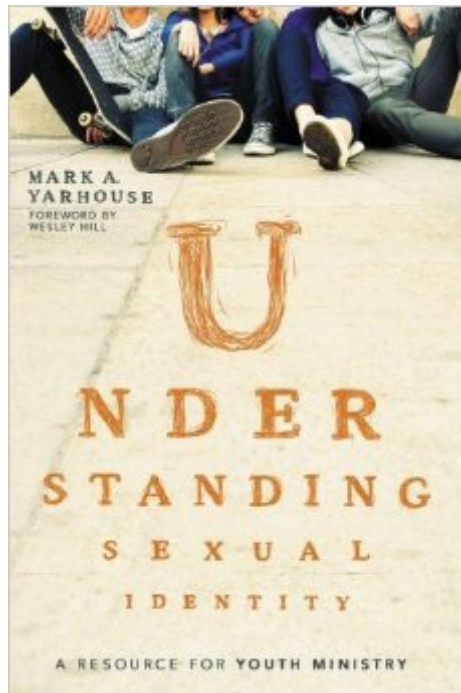


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# Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource For Youth Ministry



## Synopsis

Today's youth struggle with difficult questions of sexual identity. How can a youth worker offer wise care and counsel on such a controversial and confusing subject? Mark Yarhouse, director of the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity, equips youth ministers so they can faithfully navigate the topic of sexual identity in a way that is honest, compassionate, and accessible. Reframing the focus away from the culture wars, Yarhouse introduces readers to the developmental considerations in the formation of sexual identity—all of which occurs in the teen years. He offers practical and helpful ways to think about homosexuality along with suggestions for talking with people who experience same-sex attraction. He also helps parents and youth volunteers learn to graciously respond to children and teens who struggle with questions of sexual identity, and discusses how youth ministry can become more relevant in the lives of youth who are navigating these issues.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Today's youth face a lot of challenges when it comes to issues of sexual identity, yet for too long the Church has not known how to respond. Christians often see homosexuality as an adult issue not realizing that many gay people recognize their same-sex attractions at 12 or 13 years old, sometimes even younger. Dr. Mark Yarhouse's book is a long time coming as a resource for youth pastors on how to minister to young people who are experiencing same-sex attractions. I highly recommend this excellent resource. It is the only book of its kind addressing youth ministry needs in churches with a traditional sexual ethic. However, the book is useful for anyone thinking

through issues of sexual identity. "Understanding Sexual Identity" is divided into twelve chapters. However, the Table of Contents is not as helpful as it could be as the titles are very general, making it difficult to know which chapter to turn to about specific issues and questions. Here is a translation of what you will find: Chapter 1: "Becoming a Better Trail Guide" = INTRODUCTION. Describes the importance of beginning from a disposition of compassion and civility on the issue. Key terms are defined. Chapter 2: "Check Conditions" = Discusses the INNER CONFLICT that can exist between faith and sexuality. Specifically, questions teens have about sexual identity vs. questions they have about religious identity. Chapter 3: "Markers on the Trail" = The DEVELOPMENTAL process; how people who identify as Gay end up adopting a Gay identity. In other words, stages of identity development. Chapter 4: "Finding a Path" = Discussion around the importance of recognizing the IDENTITY SCRIPT and how that has been meaningful to people in the Gay community.

This is a phenomenal resource for Christians seeking to better understand how to love and support gay (or same sex attracted) Christians. As a gay person who holds traditional Christian values and seeks to honor the Lord through celibacy, I would have loved for those walking with me in my teenage years to support me in the gracious, compassionate manner Yarhouse describes in this book. He challenges Christians to get outside the culture war mentality in order to walk with young people as they navigate the rocky terrain of finding congruence between their faith and sexuality. The book offers tremendous insight into the unique challenges facing gay youth, and he encourages those who walk with them to assume a posture of compassion, a resolve to stick with them no matter what, and a willingness to allow the young person to be in the driver's seat so they can truly own the choices they make. If you read much on this topic then you realize just how rare that is. Written in a winsome way that's accessible for readers who have little knowledge on this topic, Yarhouse shares research on sexual identity development, the meaning youth attach to emerging conflicts, and the feelings of shame many experience in the process. In the polarizing debate, where we often hear simplistic explanations about the causes of homosexual attractions or arguments on whether it can change, this book presents a balanced and realistic response that will shift the conversation in a more life-giving direction. Yarhouse offers practical advice for creating the kinds of communities that will provide youth prone toward shame and despair a place to be known and loved.

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