



The Evangelical Covenant Church



Show Notes for
Embrace Webinar #15

Becoming Churches Where Gay Christians Can Thrive in Celibacy and Mixed-Orientation Marriage

with *Pieter Valk*

Embrace webinar #15 summary:

This webinar explores how our churches can become places where gay Christians thrive in celibacy or a mixed-orientation marriage with Pieter Valk, founder and Executive Director of [EQUIP](https://equip.org). Pieter provides practical steps pastors can take to teach what the Bible has to say about celibacy and marriage, help teens and young adults discern God's call for their life, support gay Christians as they step into celibacy or a mixed-orientation marriage, and continue to celebrate their callings. Full webinar and resources available at <https://covchurch.org/embrace/webinar-15/>

Key takeaways and timestamps from the webinar:

(2:50-4:49): Pieter tells his story of starting [EQUIP](https://equip.org) to help churches become places where LGBT+ Christians (like himself) could belong and thrive according to a traditional sexual ethic.

(5:00-10:22): Why don't we see gay people thriving within the church that holds a traditional sexual ethic? Most churches...

1. Inconsistently apply the Bible's wisdom about sexual stewardship.
1. Avoid talking about sexuality clearly.
1. Enable gay teens to process alone.
1. Outsource care of gay people to counselors.



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1. Provide little support for celibate people or mixed-orientation marriages.

(10:23-15:00): Pieter's vision for churches becoming places where gay people thrive...

1. Everyone is thinking theologically about their sexuality.
1. Christians talk publicly about the challenges LGBT+ people face.
1. Every kid knows God loves gay people.
1. Pastors and leaders know how to minister to LGBT+ people.
1. LGBT+ people could thrive in vocational singleness or Christian marriage with reasonable effort.

(15:00-38:50): Practical steps churches can take to support people thriving in a lifetime calling to singleness for the sake of the kingdom.

1. **(15:00-28:09): Teach** temporary singleness and lifetime vocational singleness across the lifespan. Share the rich theology of vocational singleness in Scripture (Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7).
 - a. Teach a lifetime vocation of singleness is a calling. God calls us to either a vocation of marriage or singleness. God has preferences and wants to communicate that preference to us. God intended for vocational singleness to be committed and permanent. This is a call to give up romance, dating, marriage, sex, and children. It is still a call to intimacy in the context of committed family.
 - a. Teach a vocation of lifetime singleness is for the sake of the kingdom. Those called to lifetime singleness do kingdom work those raising children don't have the time and energy to do. Those called embody the gospel in unique ways, reflecting God's love between Christ and the Church, and live how Christians will all live in the new heavens and new earth.
1. **Model it.** To imagine a future that is good and valued, children need to see celibate people thriving and leading. Seek out single people as leaders in your church. Invite single people into your homes (meals, vacations, living together, etc.).



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1. **Celebrate it.** Find ways to mark and celebrate the commitments and milestones of celibate people. Celebrate work singleness are able to do through their vocation. Celebrate life with singles: birthdays, holidays, buying a home, etc.
1. **Discern it.** Help people grow their “spiritual muscles” for general discernment before discerning a call lifetime call to singleness or marriage. Remove any emotional or theological barriers to clear discernment. Consider what work people are called to, and past and current circumstances. Provide support as a church through mentorship.
1. **Support it.** Help celibate people stay in, join or build a family in the body of Christ. Ways to support: 1. stay with biological family, 2. join another nuclear family, 3. create families of celibate people (Pieter belongs to the [Family of Brothers Monastery](#)).

(39:00-49:05): Practical steps churches can take to support people thriving in a mixed-orientation marriage (MOM). MOMs are opposite-sex marriages where at least one spouse experiences same-sex attraction.

1. **Teach** about the possibility of MOM carefully so that the church prevents the harm that has been so common for decades. Don't pressure singleness or marriage for LGBT+ people. Teach accurately about what Christian marriage is. Teach for those discerning a call to MOM: to talk about orientation before engagement, to continue to talk about orientation in marriage, and to talk about joys and challenges of marriage with other MOM and heterosexual couples.
1. **Model it.** Kids and teens need to see couples in MOMs and see them thriving in their marriages. Give MOMs opportunities to share honestly about the beauty and brokenness in their marriages.
1. **Celebrate it.** Acknowledge the beauty that MOMs offer in grace, sacrifice, faithfulness, and hope in the gospel.
1. **Discern it.** Help gay people discern whether they are called to vocational singleness or a MOM. Ask God what His preference is.



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1. **Support it.** Cultivating thriving MOMs by supporting them well, including: encouraging deep friendships, eradicating the idolization of sex and marriage, and providing therapy and expertise when needed.

Selected resources mentioned:

[Pieter Valk's Embrace slides](#)

[EQUIPyourcommunity.org](#)

[Family of Brothers Monastery in Nashville, TN](#)