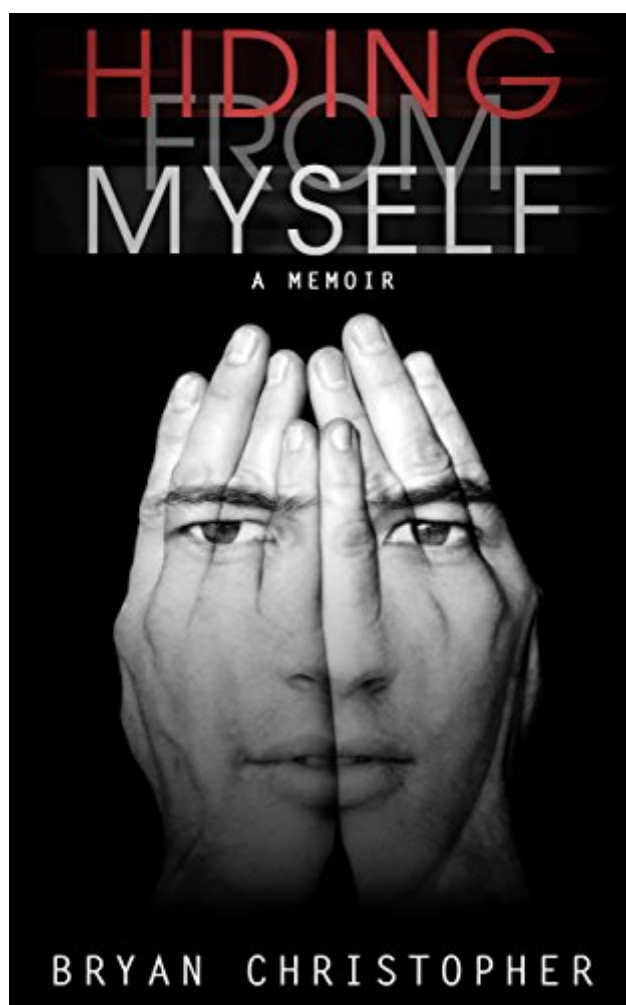


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Hiding From Myself: A Memoir



Synopsis

You can't read the news these days without seeing "gay" in a headline: from the simmering showdown over gay marriage and religious freedom, to bullied gay teens tragically taking their own lives, to state by state lawsuits challenging a parent's right to force their gay child into conversion therapy (now banned for minors in five states). Few social issues ignite such passion from all sides. For those who see homosexuality as a choice and a sin, the notion of gay marriage is intolerable. For those who are gay, being excluded and shamed is simply intolerant. Bryan Christopher's life has been spent straddling this great divide. As a boy raised in the buckle of the Texas Bible belt--from the playground to the pulpit--one message was consistent: "queers" deserved to be smeared. And at the dawn of puberty, Bryan knew he was in trouble: he was staring limply at the pages of his dad's Playboy. That's when the hiding began. And in his neck of the woods, it left him with one viable option: change. "Hiding from Myself: A Memoir" chronicles his zealous crusade: from ringing doorbells for Jesus in the Castro of San Francisco to sorting through Hugh Hefner's dirty laundry as a butler at the Playboy Mansion; from bathing in the beer-soaked trenches of his UCLA fraternity house to plunging head first into the evangelical Christian world of "ex-gay" conversion therapy. As Bryan walked the straight and narrow in Hollywood, he found the narrow path to have more twists and turns than he ever could have imagined...

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Customer Reviews

I'm writing my review in the context of having spent years as a Christian pastor. Bryan sent me his book a couple of years ago to read as he knew I reviewed a lot of books. His memoir captivated me and I've read it through twice now. Bryan's story covers a decade of his life fully committed to purge himself of his apparent sexual orientation. He even manages to get a job at the Playboy Mansion, working his way into the holy of holies - Hugh's bedroom. "I am in Hugh Hefner's closet, drowning in a sea of silk pajamas." And I wonder what Bryan's next sentence, his reality, will mean to the mainstream, Christian mindset at all: "My objective at the Playboy Mansion: to be tempted and to stumble would be a miracle." When your religion pushes you to the place where you think that humping like a bunny, with a Bunny would be a God-given miracle, well, then you know that your religion has led you astray. So then what? Bryan presses forward with the hope of a 180° turn, now with the help of a professional counselor, but has to admit, "Psychology would point to my theology as the root of my pathology." In the words of Bryan's Jewish counselor, "You are a case study of what happens when we cut ourselves off from feeling our true feelings. As I've said many times before, the judgement of your innate impulse and the way you punish yourself for not being able to live up to the expectations of your family, friends, and church are leaving scars. And until you learn to accept yourself, and all the parts, without this awful judgment you attach, you will continue to suffer and self-destruct..." Seriously, how screwed up is it that we religious leaders, in our well-intentioned efforts to 'help' someone, have actually been leading them to where they are self-destructing?

First, I must assert that I'm profoundly grateful to Bryan Christopher for offering me the opportunity to read his deeply felt and eloquently articulated memoir. It is the type of book that, had it been offered to me on the Vine program, would most certainly have been one of my top choices. Bryan's book is obviously extremely relevant and timely. It deals in very large part with the extreme guilt trip imposed on the author by the teaching of the Exodus ex-gay program and the fundamentalist religious and cultural milieu in which he was raised. Obviously, despite a half-century of excellent

scriptural scholarship "debunking" the faulty interpretations that "God considers homosexuality an abomination", this perspective is still causing undue anguish. It is only within the past few months that the Exodus organization has finally ceased its operations, and its most recent president, Alan Chambers, "apologized" to the LGBTQ community for the grief and pain its propaganda and purported "conversions" has caused. Bryan Christopher's book is poignant, personal and at times almost unbearably painful, and yet with an ongoing thread of humor. He definitely imparts to the reader the full "whammy" of his decade-long struggle to overcome his homosexual feelings and "train" himself to be aroused by females. The tale of his stint as a butler in the Playboy Mansion alone is enough to make the narrative sparkle, but that is just the beginning. Christopher's writing style is colloquial and sometimes a bit raunchy, but never transgresses good taste. His vignettes of the various sexual encounters he describes are not overly explicit, but do not mince words.

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