



What do you wish your pastor understood about your same-sex attraction?

The fact that I experience same-sex attraction does NOT mean

1. that I identify as gay or that I'm turning away from my faith.
2. that I'm necessarily sinning any more than a heterosexual man is
3. that I'm necessarily any more "broken" than anyone else.
4. that I chose to have these feelings
5. that I'm attracted to minors any more than heterosexual men are
6. that I can't control my actions or that I'm a threat to anyone.
7. that hiding and suppressing my feelings will help.
8. that marrying a woman will change my sexual attractions and "solve" this
9. that I'm only attracted to men; I may experience some attraction to women also.
10. that I'm attracted to all men any more than a heterosexual man is attracted to all women.
11. that having SSA is the same as having a sex addiction. A person can have one without the other.
12. that I can change my feelings by willpower, or if I just pray hard enough, or am righteous enough.
13. that I experience gender confusion (gender dysphoria). They are not the same thing!

The fact that I experience same-sex attraction probably DOES mean

1. that I have (or have had) self-esteem issues related to this.
2. that I have (or have had) difficulties feeling God's love and acceptance.
3. that I may have traumatic experiences in my background or a history of emotional detachment or, conversely, emotional enmeshment.

My associate pastor takes the time to get to know me. He's asked a lot of questions (some very uncomfortable). He loves me and hugs me every time we see one another. What do I want pastors to know? That I want to talk more and that I love it when he's vulnerable with me; it fosters trust and brotherhood. I'm learning to take the initiative and tell men what I need or want. For whatever reason, they haven't learned to read my mind and heart yet. Go figure.

- Dan

I am usually not motivated to bother anybody who does not show he's genuinely willing to help.

- Michal

I don't need to be fixed. There are resources available. Essentially it doesn't matter where this came from or how it originated. That not all same-sex attracted men are predators. Denying it won't help. Shame is a huge part of the issue. So is self-deprecation.

- Justin

Not gossiping and sharing my private stuff in his "prayer requests." It would really be appreciated to be seen as a normal Christian. And if I fall, I'll get up like any other church member. I don't need a pastor's labels.

- Nathan

His prayers with me and for me and by my side have given me the hope Christ would offer if he were here in person .

- Bill

I have already memorized the scriptures of condemnation of homosexuality and I have weaponized them against myself, so quoting those to me only serves to dig my pit deeper and wider. The scriptures that ultimately helped and saved me focused on God's love for me, my infinite worth, and the hope Christ brings.

- Tyler



What do you wish your pastor understood about your same-sex attraction?

The fact that I experience same-sex attraction probably DOES mean *(CONTINUED)*

4. that I'm hungry for healthy, affirming, platonic connections with men that are close and meaningful. I need brothers, not lovers!
5. that I may have trust issues and likely some trauma related to men and how I have felt treated by males, peers, and father figures throughout my life.
6. that I may have trust issues with God and the church
7. that I have (or have had) a hard time feeling "man enough" or "one of the guys" throughout my life (which is not all the same as questioning my gender)!
8. that I may be more emotionally sensitive than the typical man and probably more easily hurt, and I'm aware of that. And I can't just "get over" my sensitivity on demand, either.
9. that I find prayer and scripture reading helpful but not nearly enough to address my issues.
10. that I'm unsure about my future and how to create the best life possible, under these circumstances (especially how to balance my drive for companionship with my longing to please God).
11. that I want support from you, from mentors, and certain safe, compassionate members of the church community.
12. that confidentiality is very important to me.
13. that I realize I know a lot more about SSA than you do, but that's not why I'm coming to you
14. that I'm coming to you for a compassionate ear, encouragement, hope, faith, and spiritual direction.
15. that I crave affirmation for doing what I can to handle this as God would have me to, and not shame for having to deal with it in the first place.
16. that I likely crave healthy, genuine, enthusiastic, platonic hugs.

There are support materials. (I was once told to just keep struggling with it.) SSA and living a gay lifestyle are two different things. A pastor once told me to *keep it under my hat*. He said he was just trying to protect me, that people would not understand. I told him that was the problem.

- *Larry*

One of the best ways to grow or work for me is to build healthy relationship towards other men. And hetero men don't necessarily know how such a friendship looks either. Having SSA is not a sin. Support for SSA can cut across multiple faiths. It doesn't need to be denomination-specific.

- *Luke*

I gave up trying to talk to my pastor. I just needed him to listen without him telling me what I'm doing wrong, especially when he isn't willing to try to understand or to be educated about SSA. I don't need him as a therapist. I chose to talk to him about some resentments that I had/have towards the church, and my struggles with it, and about not being sure it was for me anymore. I mostly got a lot of shame from him. And very little effort to understand or to be empathetic. I don't need that. I wish he understood how to just listen and how to be empathetic. I'd be more willing to listen to his counsel if he could do just those things.

- *Keith*

My pastor gets that men are designed to need each other and be drawn to each other. Jesus modeled this! This is something to be embraced and celebrated. It's not sexual. His validation has been very healing... because I have experienced many wounds in the past from church leadership.

- *Robert*

I have walked this journey. I have overcome so much. I just wish my faith leaders would use me as a resource.

- *Blake*

It's okay to say you don't know anything about SSA. I'd rather you say that instead of giving advice about something you don't understand.

- *Ezekiel*