

CAN GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES BE FAITHFUL TO EACH OTHER?

I asked Kinship members for their views on the charge that most gay and lesbian couples are not faithful to each other. Here are some of their responses:

- There are enormous rewards when one can stick to one partner. No, it is not living on Easy Street, you have to put in the hard miles to get the rewards. As a gay male, and I can only speak for myself, it is easier to go out for a meal than to cook it at home. An effort is always required. So yes, I think you can live a committed loving relationship.
- We've been together almost 13 years. The longer I'm with him, the more I love him. I see new facets each and every day that deepen my love for him. We have a trust, a bond, a love that is unshakable. Yes, we both have made many mistakes and we've both had to do a lot of forgiving. We've narrowed it down to the 3 C's, that keep us together and hold us close. We're not perfect at the 3 C's, but we do our best. Commitment, Compromise, and Communication! Communication and commitment are the easiest of the three. They're not easy, just the easiest. It's the compromise that is the most difficult. Again, I believe that is because of the ego factor. Two males in one household can make for a challenge. We are socialized to be the "head of the household" and the testosterone flows very strongly when we both want our way. But, after 13 years, we have learned to pick and choose our battles so that we can ultimately win the war, which is to be in a loving and supportive relationship.
- My partner and I are in a committed, monogamous relationship because we have chosen that for ourselves. For us, that is the definition of being faithful to each other.
- I wish there was a simple answer to life's questions. But in reality, the answers are as varied as the people they represent. I think the answer is that among Christian gay couples monogamy is about as high as it is among Christian straight couples.
- I personally asked my partner to be true to me from the start, a one to one relationship that to my knowledge has been for twenty-four years.
- I will admit that I was initially somewhat disillusioned when I discovered that some (OK, many) gay couples (including some Christian couples) had "open" relationships. However, that is not to say that a monogamous relationship cannot exist in gay relationships. Monogamy is a choice. Being gay isn't. When A___ and I said our marriage vows in the presence of God and our family and friends, we pledged to be faithful to each other. It was a conscious choice and decision that we made. It was what we wanted for us. God-willing, we intend to be monogamous for the rest of our lives.
- From the few dating experiences I have had, I have found out that I have been cheated on. I have spent many years in therapy to work on this and it's been quite a

process. Furthermore, with my personal Christian GLBT friends around my age, I know of several young lesbian couples who have been together and faithful for five years plus. However, amongst young men that I know, I only know of one young man who is faithful to his partner who is in his 40s. Aside from that, all my other young gay male friends have either cheated or been cheated on. I have to say that it wasn't until I made a good number of Kinship friends that I realized that monogamy could exist in couples.

- A relationship between two persons of the same sex is not as valued by the society as is a heterosexual relationship. The idea that homosexuals are all promiscuous is still alive in the gay community and gay couples don't have many models to look up to; they need to be their own models. It is especially hard to be what God intended us to be when everybody says that we are lost anyway.
- I believe that internal conflicts have a great influence on the behavior of people in every relationship, including homosexual couples. For example, if I consciously or subconsciously think that homosexuality is a disease, a problem, or a trauma, then I am a victim, I am not going to have a 'normal' life with anyone, I am not going to be part of a 'normal' family, because homosexuals are not 'normal', I am not 'normal'. There are so many other mistakes, misconceptions, problems, traumas, complexes, that we carry as gay people. We need to deal with serious issues, be okay with ourselves first, be happy, and then share the happiness. If I am not loyal to myself how can I be to anyone else? I am responsible for myself. I need to take care of me, to feel good, to ask for help. If I do not do that, the problems become bigger and bigger, the pressure becomes unbearable, the risk of making decisions by impulse/instinct/hormones are higher, and I will be responsible and pay the price for them anyway.
- also had surprises when I figured out that 'some', or maybe 'many', gay couples live together for companionship and have encounters on the side. But I wouldn't say 'most', especially if we are talking about Christian couples. We also can say that 'many' heterosexual people have encounters on the side, but not 'most' of them. Gays are trying to survive, to create a community, to find models, to live normal lives, against the tide, against the terrible expectations about them.
- I really believe that God is working in our lives, fulfilling our necessities and helping us to grow. Getting to know God's plans is a lifelong activity. I am so, so blessed to have O___. I prayed for this when I was not completely sure if God would agree with 'this kind' of relationship. With God's answers, I can be more sure that He is taking care of everything in the right time. Sometimes love hurts, but relationships are still on the top of the list of best things in this life.
- I think GLBTI couples are just as capable of having monogamous relationships as straight couples.
- I think most of the Christian gay couples I know seem to want to have monogamous relationships, and I think they want to be faithful, too. I know that in this church

where I visit, called Freedom In Christ Evangelical Church, there are lots of couples, and I have become friends with many of them. I truly don't know if they are monogamous or not. If they are not, maybe we don't hear about it as much as if they were not Christians. The pastor of this church seems to encourage monogamy and such. I think basically we all want the same things in life - a partner who loves us, some one we can love, and stability within the relationship. We all know though, that sometimes things don't work out; it is our common condition. I think it makes a difference when you honestly put God first in your life and let Him cover your life including your relationships.

- We are faithful and all of our close friends are also.
- I think we all know of gay couples and lesbian couples who have been together for decades and have been sexually and emotionally faithful. And we know straight couples in that category, too. Unfortunately, there are others, both gay and straight, who are not. Human nature is human nature.
- From my perspective, sexuality is only one of the ways that we build vulnerability, emotional honesty and heart touching intimacy in relationships. I believe the evil ones have tried to come up with anything, anyway, they can entice us to harm the relationships in our lives. Through that lens, I think there are many ways that marital partners can be unfaithful.
- If we put our work or our careers ahead of building a safe and emotionally nurturing relationship, I believe that work has become our mistress or our infidelity. If we let anger come between us and our beloved, anger has become a means of unfaithfulness. If we put "church work" ahead of taking care of the people to whom we have made the commitment to nurture in a vulnerable way, I believe we have been unfaithful. If we put spending time with our friends in front of or to the detriment of, nurturing our primary relationship, I believe we have become unfaithful. If we use any sort of substance in a way that harms our most intimate relationship, then that substance is the means of infidelity. If self-righteousness comes between us and our loved ones.... I could ramble on with this.
- For me, the issue is about learning to replicate the motives and the closeness of the Trinity. That is why I believe relationships were given to us. And I believe that is why the evil ones try to destroy this particular object lesson. Through this lens, there are many, many, many SDAs in good standing with the church who have put their work or their "good" activities or, or, or ... in front of their committed relationships. And I believe they have been unfaithful.
- This said, it is from a healthy sense of our own value that we can value and nurture a relationship with another person. If GLBTI people have been denigrated, dismissed, and emotionally shunned it would also make sense that we would have a difficult time learning the skills to nurture the relationship.

- I think the idea that gays are not faithful towards each other in relationships is wrong. I don't know if there are studies about this issue but I guess that there is no difference between straight and gay relationships. I also don't think there is a difference between Christian and non-Christian relationships. The Christians might try harder but they also might be the ones to hide it more if it happened.
- The bottom line for me is, sex is not enough. Sex by itself is exactly that, just sex. But when you have sex in the context of a committed relationship, in my own experience, it's way more than just sex.
- As a society, we've moved sexual behavior from something sacred to something physical. It has inspired media attention and present-day society drowns in sexual images as something commonplace and vulgar. Sex is more than an event, it has a sacred underpinning. Unfortunately, we no longer interpret sex as part of spiritual maturation -- we simply regard it as pleasure.
- Predictably, homosexual relationships are prone to more division. We don't have the same social structures of support -- and indeed, cope with tremendous social forces trying to split us apart. Furthermore, we are caught with feet in both worlds. Again, speaking as a male, the most difficult thing to handle in a gay male relationship are two male egos! After all, both men were raised in patriarchy to believe they would be in charge, they would be the "centerpiece" they would be the provider and their career would be held as the top priority. Of course, no matter how our relationships are constructed or examined, they will be the topic of derision by our social structure. An oppressed people have never successfully argued the merit of their value to an oppressor.
- As we build respectful relationships, the value structure of that relationship grows and develops to the mutual agreement of both parties. This includes sexual conduct and behavioral and emotional boundaries. I also believe a monogamous coupled relationship can foster personal growth, maturity, and ongoing respect. The point is that all of us have a spiritual birthright and need the support of a spiritual community. Without it, much of life -- including sex -- becomes trivialized and unreflected. But when a church offers silence at best, the results are obvious. As Christians, our spiritual growth is linked to our human relationships. Because our spiritual journey requires a community to the witness of Jesus in our lives, when we are denied such community, our spiritual journey is crippled.
- Most gay and lesbian Christian couples do strive for monogamy because the goal doesn't occur in a vacuum. Rather, it's part of their whole life which includes a spiritual and sexual journey. I think there is a recognition that this type of relationship -- at its best -- results in real love and maturation. And it is that growth and maturation that is crucial to our walk as Christians!
- In terms of lifelong singular monogamy with one person, I have not lived up to the notion -- but I aspire to it. I aspire to it because I have come to believe that it makes me a better person -- a more thoughtful, mature, responsible and respectful human being.