

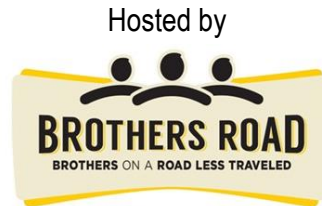
Faith, Brotherhood & Same-Sex Needs

A conversation with [Tim Timmerman](#)

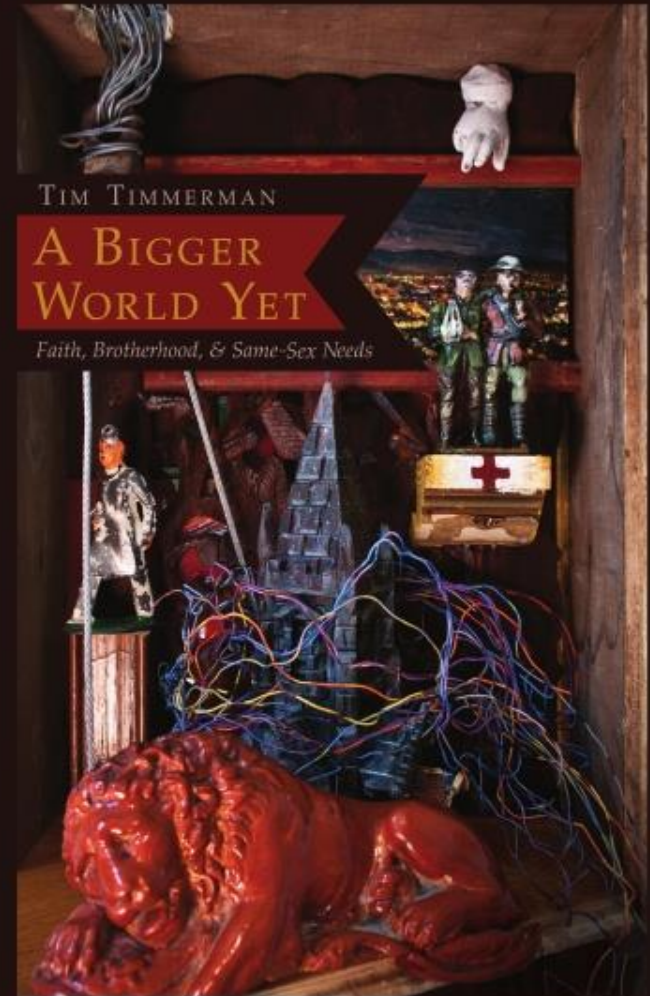
Author, *A Bigger World Yet*

and [Rich Wylor](#), Founder/Director of Brothers Road

Webinar May 16, 2020

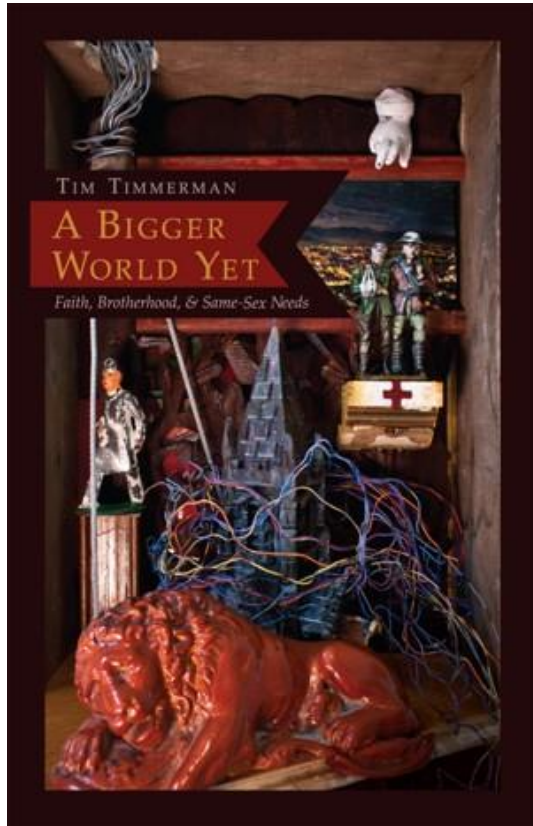


www.brothersroad.org



About Tim Timmerman

Artist, Author, Disciple, Humorist, Brother, Friend



Tim is the author of a daring and heartfelt [book](#) about his and other men's struggles that come from sexualizing their own gender — and about the healing balm of radically vulnerable friendships and unconditional love.

Tim describes his book as being about:

- an ache and a longing in our culture for friendship and brotherhood
- hungers of the heart
- boys who needed connections to loving men and friends growing up, but instead received abuse and absence.

This book is one man's spiritual odyssey.

About Tim Timmerman

Artist, Author, Disciple, Humorist, Brother, Friend

Tim challenges the Christian church in particular to go far beyond the relative ease of affirming same-sex sexuality, on the one hand, or condemning and preaching against it, on the other.

He instead invites the church to "get their hands dirty" by walking with men and women through the emotional messiness of healing lifelong same-sex wounds through friendship, acceptance and community.

Tim is an art professor at a Christian university in the Pacific Northwest. He is a "JiM brother" who has led the Journey Into Manhood and Journey Beyond experiential-healing programs for Brothers Road a dozen times.



About Brothers Road

(Webinar Host)

Brothers on a Road Less Traveled (“Brothers Road”) is a non-profit, interfaith, peer-support fellowship made up primarily of men from homosexual or bisexual backgrounds who — for our own, deeply personal reasons — typically do not embrace a gay identity or choose to live a gay life. Instead, we prefer to explore and address underlying issues that may be at the root of some of our inner conflicts around sexuality, faith, masculinity, and self-esteem.

The “road less traveled” that we choose for ourselves is a journey of self-discovery, authenticity, personal empowerment, and affirmation.



In This Webinar

My Story: A Good Christian Boy—Attracted to Guys

Discovery One: Be Honest, Be Seen

Discovery Two: Move Out of Victim

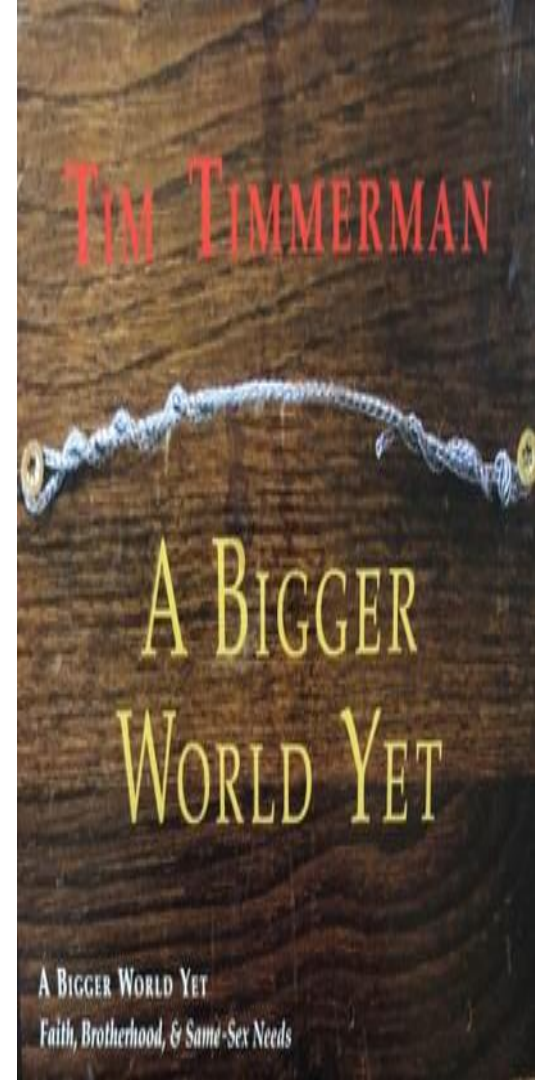
Discovery Three: The Gift of Being Needy

Discovery Four: The Power of NOW

Discovery Five: Live in the Land of IS

A Call to The Church: Move Past Theology to Ministry

A Final Thought: God Delights in YOU!



My Story: A Good Christian Boy—Attracted to Guys



I grew up in a conservative Christian home. My father was both absent and abusive.

To me, men were a mystery or terrifying. My deepest needs were for guys, but I didn't quite know what to do with that. I was afraid of losing my relationship with Christ. The idea of embracing a gay identity or lifestyle was terrifying. In fact, my own journey hasn't been about embracing a gay identity. That's never been what I wanted.

But life was just not working for me. I tried to find help. I read [Joe Nicolosi's](#) book and went to him for counseling.

My Story: Learning to Trust Scary Men



Dr. Nicolosi referred me to a men's weekend called New Warriors to learn to trust men. It was a terrifying group of men: Construction workers and recovering alcoholics and non-believers and everything that scared me about men.

I can tell you I've never been in a group of men who hugged so much and cussed so much. I'd never been in such an *authentic* group of men. It was an amazing community.

I started on a journey of deep personal work around men, masculinity, faith, forgiveness, self-acceptance, and friendship.

My Story: Challenging Christian Men to Authenticity



Later, I helped start a Christian men's group that borrowed some of the principles from New Warriors, things like "shadow work" and psychodrama.

Typically, Christians are so up in their heads. The men in the group weren't same-sex attracted, but they were struggling with other things. We found common ground in being honest and transparent.

I found that when I took the risk first by saying, "I'm struggling with X," they would come back to me and say, "Gosh, Tim, you're safe to share my story with." They were authentic and vulnerable because I was authentic and vulnerable first.

My Story: Finding Unity in Diversity



Brothers Road invited me to join in with your community and lead some of your workshops. Wow, what a loving group of brothers walking a difficult road together.

One of the amazing gifts of Brothers Road is the spiritual diversity. I remember, as a Quaker, praying there with a Jew and a Latter-day Saint and an Eastern Orthodox Christian, men with very different beliefs but all trusting God with our most challenging issues. Powerful.

This is a great strength of Brothers Road: the diversity of men and women following God out of their own traditions, but walking together, supporting each other.

My Story: Touch, Friendships, Forgiveness



“I even needed to forgive my church for not being there for me to the degree I found in a secular group of guys out of AA and out of rehab.”

As I explored my personal issues further, I started doing research on physical touch, cutaneous (skin) contact, the importance of being physically held, like what happens to babies when they are not touched, as well as adults.

I also did research on historic friendships, and what they have looked like over time.

A big part of my work—and for people of faith generally—is forgiveness. There were major things I needed to forgive my dad and others for. And even the church, and letting those things go.

Men's Issues, Not Gay Issues

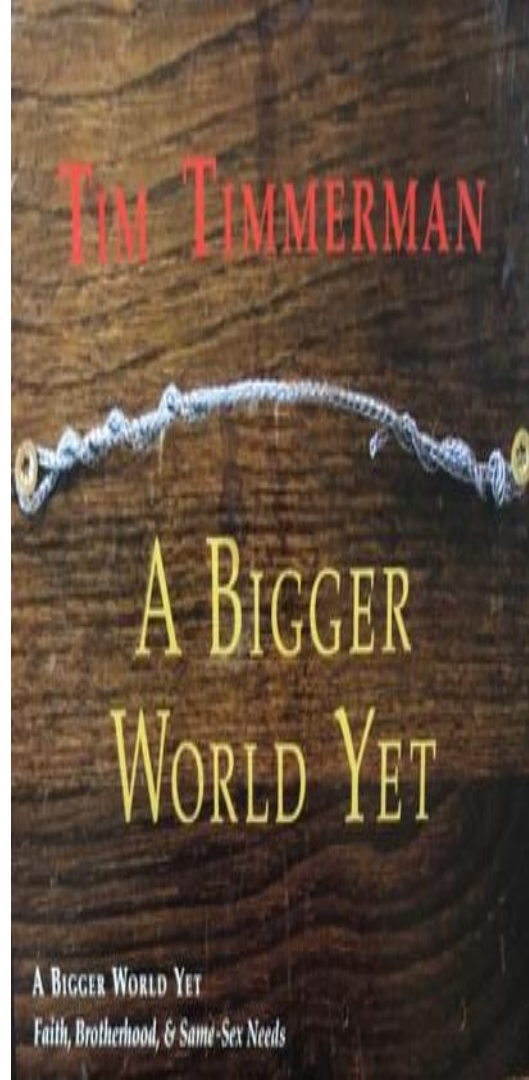


All of these experiences drove me to write the book, *A Bigger World Yet*.

One of my editors told me, *“Tim, these are not SSA issues. These are men’s issues. This is not about being gay, this is about being a man. I need to think you need to reframe the book—and your own thinking.”*

So my book became not just about men who sexualize their same-sex bonding needs, but about any man who longs for authentic friendship and brotherhood—or who is willing to be there for those who do.

Discovery One:
Be Honest, Be Seen



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, page 76)

“After surrendering my hand to God he offered me simply one thing back: ‘Be honest.’

“Be honest, Tim, and let others in on what you are experiencing. You have never been honest.’

“Many people tell you that they love you, but you don’t believe them because you have never let them see all of you. It is time to be seen.”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“At my men’s Bible study, we would always spend some time praying for one another.

“One night, I decided to go for broke. I confessed that I had rented a soft porn video the night before. Only I wasn’t looking at the women.

“The guys in the group looked at me a little dazed. When one asked sincerely, ‘How can we help?’

“I asked if I could call late at night if I found myself struggling.”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“He asked, ‘How late?’ I said, ‘Likely after eleven or so. That’s when this stuff gets kicked up, in the dead of the night.’

“He replied, ‘Man, that’s a little too late.’ No one else volunteered his time

“Feeling rejected, I left that night thinking, I’m going to go home and rent another video.

“I longed for a connection with other men, and I couldn’t get it in that group. The vacuous fantasy of a guy on a video had more appeal.”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“Later that week, I was meeting with my *non-Christian* men’s group, my scary men’s group.

“The exercise was to finish this statement: ‘*The last thing in the world I want you to know about me is...*’

“I took the risk again. I shared my episode with the video and the shame I had that I was watching the men on the video, not the women.

“Dee, one of the facilitators, looked around the circle of 12 guys and said, ‘How many of you have ever watched a pornographic movie?’ All the men’s hands shot up.”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“He continued, ‘How many of you have ever watched the guy in the film?’

“Most of the men’s hands shot up. These were married men, men who I would say never struggled with their sexual identity.

“Dee continued, ‘You’re not alone, Tim. We all struggle with these things.’

“It was amazing. A peace settled into my chest and I knew I wasn’t alone. Dee approached me with a grin tinged with concern and wrapped his arms around me.”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“Dee whispered, ‘It’s okay to struggle with your sexuality, Tim. It’s okay to be confused about what you want.’

“I began to sob onto his shoulder. He didn’t let go of his embrace. ‘It’s okay to be a sexual man.’”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“No one had ever before been Jesus to me in the tenderest area of my inner world, my sexuality.”

“I left the group that evening having absolutely no desire to sexualize men. I had absolutely no inkling to rent a pornographic movie, and I knew why:

“I felt loved. I had received what I needed at my core!”



Be Honest, Be Seen

(A Bigger World Yet, pages 69-72)

“I felt seen and loved by this group of men who were more Christlike in their brokenness, in their sincerity, than the majority of Christian men I knew.”



Honesty Is Risk

It Doesn't Always Go As Planned

Of course, it doesn't always go so well.

My friend Titus told me he had a pastor who had dealt drugs in a former life. He would bring that up sometimes in his sermons, and people would applaud his turnaround. What a testimony of God's power!



Honesty Is Risk

It Doesn't Always Go As Planned

I said to Titus, “What if your pastor said he had been gay before he was a pastor? Do you think it would be received the same way?”

Titus thought a moment and said, “Tim, some sins are worse than others.”



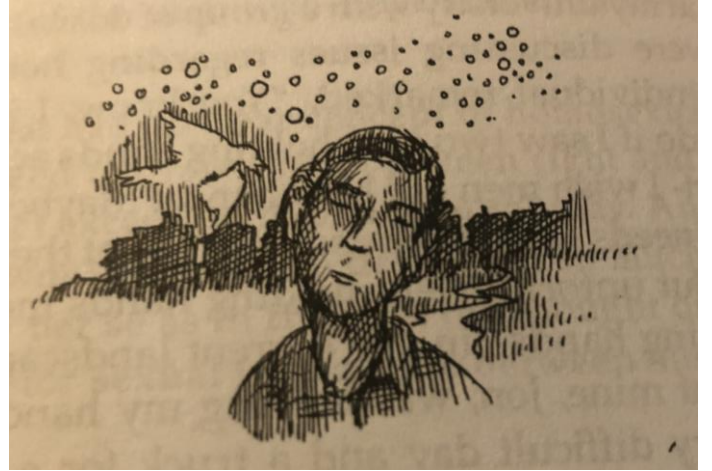
Honesty Is Risk

It Doesn't Always Go As Planned

All my alarms went off. Alert! Not safe!

Being gay was worse than dealing drugs?

I wasn't even acting on my same-sex attractions, but I knew now that it wasn't safe to talk to Titus about this.



Honesty Is Risk

It Doesn't Always Go As Planned

Some time later I came back to Titus and told him I had been avoiding him and thinking ill of him. He had no idea. I told him the story.

He started crying, “Tim, I am so sorry.”

Then he shared his own sexual struggles, which had nothing to do with homosexuality. He had been coming from a place of trying to understand the mystery of his own sexuality and what's right and wrong.

That day, we connected deeply around our stories and struggles.



Be Honest, Be Seen

It became easier over time.

I met my friend Rick 17 years ago at the Christian university where we both worked.

The second time we got together for coffee, I said, “Rick, I need you to know I’m attracted to men and I don’t know what to do with that. I just want you to know.”

Rick later said, “I’ve never had a conversation like that with a new friend I’d just met. I’m with you Tim, I’m not going anywhere. But why did you do that?”



Be Honest, Be Seen

I told him, “I don’t want to waste me time in relationships where I’m constantly worried, *How will this person judge me? How will they categorize me because of my sexual attractions?*”

“Life’s too short. I just want brothers and sisters and friends who know me and want to walk with me. So let’s get this over with. If this is going to be a make-or-break thing, I just want to know that now so I can move on.”



Be Honest, Be Seen

Honesty is a gift to myself and others. I can let go of the exhausting work of presenting myself as something other than who I really am and of caring about what others think.



Be Honest, Be Seen



Are you saying everyone in your life needs to know about your SSA?

- You have to figure that out for yourself. It's your story to tell or not to tell. Also, if you're married, your wife needs to be a part of that decision, because your story is her story too.
- For me it was letting go of how I wanted people to perceive me. I decided I needed to be transparent with my university community where I teach, in order to be open to my students so they would know I was someone safe for them to talk to. I had a sense of calling about it, to be a light to others. Not everyone is going to feel that.

The first time I spoke in chapel, with 1,000 people there, I said to myself, "Tim, how you want to be perceived is going out the window. Let it go. It's time to just be you."

Be Honest, Be Seen



Continued: Are you saying everyone in your life needs to know about your SSA?

- It's also okay to have friends who don't know your deepest secrets. To them, you're just one of the guys. They're just golfing buddies or whatever.
- And some people are just not safe to tell. They might not treat your story with the respect and, frankly, sacredness it deserves.
- Also a big factor was that my employer, a Christian university, was behind me and fully supported me. There may not be a lot of employers like that out there today. That can be a big consideration.

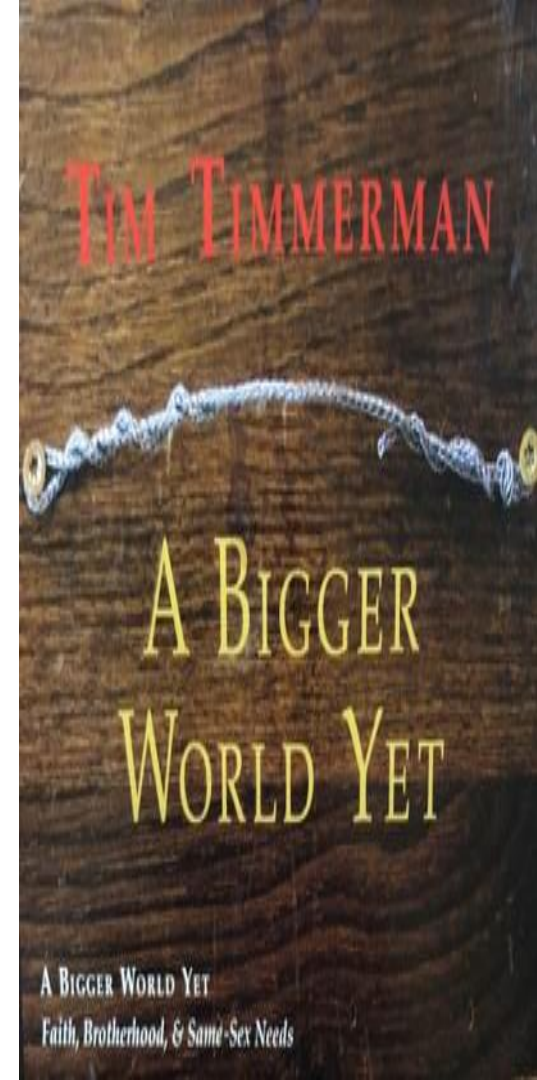
Be Honest, Be Seen



Continued: Are you saying everyone in your life needs to know about your SSA?

- The gift to myself in being honest is that, 10 years ago I would have cared a lot what people were saying about me. Over time, having enough people know me and love me makes me care less about what others think. My friends know how I live my life. They get me. So another person's evaluation of me doesn't matter as much. It may still hurt a little sometimes but I have my team behind me, and that's what matters.

Discovery Two:
Move Out of Victim

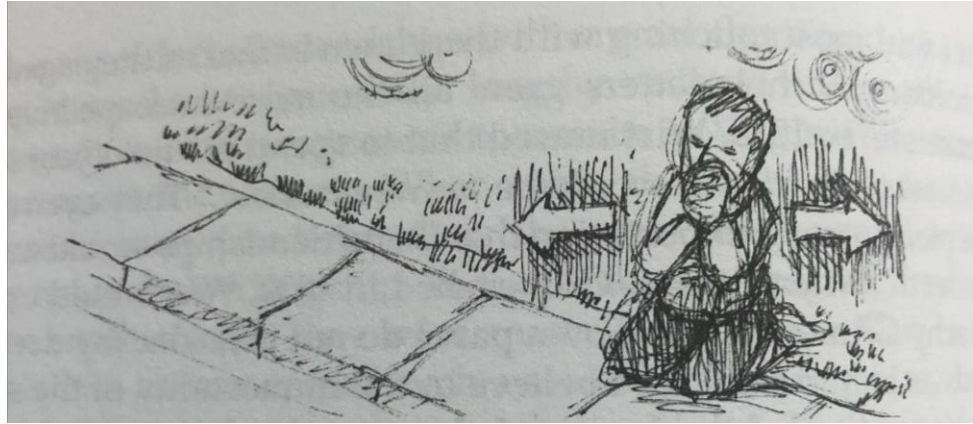


Move Out of Victim

Early in my work, I realized I had to stop living in my victim. (*“Why me? This is so hard!”*) I realized I had free choice—a lot of it. I didn’t have to live the way the gay community told me I was supposed to live just because I was attracted to men.

I started thinking, Okay, if this has to be my journey, how do I make the best of it?

Even when bad things happen to us as adults, we probably made choices that put us in that situation, and we make choices around how we get out of it.



Move Out of Victim

Like a buddy I connected with once. He had betrayed all his friends prior to me. I knew that going in. But I chose to befriend him anyway. Somehow, it was going to be different with me.

No surprise, he eventually betrayed me too.

But I realized I wasn't really a victim. By making the choices I did, I had set myself up for that outcome.



Move Out of Victim

In one workshop I lead, I invite everyone to tell a story where, as an adult, they felt like a victim. The prompt is, ***“I felt like a victim when...”*** Everyone tells their stories. Then we talk about how that feels. We all agree: It feels terrible. A real downer. Life is hard. People are mean.



Then I have them tell the same story again, but this time recognize the choices they made to put themselves in that situation and the choices they made to get out of it. The prompt is, ***“I chose to...”***

The shift is amazing. Participants even start laughing along with each other. “Yeah, I’ve done that. I’ve done crazy things to try to get my needs met.” They feel so connected.

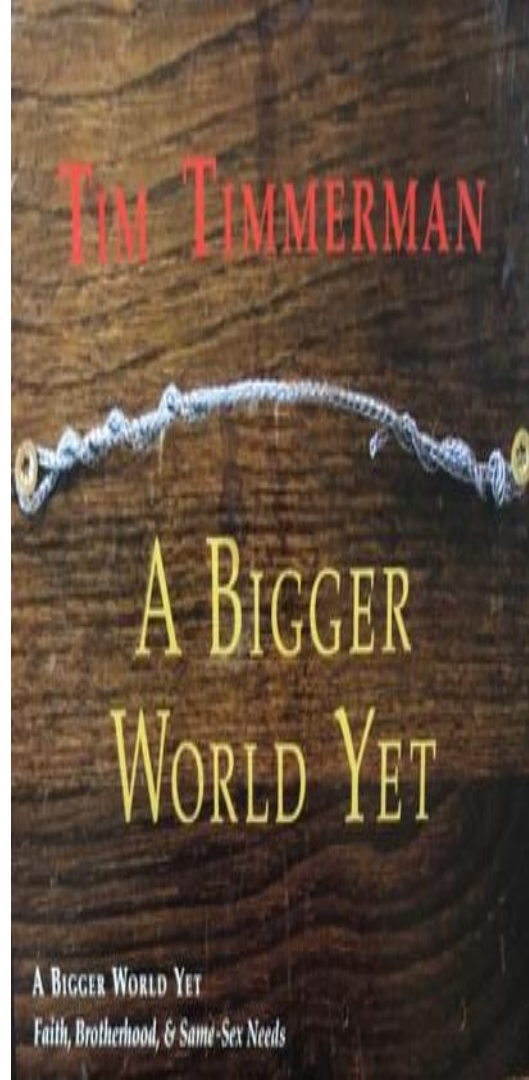
Move Out of Victim

We connect with stories of our own ability as an adult to make choices, and that sometimes includes making bad decisions and stupid choices. It connects us on this level of humility of, Yeah, I'm still trying to figure out life and relationships, too.



I love that exercise because the room changes as soon as you take the blame and victim out of it. And we just laugh along and realize we are all in this together, trying to figure it out.

Discovery Three:
The Gift of Being Needy



The Gift of Being Needy

(A Bigger World Yet, Chapter 9)

“I had few, if any, loving and affectionate experiences with my dad growing up.

“As an adult, I believed if I just worked through enough of the garbage in my past, I wouldn’t need men to the degree that I did. I felt I should be ‘done.’ I wanted to be rid of my deep need for other men.

“One day I was watching a friend with his young son. Here was a little boy who had gotten the love he needed growing up and he still desired an abundance of affection.

“I saw inside of *me* was a boy who didn’t get the love he needed as a child, and I was shaming myself for still needing it.”



The Gift of Being Needy

(A Bigger World Yet, Chapter 9)

“I felt like God was saying, ‘Of course you need physical affection and love. That is how I designed you. Be okay with it. Be okay with being needy. It’s a good thing.’”



The Gift of Being Needy

(A Bigger World Yet, Chapter 9)

“That idea was revolutionary. Perhaps it wasn’t a matter of me getting ‘fixed’ once and for all, but it was about trusting that God would continually put men in my life who would meet those needs. Maybe I never get to stop being vulnerable.

“Being needy is a gift. It is rarely easy. I have to risk asking for what I need from my friends. But God has created us to be in relationship with one another.



The Gift of Being Needy

(A Bigger World Yet, Chapter 9)

“We may fear leaning on others because we don’t want to overwhelm them. Individuals may come to mind who have abused boundaries with their needs and expectations, and we fear resembling those dysfunctional individuals.

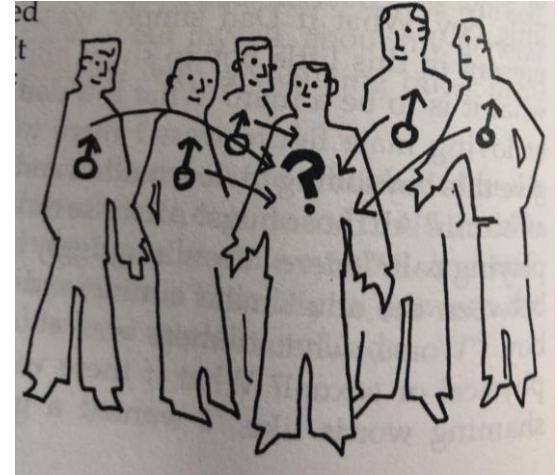
“But I believe those individuals are the exception. More often, we don’t want to ‘burden’ others and try instead to make it on our own.”

Even thought that’s not how God designed us.



The Gift of Being Needy

- Be willing to ask for what you need. Nobody can read your mind.
- If I don't get my needs met in healthy ways, the need doesn't just go away. More likely, the unmet need will cry out to get met by any means necessary—even in unhealthy ways.
- Ask yourself what you need, and how you can get this need met.
- Take the risk to be “needy.” Be needy, be greedy. You're an adult. Ask for what you need. If one person can't help you meet a healthy need, keep searching, until you find someone who can.



The Gift of Being Needy

(A Bigger World Yet, Chapter 9)

“Take a chance of being known among the men you call your friends. Be vocal about asking for what you need and want from your brothers.

“If they tell you they are afraid to hug you, hold you, or are unavailable to help you process through something, ask someone else. Keep asking until you find men who will step into the fray and are willing to be a brother down in the trenches.

“Look especially for men who have been versed in the lessons of pain. They will need you too. God designed it that way.”

“Your high same-sex needs are a gift of God. Don’t cheapen them by reducing them to sexual behavior.”

The Gift of Being Needy



How do we meet the need for non-sexual physical touch with other men?

- Culturally we are very conservative with touch. We have reduced all touch to sex. Our culture tells men not to touch each other — that's not masculine. Somehow, we think every sort of touch is a prelude to sex. Some of that comes out of abuse or fear of abuse.
- Yet we still need physical touch. We are made to connect.



The Gift of Being Needy



Continued: How do we meet the need for non-sexual physical touch with other men?

- For me, it took very masculine, heterosexual men to show me physical affection to change my perception. They were willing to be super affectionate and caring with me and really didn't care how others perceive them.
- The majority of guys in my men's groups and weekends are straight. I love to see how much they love loving on one another. That's the culture we have created on our weekends and men's groups, where touch is a natural part of how we connect.



The Gift of Being Needy

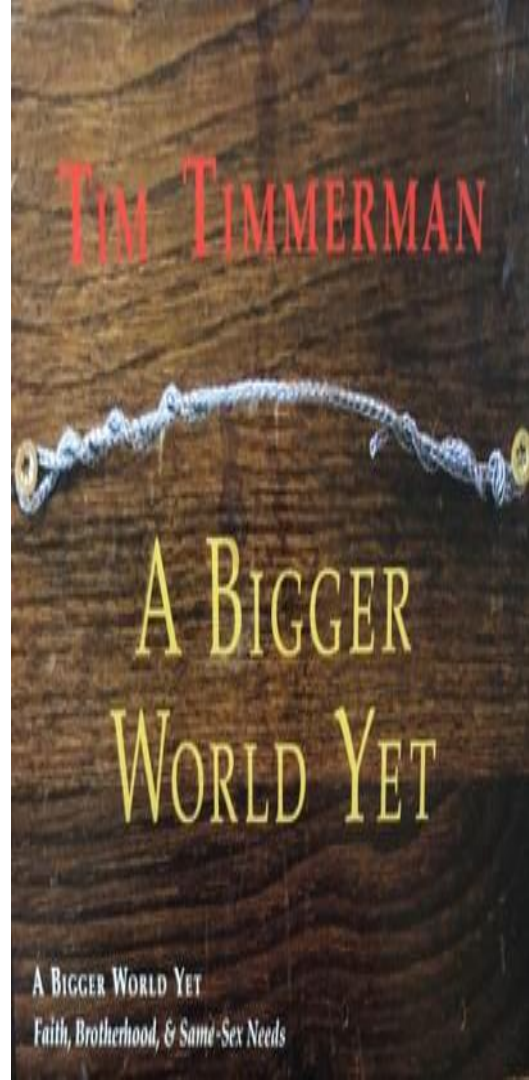


Continued: How do we meet the need for non-sexual physical touch with other men?

- Change how you think about touch. The need for physical touch is a universal human need. Some people's need for touch may be higher than others. Some people may have trust issues around touch. Just know that the need is human, not homosexual.
- Take the risk to ask for a hug, or even holding, especially from heterosexual men. Not everyone will say yes, but some will. Set your pride aside and ask for what you need.



Discovery Four:
The Power of NOW



The Power of *NOW*

Learning to stay present has been a big gift for me.

Ekhart Tolle wrote a book, *The Power of Now*. The idea is that everything God has for you, all you need, is provided here in the moment. It's up to you to see it, relish it and take it in.

- Unless I'm working toward something in the future, there's no point in living in the future.
- Unless I need to process something from the past, there's no point in living in the past.



The Power of *NOW*

Every relationship God gives me is a gift in the moment. That could change. People get married, have children, move on, change, you never know.

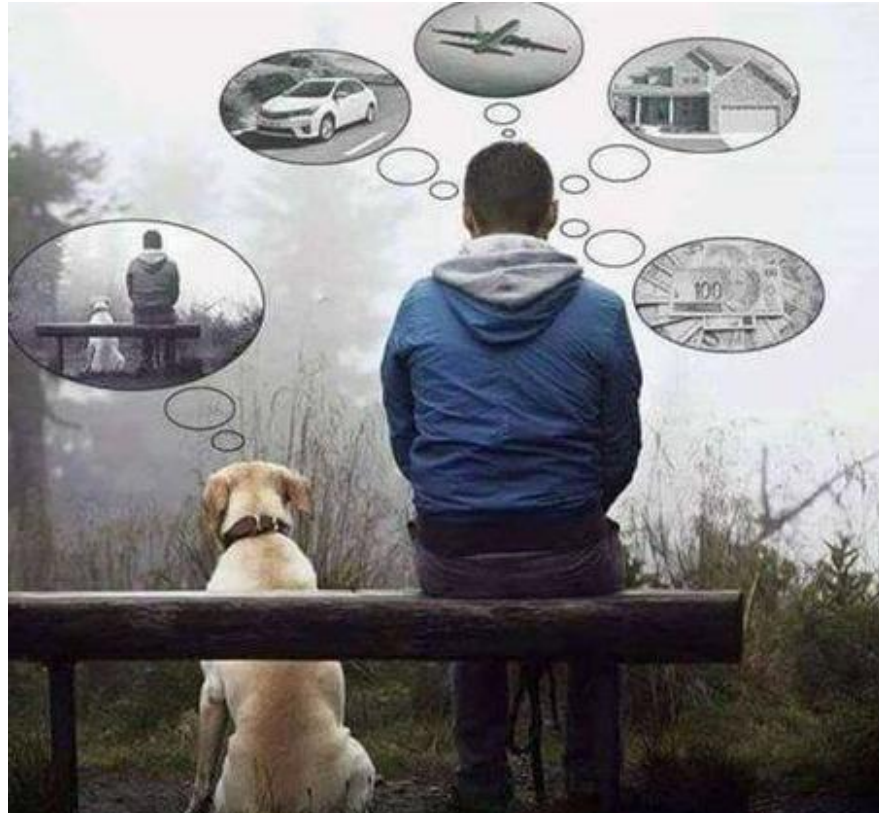
My responsibility is to just love well in the moment whoever God has given me. I've learned to enjoy the blessing of that love for now.

I've been single my whole life. I relish who God gives me in the moment. Take advantage of that friend who can hug me and who needs that too.

That love you had for your friend who has moved on, that's not for naught. It was still a valuable friendship for that time of your life.

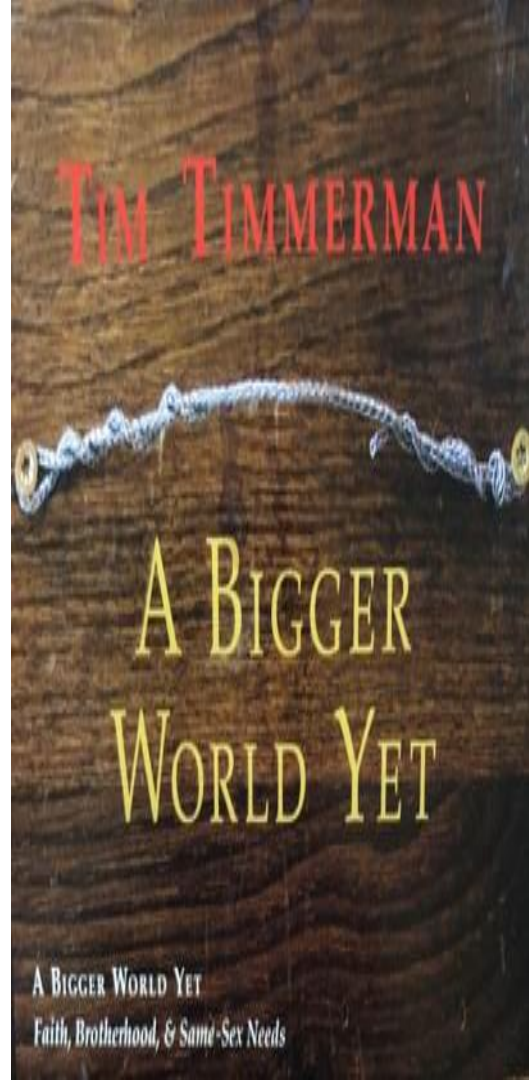


The Power of *NOW*



Who is happier?

Discovery Five:
Live in the Land of IS



Live in the Land of *IS*

Related to “the Power of Now” is “*the Land of IS.*”

I’ve learned to lean into the Land of Is. Not the Land of What Was, or What Might Be, or What Should Be, but the Land of What IS.

And living within the Land of IS, I like to ask:

- How do I flourish here?
- How do I take care of myself?
- How do I get my needs met?
- What does God have to offer me today?



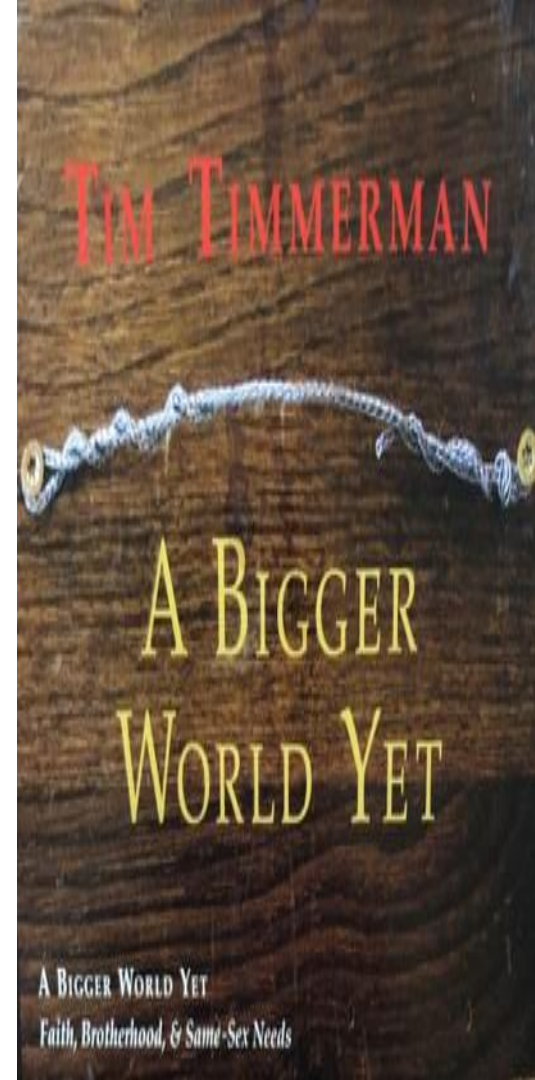
Live in the Land of *IS*

*Lean into what God has given you
today, not what he hasn't.*



A Call to The Church:

Move Past “Comfortable” Theological Debates
to the Discomfort of Radical Ministry
to the Outsider

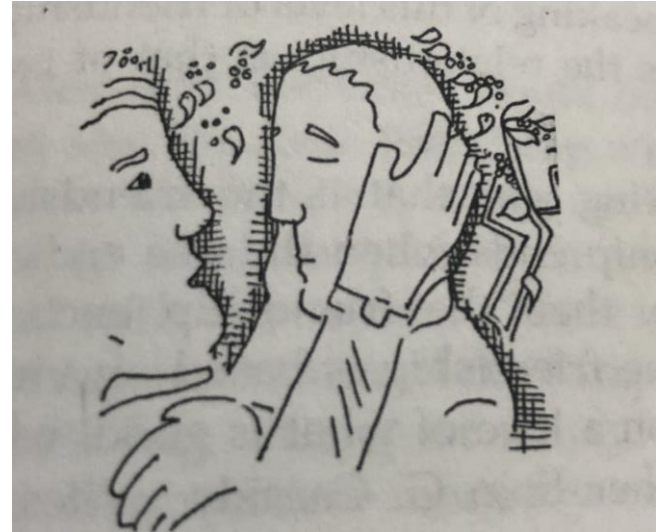


A Call to the Church

Here's what I would say to pastors and church leaders and people of faith generally:

If you really care about this issue, have some skin in the game. Meet people where they are, not where you think they should be.

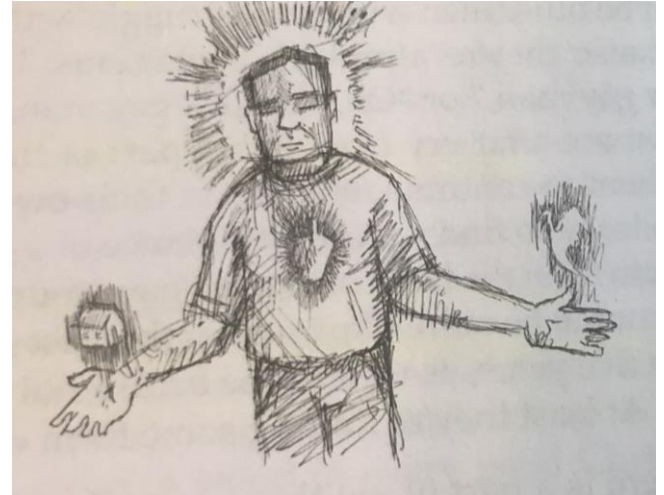
It won't be easy, because pain is messy and the answers to these complex questions aren't easy.



A Call to the Church

The church often defaults to one of two “easy” roads that are comfortable—or at least familiar. Either:

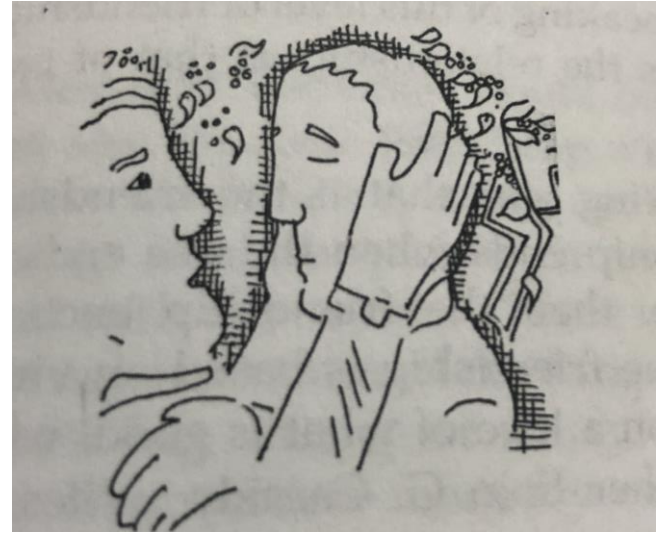
- Affirm gay life without boundaries. Affirm same-sex marriage. That way you feel like a loving person and you don’t have to feel the discomfort of facing your own challenges with morality or scripture.
- Or affirm traditional biblical sexuality. Preach against sin. That’s familiar. And that way, you don’t have to face the discomfort of living alongside the “sinner”—because you’ve probably chased them away.



A Call to the Church

But they stop there.

- No walking alongside the one who is struggling to figure out how to live a Christian life while feeling attractions to the same sex.
- No loving them deeply (rather than casually, from afar).
- No being with them in the emotional messiness of their work. After all, it's much harder to get in the mire with them.



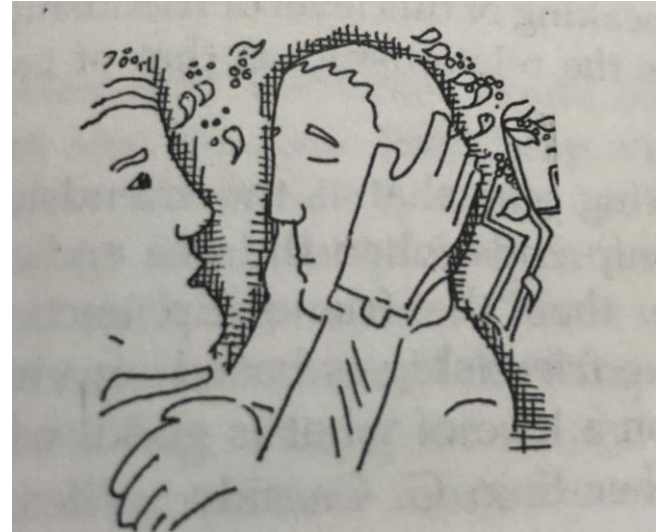
A Call to the Church

This is how the church has largely been absent.

They send the message, “Come back when you’re better.”

Or worse, they send the message that you don’t exist.
There is no place for you here.

So people who want to stay in the Christian community
go into hiding.

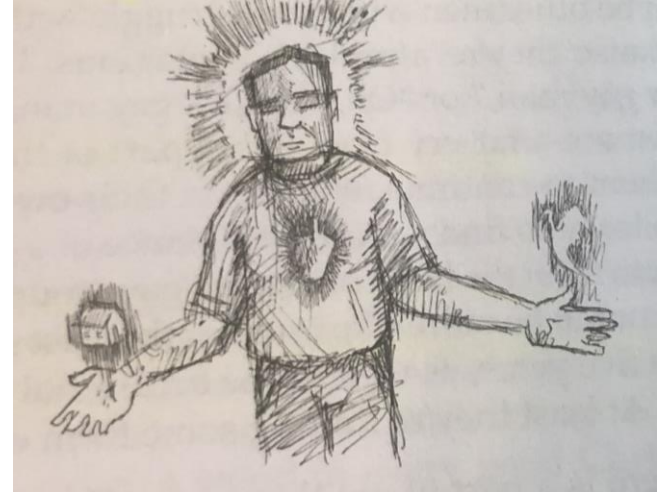


A Call to the Church

I have a dear friend who is a theologian here at the university whose church was trying to figure out what to do with the issue of same-sex marriage. She came up with a document: Here are the interpretations of scripture affirming of same-sex marriage and here are the interpretations that are non-affirming.

She presented it to the elders. Afterward, she told me they had decided against affirming same-sex marriage.

I was like, Great, I get totally get that. **So what are you doing instead?**



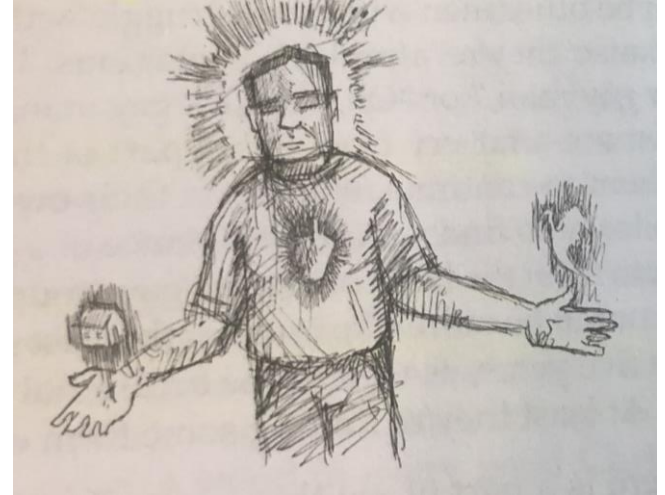
A Call to the Church

She looked at me blankly. “What do you mean?”

I said, surely you have people in your church who are LGBTQ or SSA or are heterosexually married but attracted to their own gender.

So what are you doing for them? How are you providing community and family? How are you supporting them?

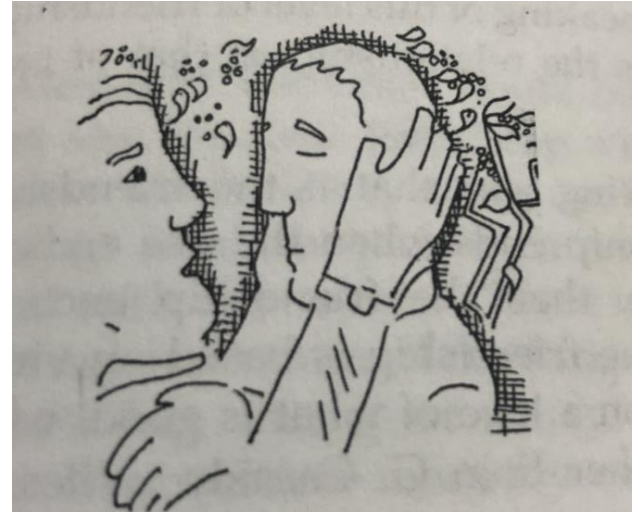
She paused and said, “Let me get back to you on that.”



A Call to the Church

That's my biggest frustration with the church on this issue. What are you doing besides preaching? Who is willing to put their skin in the game?

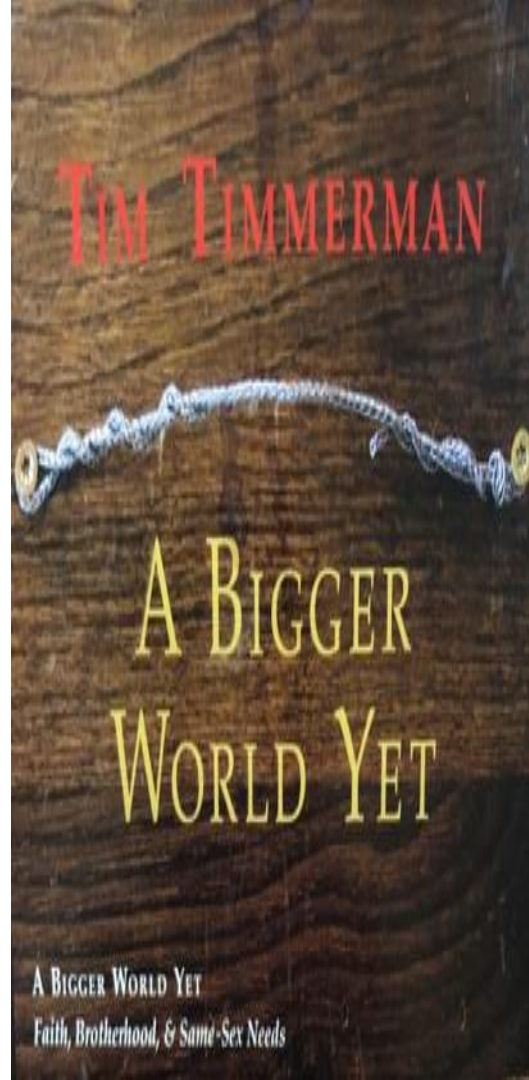
If you want to carry for the inner-city poor, you're going to move downtown with them, maybe start an inner-city church, start a food bank. Christians are great at some of these things.



But who is willing to sit and listen without judgment to the man or woman who is struggling with their sexuality? Who is willing to truly see and hear them?

How are you being the hands and feet of Christ to people whose story is not your own?

A Final Thought:
God Delights in YOU!



A Final Thought: God *DELIGHTS* in YOU!

Find joy in life. You just gotta laugh.

Will Rogers says humor is pain in retrospect. You can tell your story as a tragedy or as a comedy. You get to choose.

I was watching my dog run in the field. I just laughed in delight at how much joy she was exuding just being who she was created to be!

Then a still small voice in my mind said to me, ***“Tim, this is how I look at you every day!”***



A Final Thought: God *DELIGHTS* in YOU!

I burst into tears! God was laughing in delight with me and who he made me to be!”



A Final Thought: God *DELIGHTS* in YOU!

*And God delights in YOU too, and
who he has made you to be!”*



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