusion. 3. **Strong faith:** nourish faith identity.

(8:50-12:06): Parents and church leaders need to recognize **the cumulative weight of the challenges that those who grow up LGBT+ face**. Examples include: feeling “different”,



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being teased and bullied, fearing family rejection, church judgement, the potential for isolation and suicidal ideation. These experiences result in trauma, which rewires the brain in anticipation of even more trauma relating to one's sexuality or gender identity.

(12:07-13:52): **LGBT+ youth are 2-4 times more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience suicidality.** Two primary risk factors in suicidality are: 1. family rejection or disconnection/silence and 2. bullying.

(13:53-18:12): If youth come out to parents and pastors, they may face many “relational gaps.”

(18:13-21:00): Language gaps: the need to reach LGBT+ youth where they are in sharing the love the Christ, using language that communicates care and understanding. Here are some examples of language gaps:

When we say...

- Homosexual
- Love the sinner. Hate the sin.

LGBT+ youth hear...

- Bigotry/judgment
- You hate who I am.

What we call...

- Sin
- Lifestyle choice
- Sexual preference
- Alternative lifestyle
- Broken
- Touched by homosexuality
- He

LGBT+ youth call...

- Identity
- Born gay
- Same-gender loving
- Blamed for choosing
- Need to get fixed
- Caught a disease
- They

(21:02-22:29): How to respond well when youth come out:

1. **Never guess:** “I kind of suspected...”
2. **Initial response:** “Thank you for trusting me with your story.”
3. **Be curious:** “I would like to hear your whole story.”



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4. Ask about risks: “Do your parents know? How did they respond?”; “Do you have friends here at church who know?”; “How safe do you feel at home, at school and here at church?”; “Have you experienced any bullying or teasing?”

5. Be available: “I want to talk again and learn more about your story.” “If you experience any mistreatment, I want to know right away.” “I will protect you. Jesus loves you and so do I.”

(27:25-29:20): How to care for LGBT+ loved ones without an agenda? By prayerfully considering: 1) What is the next honoring question I can ask? 2) What is the next affirmation I can give? 3) What is the next thing I can do to include them in our family?

(35:00-55:00): Bill offers **wisdom** on: gender identity, what a parent's role is with an LGBT+ child, how churches can create a safe place for LGBT+ people, and how the church can honor LGBT+ people as they teach about human sexuality.

Selected resource mentioned:

[Guiding Families of LGBT+ Loved Ones](#)

[Lead them Home](#) website