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Dear Editor,

Thank you for publishing David P. Gushee's compassionate and challenging reflections on his encounter with the suffering homosexuals he met in Mitchell Gold's "Crisis: 40 Stories Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing Up Gay in America." His confession of "appalling Christian moral failure" to express "the love and mercy that Jesus exemplified" and his heartfelt conviction that we Christians need to request forgiveness "from God and from gays and lesbians" is certainly to be welcomed and affirmed.

But my reading the stories in "Crisis" convinced and convicted me of something more. We have not only been unkind and often hateful toward homosexuals. We have also too often failed to understand both homosexuality and the Bible. The core problem is not that there is "a gap between what traditionalist church leaders may intend to say... and what those listening to them actually hear" that can be corrected by being "extraordinarily careful about how we express ourselves."

The greater problem is that we are blind to the reality of God-given yearnings for life-giving love and affection between same-sex couples and that we fail to see that biblical texts that rightly reject lustful, exploitive same-sex behavior say nothing concerning homosexuality as we understand it today nor concerning those who live in blessed covenants of love and faithfulness. There is simply no way to say with kindness and love: "You are an abomination!"

Lowell O Erdahl, Bishop Emeritus  
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