

The Debate Over Sexuality – Will this Split the Church?

A quote from the article below from WORLD Magazine says this:

“Sooner or later, every church and parachurch organization will have to pick a side. But the tug-of-war has already threatened to tear some of them apart”... as they expose CRU for compromising on Biblical truth.

It is my persuasion that both the [Catholic Church](#) and the [Evangelical Church](#) will see a deep split, primarily over the orthodoxy of sexuality issues. Things are moving at warp speed, and I suspect it will be will sooner rather than later. I am voting for sooner because, the deception of our [youth](#) is also moving at warp speed. I am hoping that – before we completely lose the next generations – biblical sanity will return to the *remnant*, the orthodox churches.

[If Pastors and leaders had been willing to teach on these issues](#) - even five years ago - perhaps this could have been avoided. **Now it is too late!** So-called Conservative leaders have allowed culture to instruct Christians. Now even scripture is just an “opinion – a suggested guide” to be considered – nothing more. Emotions and feelings have replaced orthodoxy.

[This article](#) below was sent to me by Dr. Christopher Yuan who has spoken for the Big Sky Worldview Forum twice. His book [Holy Sexuality and The Gospel](#) is a guiding light. Like Rosaria Butterfield in this WORLD article, he lived as a homosexual, came to know the Lord, and is now uncompromising with regard to LGBTQ+ issues.

The article examines the compromises of CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) and one of their mentors Dr. Preston Sprinkle, the founder of [Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender](#). If you follow Sprinkle for even 15 minutes, you will discover that he is slippery and never really takes a stand on anything. I read [his Embodied: Transgender Identities, The Church and What the Bible Has to Say](#). My analysis was similar to that of Glenn Stanton from Focus on the Family – it is disappointing, long on stories, and short on Bible.

Sprinkel, CRU’s champion, has many questionable beliefs. He is a CRT advocate (Critical Race Theory) and approaches homosexuality through the lens of oppression.

Preston wanders off the reservation also with respect to Hell. He defends [Annihilation](#) as a valid view of hell that teaches that Hell is not eternal fire, but you are just burned up and poof, you're done! There are also questions with Sprinkle about Polyamory – everywhere you look, he never really takes a stand.

If you take a few minutes [here](#) you will see how the leadership from Montana's biggest mega church expresses full confidence in Dr. Preston Sprinkle (at 30 minutes).

Little wonder that our GenZ's and Millennials [have lost confidence](#) in us. From Preston Sprinkle to [Andy Stanley](#), we **demonstrate no discernment and no ability or willingness to teach on these issues on Sunday morning.**

Finally, notice the CRU leadership's power threat – “submit and align or move on!”

Never the less, while I don't believe CRU actually redirected, it does document that when people and institutions speak out, they can change things - even if not completely – and help preserve the culture.

Now, I give you the WORLD Magazine article on CRU. Please read it carefully because, this is all about a Christian Worldview!

Respectfully, Dick Pence – Coordinator, Big Sky Worldview Forum

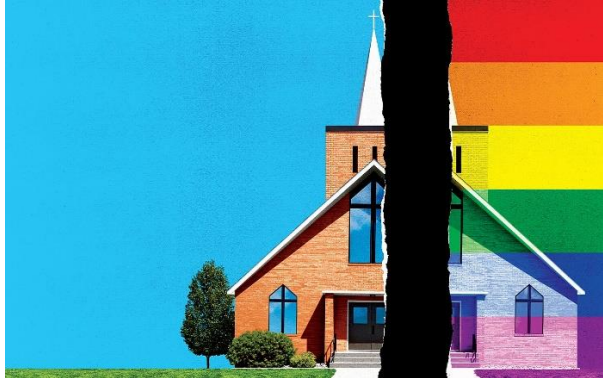
Taking sides:

A growing divide over the theology of sexual brokenness threatens to tear evangelical institutions apart

WORLD Magazine: Posted Feb. 22, 2024 [Emphasis Added]

<https://wng.org/articles/taking-sides-1708229211>

Illustration by Krieg Barrie



LATE LAST YEAR, Uriah Mundell sat outside a noisy coffee shop, across from his boss, and agonized over a wrenching prospect: His decades long tenure with one of the nation’s leading evangelical ministries might be coming to a premature end.

Months earlier, Uriah had completed a **new sexuality training program mandated by his employer, Cru**. He had voiced objections to his boss and other leaders, but still couldn’t shake his concerns. Now, his boss suggested he was **quibbling over semantics**. **He told Uriah if he couldn’t let it go, he might need to look for a new job.**

Uriah left the meeting with a heavy feeling of sadness. “It’s been a tense hour and a half,” he texted his wife before heading home in the rain. As he drove, he wondered whether **he was the only one concerned** that the organization formerly known as Campus Crusade for Christ had drifted from Biblical teachings on sexuality and gender. He soon learned he wasn’t.

The next day, author **Rosaria Butterfield stood before roughly 10,000** Liberty University students to give a convocation address. Butterfield is a former lesbian feminist and tenured English professor who is now a pastor’s wife and mother. After sharing her testimony, she called out organizations and leaders she believes are **compromising** on issues related to sexuality and gender: **Revoice; Preston Sprinkle’s Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender; ... and Cru**. The audience let out an audible gasp.

Butterfield paused to let her assertion sink in. She insisted subtle lies have crept into the Church and other Christian institutions—lies that **“discourage repentance and encourage the pride of victimhood.”** Among what she **labels false teaching: Same-sex attraction is a sinless temptation unless you act on it; it’s acceptable for Christians to call themselves gay as long as they are celibate; people with**

same-sex attraction **rarely, if ever, change**; and **sex and gender are different**, so God doesn't mind if **men live as women and vice versa**.

Despite the immediate furor, Cru has not responded to Butterfield's allegations, even as it has taken steps behind the scenes to clarify its position and tweak its training materials in response. Far from being mollified, Butterfield argues those changes **mask a deeper theological problem** that remains unaddressed.

Cru's attempt to fix its messaging sheds light on the ways evangelical ministries and leaders are being challenged to **clarify their positions** on myriad hot-button issues surrounding sexuality and gender. On one side are those who believe Christians can embrace some, if not all, cultural sexual norms. On the other: those who believe the **Bible leaves no wiggle room** when it comes to creation's male-female dichotomy, that same-sex attraction has its roots in the sinful flesh, and that **through repentance, all sexual brokenness** can be overcome in the Savior.

Sooner or later, every church and parachurch organization will have to pick a side. But the tug-of-war has already threatened to tear some of them apart.



Marissa and Uriah Mundell **Photo by Billy Calzada/Genesis**

WHILE THE AUDIENCE at Liberty University sounded shocked to hear Cru linked with organizations that veer even slightly from Biblical orthodoxy, **the debate** over how to address issues of sexuality and gender has been running **behind the scenes for several years**.

Uriah Mundell and his wife Marissa, who are both 42, have served in various roles at Cru for the **last 23 years**. The couple's relationship began during Cru events in college. Uriah proposed during a Cru mission trip in East Asia. The couple continued as missionaries with Cru in multiple foreign countries, and they adopted two of their five children from regions where they served. But as they

watched the organization attempt to respond to the culture’s increasingly un-Biblical ideas about sexuality and gender, the Mundell’s felt caught in a widening rift.

They learned about Butterfield’s comments from another staff member. The next day, after Marissa returned home from picking the kids up from school, the couple knelt beside their bed and propped her phone up against a pile of laundry. With the bedroom door closed, they listened to Butterfield’s address.

Until that moment, Uriah, who works with a small team in Austin, Texas, had wondered if his and Marissa’s concerns were overblown. Cru leaders had certainly downplayed them. When he told his supervisor he couldn’t support “**pronoun hospitality**”—using a person’s preferred pronouns as a presumed expression of Christian compassion—the supervisor said Uriah wasn’t being **winsome**.

For Marissa, who is also on staff at Cru, Butterfield’s remarks brought sadness and relief. Sadness because the statements came as no surprise. Relief because **Butterfield’s theological objections mirrored her own**.

When the video ended, Marissa turned to her husband, her mind filled with alarm at the potential fallout. The Mundell’s care deeply about Cru. Plus, they rely entirely on donor support. This was their livelihood. But Marissa knew the couple’s commitment to Scriptural fidelity trumped all else.

“Well,” she said, “here we go.”

Days after Butterfield’s address, Cru sent an email to its staff linking to its media policy, “spokesperson resources,” and “communication ***best practices***.” It **reiterated the message all staffers should share if questioned about the training:** The organization holds “a traditional, historical biblical understanding of sexuality and gender.”

But Cru’s leaders didn’t address Butterfield’s accusations directly.

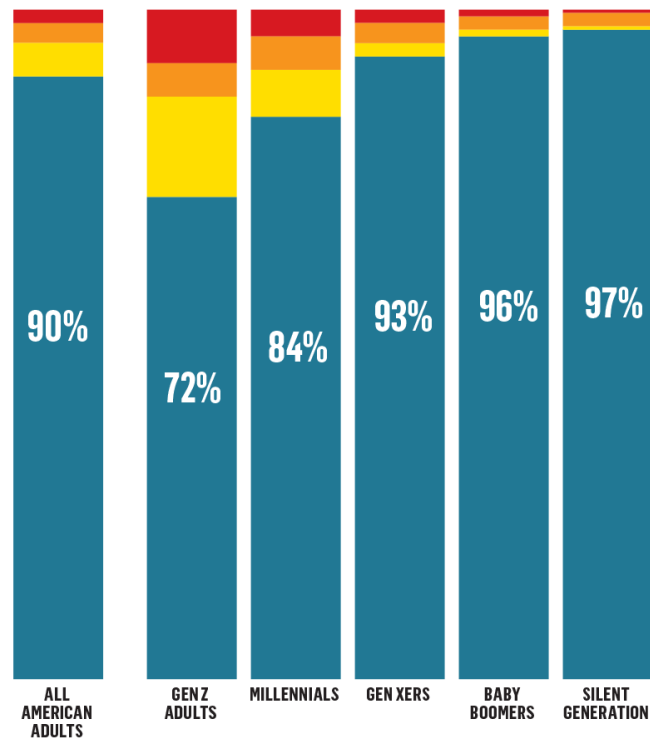
I emailed Keith Johnson, Cru’s director of theological development, to ask about the training and Butterfield’s comments. He never responded. Patrick Martin, Cru’s director of communications, told me in an email that the organization would **not participate in interviews on the topic:** “There are a number of issues

surrounding sexuality and gender that we feel are best addressed in the **context of relationships.**”

LGBTQ IDENTIFICATION

*According to a recent survey by the Public Religion Research Institute**

- Straight
- Bisexual
- Gay or lesbian
- Something else



***PRRI, Gen Z Survey, Aug. 21-Sept. 15, 2023**

NEARLY 30 PERCENT of Gen Z adults, those between 18 and 25, now say they are LGBTQ, according to a new survey by the Public Religion Research Institute. The popularity of alternative sexual identities on social media and the elevation of those labels as **the new status symbol** likely contributed to an increase in rates of identification. By comparison, just 16 percent of millennials, 7 percent of Generation X, and 4 percent of baby boomers identify as anything other than heterosexual.

This surge among young adults presents a unique challenge for organizations like Cru. Bill Bright founded the organization in 1951 at the University of California, Los Angeles, with the intent to evangelize college students. Cru maintains campus ministries in 2,300 locations and reaches 101,000 students and faculty nationwide. It has grown into an \$811 million international ministry with a variety of initiatives, including the Jesus Film Project, Athletes in Action, Family Life, and Cru Military.

But in recent years, the organization has weathered claims it's departing from its original mission. In 2021, Cru closed its race ministry, the Lenses Institute, after a staff report revealed growing internal concern over the **promotion of critical race theory**.

Around the same time, Cru started developing its **new sexuality training**, called **Compassionate and Faithful**. In a July 12 email to Uriah Mundell, Keith Johnson explained why: "The majority of **our staff do not feel equipped to navigate LGBT+** challenges." He listed bullet points with other reasons for the training. They included: "The LGBT+ community is expanding in all corners of society, directly or indirectly, touching all of our ministries," and, "**We have co-workers who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria and we want to make Cru a safe environment for them to live out their missionary calling.**"

Cru insists it wants to meet those challenges while remaining faithful to the Bible. The Compassionate and Faithful guidelines state: "As followers of Christ, we want to navigate LGBT+ questions in a way that is compassionate toward people (our posture) and faithful to Scripture (our position)." The guidelines, which I reviewed, say the training addresses questions such as, "What does it mean to follow Christ faithfully **if I experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria?**" and, "Is it possible to warmly invite people in the LGBT+ community to consider Christ, while remaining faithful to the teaching of Scripture on sexuality?"

The training's seven modules lean **heavily on stories**. In one, an anonymous Cru intern described breaking off a same-sex relationship as she took her obedience to God more seriously. The intern emphasized the need to create "a space of vulnerability and humility."

"Equating same-sex attraction to sin and speaking judgmentally against those in the LGBT+ community doesn't prove conducive to sharing the gospel with non-believers, especially those who are in same-sex relationships," she said.

Similar sentiments reverberate through the portions of **Cru's training** I reviewed. It includes **13 videos from Preston Sprinkle**, one of the leaders Butterfield singled out in her address. Sprinkle has written several books on LGBTQ issues, hosts a podcast called *Theology in the Raw*, and runs the **Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender**. The videos in Cru's training are part of the center's Digital Leaders Forum series. During a Nov. 27 episode of his podcast, **Sprinkle said numerous Christian**

groups, including InterVarsity and Liberty University, use his videos. InterVarsity confirmed Sprinkle’s claim, but Liberty did not respond to my request for comment.

The Mundell’s and other **former staff** members I spoke with questioned **Cru’s heavy reliance on Sprinkle** to instruct its staff on the sensitive topics surrounding same-sex attraction and gender confusion.

John Kidd is a youth ministries pastor at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg, Va. He served on staff at Cru for 15 years, including in a national leadership role, before pursuing ordination in the Presbyterian Church in America. His wife, Kelly Kidd, resigned from Cru in May 2023 after 22 years on staff. **She left over theological objections to Cru’s sexuality training.**

“Every quote and resource from Sprinkle is a step in the wrong direction,” Kidd told Johnson in an email he shared with me. It is one of several in which he asked Johnson to shelve Cru’s new training.

Kidd said he has talked with several current staff members who expressed similar concern but fear facing organizational **backlash if they speak out.**

“Sooner or later, every church and parachurch organization will have to pick a side.”

SPRINKLE HAS GAINED widespread popularity, but also critics, for the way he addresses LGBTQ issues in the Church—oftentimes chiding Christians. He is part of a burgeoning subset within evangelicalism called **Side B.**

Loosely defined, Side B adherents hold to the historic, Biblical ethic of sexual activity as reserved for one man and one woman within the bounds of marriage. **But they support professing Christians using LGBTQ labels such as “gay Christian.”** Many, including Sprinkle, advocate for **“pronoun hospitality.”** Some within Side B support taking vows of celibacy or **allowing same-sex attracted Christians to live together**, in some cases **having romantic relationships without sex**, in what sometimes is called a **“celibate partnership.”** Individuals who say they are same-sex attracted but marry the opposite sex refer to their union as a “mixed-orientation marriage.”

In one Q&A session from his Digital Leaders Forum videos, **Sprinkle** said he thinks someone **can still be a Christian even if he or she holds to an affirming view of same-sex marriage**. “I would say being same-sex attracted, while being a part of one’s fallen nature, is not a morally culpable sin that one needs to repent for,” he added during the Nov. 27 podcast.

After Butterfield’s comments at Liberty, Sprinkle disputed her claims, arguing she’d misrepresented his position. He said he attempted to have a private conversation with her but was rebuffed by her husband, Kent Butterfield, and other church leaders. They noted, “There is a difference in understanding of the gospel and therefore ... no basis for discussion.”

In recent years, the debate within evangelicalism over whether to encourage repentance for involuntary same-sex desire has intensified. But it traces back to the difference between Roman Catholic and Reformed Protestant doctrines on indwelling sin. Critics of Side B say it matters immensely. “By withholding from an entire generation, the opportunity **to repent and mortify a sin while it is still small**, we have set them up to be **clobbered by their sin when it is large**,” Butterfield told me.

Denny Burk, an author and professor of Biblical studies at Boyce College, agrees. “**The circumstances are going to dictate that you can’t not have a position** when a kid comes to you and says, ‘I feel same-sex attraction,’” he said. “You’re either going to tell him that his same-sex attraction is an expression of the sinful nature that by God’s grace can be mortified. Or you are going to tell him that he doesn’t need to be concerned about same-sex attraction or feel guilt over it so long as it’s not acted upon.”

Those are two vastly different paths, he argues.

Side B emerged in the early 2010s as an alternative to Side A, those who argue the Bible supports monogamous same-sex marriage. Sprinkle and his center, along with the Revoice conference, have helped proliferate Side B, especially in nondenominational churches. Cru’s training points its staff to books and papers by Sprinkle and other Side B advocates, including eight pastoral papers from Sprinkle’s center.

Cru allows leeway for staffers to use the label “gay Christian.” **The Compassionate and Faithful curriculum presents two opposing viewpoints on the issue.** In one paper, Rachel Gilson, a former lesbian who is now married to a man and serves as director of theological development for Cru Northeast, explains why she chooses to use the term “same-sex attracted” to describe her “internal pulls.” In another, Greg Coles, an author and senior research fellow at Sprinkle’s organization, describes why he favors the label “gay” to describe his experience, even as he has chosen celibacy.

In one video from Cru’s training, titled “The Importance of Language,” **Sprinkle argues Christians shouldn’t divide over the issue of “gay Christianity.”** “It’s strange enough, it’s radical enough that we live in the 21st century and we believe that marriage is between a man and a woman, that we believe same-sex sexual relationships are sin,” he said. “Let’s unite over that. Let’s not divide over the finer points of language within that perspective. If somebody wants to identify as gay and that’s a term that’s helpful for them and it makes sense of their experience, then I’m OK with that.”

But critics, including Burk and Butterfield, argue the **divide goes beyond semantics.** They say it is rooted in a false understanding of **Biblical personhood** as outlined in Scripture.

By withholding from an entire generation, the opportunity to repent and mortify a sin while it is still small, we have set them up to be clobbered by their sin when it is large.

IN THE MONTHS since Butterfield’s address, Cru has updated its training and other materials, removing some content and adding new language. A new tab on its website called “Sexuality and Gender” spells out its position. In some cases, the statements directly conflict with Sprinkle’s position.

For example, an internal document previously stated, “Deciding to use someone’s preferred name and pronouns is an issue of conscience ... [it] can be a profound way to demonstrate that you recognize them and desire to show them respect.” Now, the document lists four positions on preferred pronouns. **It warns that using someone’s preferred pronouns “may unintentionally communicate a position that Cru does not hold (and Scripture does not teach).”**

Cru's new "Sexuality and Gender" document states, "We embrace the goodness of the sexual difference God created by living distinctly as male and female, which includes using pronouns that align with our biological sex." It says same-sex attraction "is contrary to God's design for human sexuality. It represents a disordering of sexual desire in our fallen condition, which is neither morally neutral nor good."

In an email to me, Butterfield noted that **Cru stops short of calling same-sex attraction sin.** But she acknowledges the organization is quietly changing its "tone and tune." Indeed, some staff members I emailed or talked with now feel assured the organization's stance on sexuality is rooted in Scripture.

Butterfield remains skeptical. "It boils down to whether you believe a cleaned-up Side B curriculum is better than a more transparent one," she said.

Indeed, Cru is not the first ministry to wrestle with this issue, and it won't be the last. "Evangelicals and in particular institutions are sorting themselves out," Burk said. **"Every Christian institution will eventually land on one side or the other ... they won't be able to stay neutral. It's going to march through every institution."**

On a recent Monday morning, I spoke with the Mundell's over Zoom. They sat at their kitchen table, their homeschooled kids occasionally slipping into the kitchen behind them. Marissa's hair was pulled back in a loose bun. She wrapped a fluffy white blanket around her legs. I asked why they chose to share their concerns, risking a rift with an organization that has been like a family to them. Marissa immediately teared up.

"If the gospel and Jesus are not powerful enough to redeem people to complete wholeness and freedom, then we sell a cheapened gospel to this population," she said. "It matters because our kids are watching ... and **because this next generation is being bombarded with false teaching and lies surrounding gender and sexuality."**

[Mary Jackson](#)

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