

**INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY
STUDY GROUP**



WILSHIRE
BAPTIST CHURCH

SEMINAR AGENDA

Welcome — *George Mason*

Introduction — *James Perry*

The challenges of our cultural context — *Rob Banta*

About the Old Testament and New Testament texts — *Mark Wingfield*

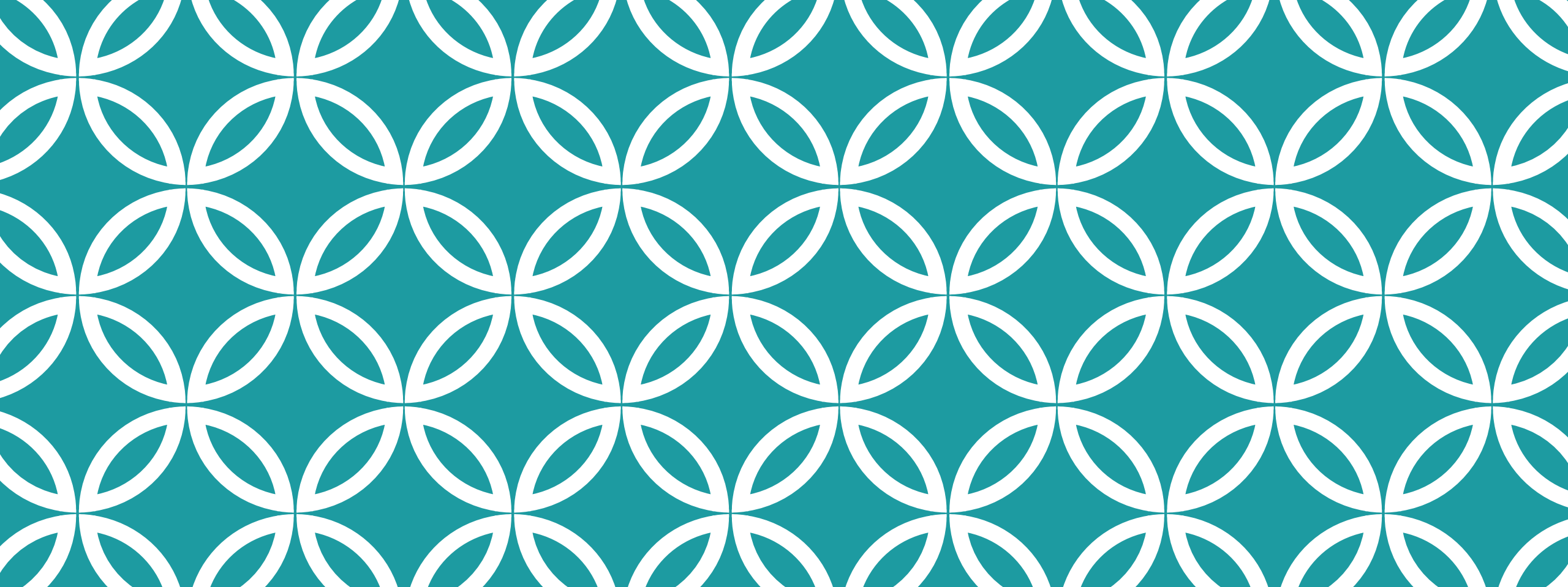
BREAK

What we know about genetics and sexuality — *Gail Brookshire*

What we know about adolescent sexual development — *Rhonda Walton*

A range of views with today's church — *Kile Brown, Jill Allor and Jared Jagers*

Closing comments — *James Perry*



WELCOMING COMMENTS

GEORGE MASON

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ❖ Study Group appointed by deacon officers in fall 2015.
- ❖ Asked to give guidance to church leadership on a range of issues related to sexual orientation and the life of the church.
- ❖ Currently, there is no language in Wilshire's bylaws to provide any instruction—either pro or con—on these issues.
- ❖ Values of “inclusion” and “diversity” ranked at the top of the Vision 20/20 member-input process in 2013. But what did we mean?

FOUR QUESTIONS

The Inclusion and Diversity Study Group has been tasked with studying four questions:

- ❖ What limitations, if any, should be placed on deacon service and other leadership roles in the church?
- ❖ What limitations, if any, should be placed on ordination to the gospel ministry?
- ❖ What limitations, if any, should be placed on marriages performed at Wilshire and/or officiated by Wilshire staff members?
- ❖ What limitations, if any, should be placed on family dedications performed at Wilshire?

IMPORTANT NOTES

- ❖ There are no pre-determined outcomes for this process.
- ❖ There is no desire to change Wilshire's identity in the community to become a one-issue church.
- ❖ We are seeking to find the way of Christ in our time.
- ❖ Our purpose today is to gain understanding.

THE STUDY GROUP

❖ James Perry

❖ Jill Allor

❖ Rob Banta

❖ Drew Bird

❖ Gail Brookshire

❖ Kile Brown

❖ Barry Buchanan

❖ Lillie Campbell

❖ Diana Early

❖ Rebecca Francis

❖ Gary E. Griffith

❖ Mary Ann Hill

❖ Jared Jagers

❖ Mary Lu Spreier

❖ Henry Stone

❖ Don Tittle

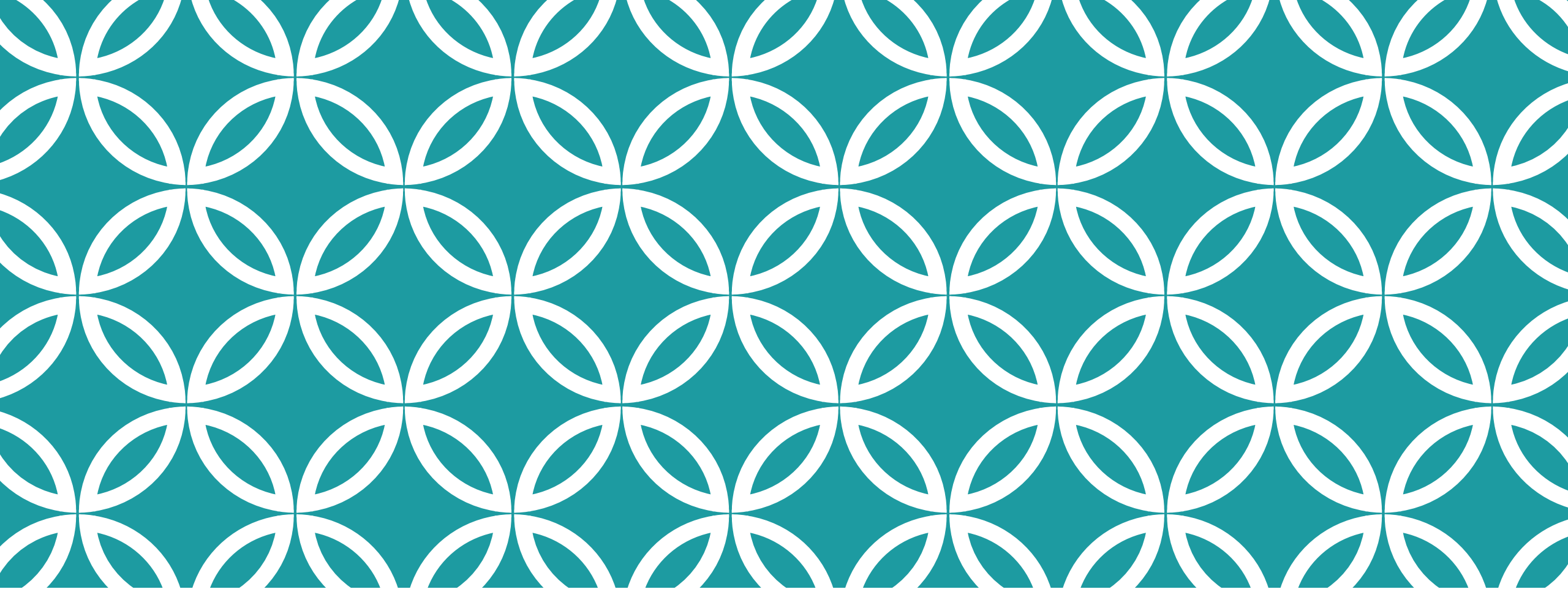
❖ Rhonda Walton

❖ Wendy Warden

❖ Paula Woodbury

❖ George Mason

❖ Mark Wingfield



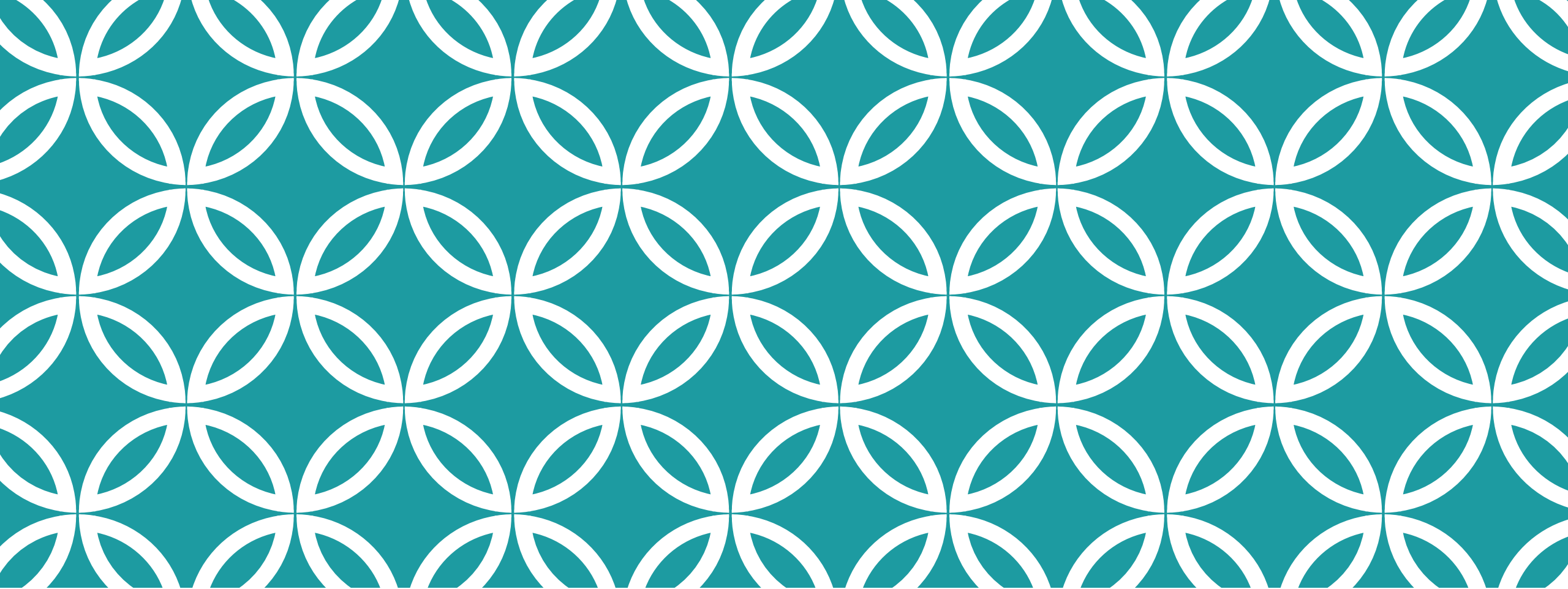
INTRODUCTIONS AND PROCESS

JAMES PERRY

PRESENTER BIO: JAMES PERRY



James Perry currently serves as chairman of the Inclusion and Diversity Study Group. He has served previously as chair of the Personnel Committee and the Finance Committee and is an active deacon. James is director of Seekers Class. His wife, Lydia, is active with the children's' ministry as a lay leader. James and Lydia live in Lakewood and have two sons: Blake (11) and Drew (9). Professionally, James is senior vice president and chief financial officer for Trinity Industries Inc. He graduated from Baylor University in 1993.



THE CHALLENGES OF OUR CULTURAL CONTEXT

ROB BANTA

PRESENTER BIO: ROB BANTA



Robert J. Banta and his wife, Pam, have been members of Wilshire since 1990. They have three sons—Ryan, Blaine and Brad—all of whom are married, have children and live in the Dallas area. Rob teaches a Sunday School class, was ordained as a deacon in 2004 (currently inactive) and has served on a number of committees at Wilshire. Pam has been a teacher in the preschool area for many years. Professionally, Rob is a practicing attorney.

TWO REQUESTS

- ❖ We ask for your prayers as we do our work.
- ❖ We ask that you respect and trust the process.

WHY ARE WE DISCUSSING THIS?

- ❖ Wilshire's current official unofficial policy can best be described as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."
- ❖ No one is suggesting that the church should follow the law of the land or the culture in determining its policies, but it is no longer viable in today's world to ignore the subject as if it did not exist.
- ❖ What will be the response of the church when a boy or girl announces to his or her parents that he or she thinks they may be homosexual, or a boy or girl learns that his or her best friend has made such an announcement?

AT LEAST TWO CHRISTIAN VIEWS

- ❖ Those who hold the traditional view, relying primarily on a literal interpretation of the texts, tend to believe that the Bible expressly condemns all same-sex relationships and behavior and that it is a settled matter.
- ❖ Those who hold alternative or non-traditional views have interpreted the same and other biblical texts in ways that support different conclusions.
- ❖ As a study group, we have tried to give credence only to views that are grounded in Scripture.

WHY DIFFERING VIEWS?

- ❖ Intelligent, passionate, well-intentioned Christian people (biblical scholars, pastors and lay people, including your fellow Wilshire members) have differing views on the ultimate question of whether same-sex relationships are inherently sinful, and each can claim scriptural interpretations that support their respective views.
- ❖ This will be the case whether we debate the matter for six months or six years. This is truly a subject about which reasonable minds can and do differ.
- ❖ How is that different than any number of other theological questions we face in our life together in this community of faith?

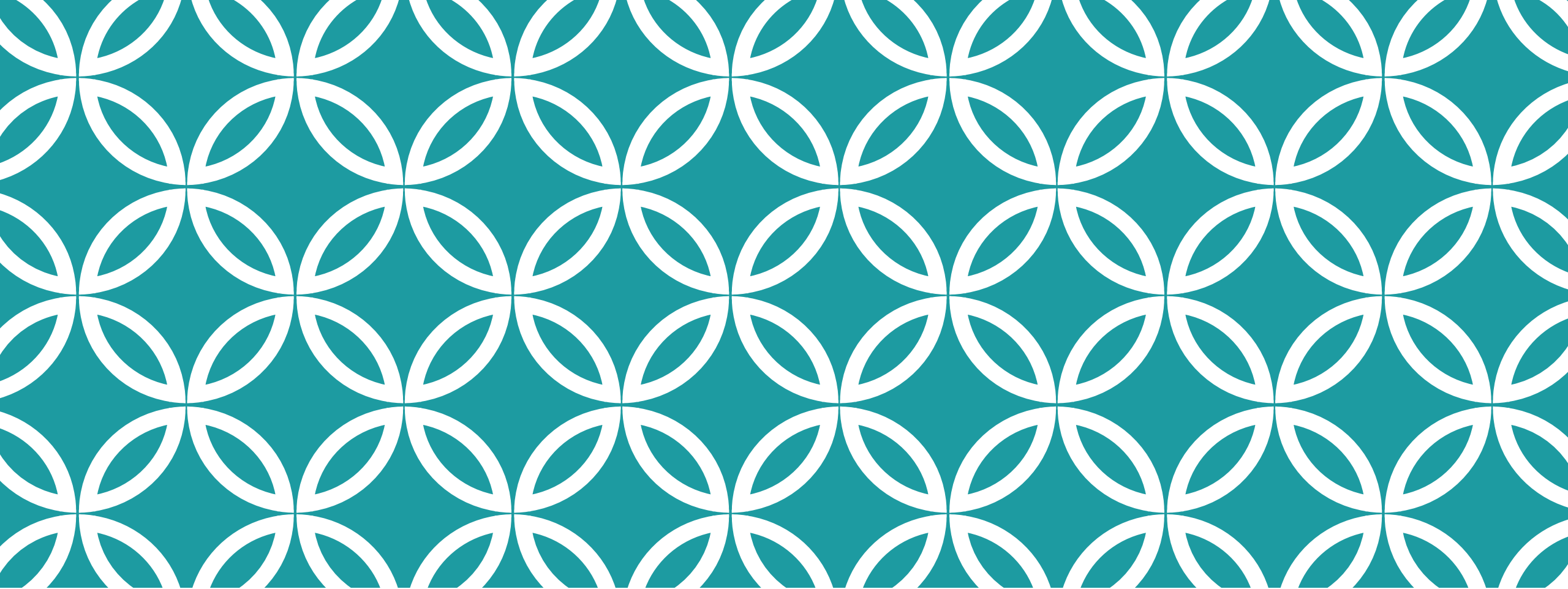


A HOPEFUL GOAL

We as a congregation — and this is a decision for the congregation — need to find a way forward that, despite our honest differences of opinion on some of the underlying issues, allows us to function as a unified community of faith and fulfill our mission to build a community of faith shaped by the Spirit of Jesus Christ to the best of our ability.

A HOPEFUL CHALLENGE

Are you willing to listen, think critically and honestly consider a viewpoint different from your own? No matter where you stand on this issue, can you acknowledge that your view may not be the only way to view the matter and that the differing view of your fellow Wilshire member may have at least enough merit to warrant your thoughtful consideration?



ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

MARK WINGFIELD

PRESENTER BIO: MARK WINGFIELD



Mark Wingfield and his wife, Alison, chose Wilshire as their family's church home long before Mark joined the church staff. They have raised two sons here from first grade forward; the twins are now 23. Mark became associate pastor at Wilshire in January 2004, after a 21-year career in denominational journalism. He has been an adult Sunday School teacher for more than 30 years and writes curriculum for several national publishers. He serves the Inclusion and Diversity Study Group as a staff liaison and as recording secretary.

FIRST CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ It is not my goal to persuade anyone to move from one view to another.
- ❖ This presentation intentionally gives more than one view, and that in itself might have the feel of bias to some who hold strongly to one view or another.
- ❖ We want to foster understanding and information.
- ❖ In our Baptist tradition and polity, you are free to understand God's Spirit in interpreting the Bible for yourself. But that always has been predicated upon a thirst for knowledge and greater understanding.

TWO SIMILAR OLD TESTAMENT ACCOUNTS

- ❖ Within the Old Testament, there are four passages most frequently cited as giving direct reference to same-sex relationships. The first two are remarkably similar, although appearing in different books and happening at different times to different people.
- ❖ The story of Sodom is found in Genesis 19:1-11.
- ❖ A similar story is told in Judges 19:16-30 but is located in the village of Gibeah.

GENESIS 19:1-11

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them." Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

CULTURAL CHALLENGES TO INTERPRETATION

The concept of sexuality in the Old Testament presents challenges to modern-day Christians because of the patriarchal culture, the commonness of men taking multiple wives and keeping concubine. Reading texts such as these requires thoughtful consideration of cultural norms across time.

TWO VIEWS OF THE SIN OF SODOM

- ❖ A “traditional” interpretation of the Bible would see the story of Sodom as being about homosexuality: The men of Sodom are wicked because they want to have male-on-male sex with the visiting angels.
- ❖ Other modern interpreters—including many conservative evangelicals who believe the Bible condemns homosexuality—read the sin of Sodom as being something other than homosexuality. These stories recorded in Genesis and Judges are viewed by them as more about hospitality and justice than about homosexuality as a sexual lifestyle.
- ❖ These two views do not break down along normal “traditional” versus “progressive” viewpoints, as many (but not all) traditionalists would follow the second viewpoint.

WHAT ELSE DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SODOM?

- ❖ Ezekiel 16:49 refers to the sin of Sodom not as one of sexual immorality but rather of justice: “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.”
- ❖ In Isaiah 10:1-17, Isaiah 3:9, Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:49, and Zephaniah 2:8-11, Sodom is singled out as a model for greed, injustice, inhospitality, abuse of wealth, abuse of the poor, and general wickedness.
- ❖ Jesus also references Sodom and Gomorrah in Matthew 10:14-15 when he says those who reject the welcome of his disciples will be “worse than” Sodom and Gomorrah, an apparent reference to arrogance and lack of hospitality.

SUMMARY: THREE VIEWPOINTS ON GENESIS/JUDGES PASSAGES

- ❖ They mean what the traditional interpretation has been, that the men of Sodom (and Gibeah) are given as examples to us of the evil of homosexual sex.
- ❖ These passages are not about homosexuality but rather hospitality, but that doesn't take away from other more clear condemnations of homosexuality later in the Bible.
- ❖ These passages are not about homosexuality but rather hospitality, and that is part of a larger translation or interpretation problem within the Bible.

TWO PASSAGES FROM LEVITICUS

- ❖ Leviticus 18:22 says, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”
- ❖ Leviticus 20:13 says, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.”

TWO VIEWS ON LEVITICUS PASSAGES

- ❖ The traditional and widespread reading of these passages is that they are explicitly clear and mean exactly what they say. There is no room or need for further interpretation. This has been the majority view throughout Christian history—although modern Christians have not advocated the death penalty in such cases.
- ❖ An alternate understanding looks at the Old Testament “Holiness Code” differently.

THE HOLINESS CODE

There are at least two ways to understand the Holiness Code, which was given to separate the Children of Israel from their pagan neighbors. It contains hundreds of rules and a common theme was the requirement to keep things separate.

- ❖ One view is that prohibitions against idolatry and sexual immorality are carried over into the New Testament view, while other prohibitions no longer apply to the Christian community.
- ❖ A second view would agree that prohibitions against idolatry and sexual immorality are carried over into the New Testament era but would disagree about what constitutes sexual immorality based only on an understanding of sexual orientation.

MALE GENDER SUPERIORITY

- ❖ Some see male gender superiority as a factor in reading the Old Testament Holiness Code. They might, therefore, read the Levitical admonitions against a man lying with a man “as with a woman” as being concerned with making one of the men ritually unclean by penetration.
- ❖ The word *toevah*, translated as “abomination,” may refer to becoming ritually unclean, the same as a man lying with a woman during her menstruation, which is forbidden.

NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES

- ❖ “What did Jesus say about homosexuality?” In the strictest sense, Jesus said absolutely nothing about homosexuality. We cannot turn to a red-letter verse that either approves or disapproves of same-sex relationships in the way we might hope.
- ❖ The three most frequently cited New Testament passages mentioning homosexuality all are attributed to Paul.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes (*malakos* in Greek), sodomites (*arsenokoitai* in Greek), thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

1 TIMOTHY 1:9-11

“This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites (*arsenokoitais* in Greek), slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.”

TWO APPROACHES TO THESE TEXTS

- ❖ In the traditional view, sex between people of the same gender falls clearly within a set of behaviors that are not indicative of those who will inherit the kingdom of God. Same-sex behavior is viewed as similar to other things that are sinful but for which repentance and forgiveness may be sought.
- ❖ Another view is that everything in the New Testament that condemns same-sex behavior then continues to apply to Christian same-sex behavior today. New Testament condemnations of same-sex behavior include pederasty, male prostitution and excessive lust that is contrary to one's created nature—not the expression of same-sex affection by those with such an orientation.

ARSENOKOITAI

- ❖ The Apostle Paul uses the Greek word *arsenokoitai* here for the first time found in Greek or Jewish literature, so there is no context from which to draw an easy comparison. It appears to be a compound word drawing together “man” and “lying with or sleeping with.”
- ❖ From this put-together Greek word, various English translations have embellished with different emphases: “abusers of themselves with mankind” (KJV); “sexual perverts” (RSV); “sodomites” (NKJV, NAB, NRSV); “who are guilty of homosexual perversion” (CEV); “practicing homosexuals” (NAB, 1st ed.).

TWO VIEWS ON *ARSENOKOITAI*

- ❖ Traditional biblical scholars see *arsenokoitai* as Paul's way of meaning just what has been often translated, whether this was the sin of Sodom or not. Do not get hung upon the word "sodomites," they might argue, but instead understand that the intent is to describe same-sex relations by any name.
- ❖ Others note that the word shown here as "sodomites" in English was introduced in the King James Bible in 1611. The word "sodomites" is found in neither the Hebrew or the Greek editions of the text. The word "homosexual" was not used in English literature until the 19th century. This word did not appear in an English translation of the Bible until the mid-20th century. This leads adherents of this viewpoint to suggest that Paul actually was talking about the known ancient practices of cultic prostitution or male pederasty (an adult male having sex with a younger boy) or about temple prostitutes.

MALAKOS

- ❖ The second word in question, *malakos*, is easier to translate and means “soft,” often used to refer to effeminacy.
- ❖ According to a traditional view, this remains a fitting description especially of a male who engages in sexual acts with another male.
- ❖ Other interpreters note that there was another commonly used word that Paul could have chosen here for “homosexuals,” if that was exactly what he meant. That word is *paiderasste*. They also point out that elsewhere in the New Testament, *malakos* is translated as “soft” or “fine,” in reference to clothing. See Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25.

ROMANS 1:26-27

“For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”

A KEY NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

- ❖ For those who hold a progressive view, this is the single most challenging text to address.
- ❖ Even some scholars who dismiss every other biblical text as not relevant to the modern debate over homosexuality see this text as prohibitive.

TWO VIEWPOINTS

- ❖ Christians traditionally have interpreted this passage as explicitly prohibitive of same-sex relations. We do not have the same difficulty interpreting here the words “intercourse” or “women” or “men.” These are clear in their translations.
- ❖ Some biblical scholars see Paul here linking sexual immorality to idolatry. By this account, the “degrading passions” listed are the result of idolatry.
- ❖ Some traditionalists would agree with that, to a point, but quickly note that from their view, same-sex behavior is itself a form of idolatry.

THE ORDER OF CREATION

- ❖ Paul makes an argument based on the natural order of creation. There are different views on what he means by this.
- ❖ Elsewhere, Paul uses a similar appeal to nature to justify his position on the proper length of men's and women's hair and the need for women to wear head coverings (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Which leads some to ask why Christians want to enforce one of the prohibitions but not the others.
- ❖ As with the Old Testament laws, however, traditionalists counter that some of the prohibitions are cultural and others are not. The sexual prohibitions, again, are of a more serious nature.

“AGAINST NATURE”

- ❖ Advocates of a non-traditional view also note that arguing from nature was a common rhetorical device in Paul’s day. It would be similar today to saying, “The conventional wisdom is”
- ❖ The words in Greek are *physis*, meaning “nature,” and *para physin*, meaning “against nature.”
- ❖ Look to Romans 11:13-24 for further understanding of these words. There, Paul says God acted “contrary to nature” by grafting Gentiles into the tree of God’s people, the Jews. Thus, the reading of “against nature” may mean “unconventional” in both cases.
- ❖ The question is whether, since God has shown adaptability, we also should be adaptable in our understanding of what has been considered “conventional.”

“ONE FLESH”

Apart from the seven biblical passages that are most often cited as direct references to homosexuality, there are other passages that get cited as indirectly condemning same-sex relations, often in the context of marriage. At least one of these does fall in the “red-letter” portion of the New Testament.

MATTHEW 19:3-9

The Pharisees come to test Jesus by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” To which Jesus answers by quoting from Genesis: “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?”

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

At the end of a long discourse on wives and husbands being subject to one another and to the Lord, Paul quotes Genesis: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.”

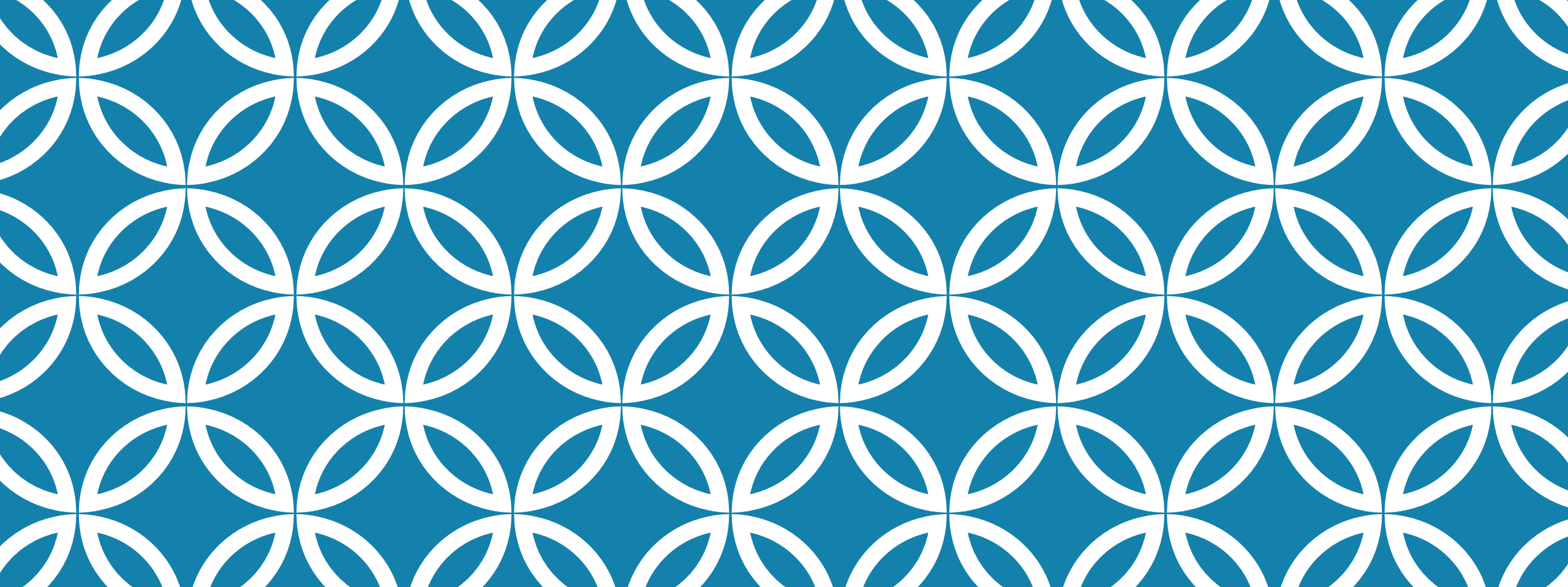
TWO VIEWS ON “ONE FLESH”

- ❖ From a traditional point of view, Jesus’ reference to the creation story and appeal to being made “male and female” is a clear statement identifying marriage as exclusively between male and female. This male-female duality occurs throughout the Bible and is indicative of the way God intended creation to function. For this viewpoint, the “one flesh” language becomes extremely important in defining Christian marriage and more.
- ❖ An alternate reading sees the “one flesh” reference teaching us that their complementarity is first their likeness as human partners, as compared to the prior creation of the animals. Their complementarity may include their anatomical difference but is fundamentally about their being different persons rather than different genders.



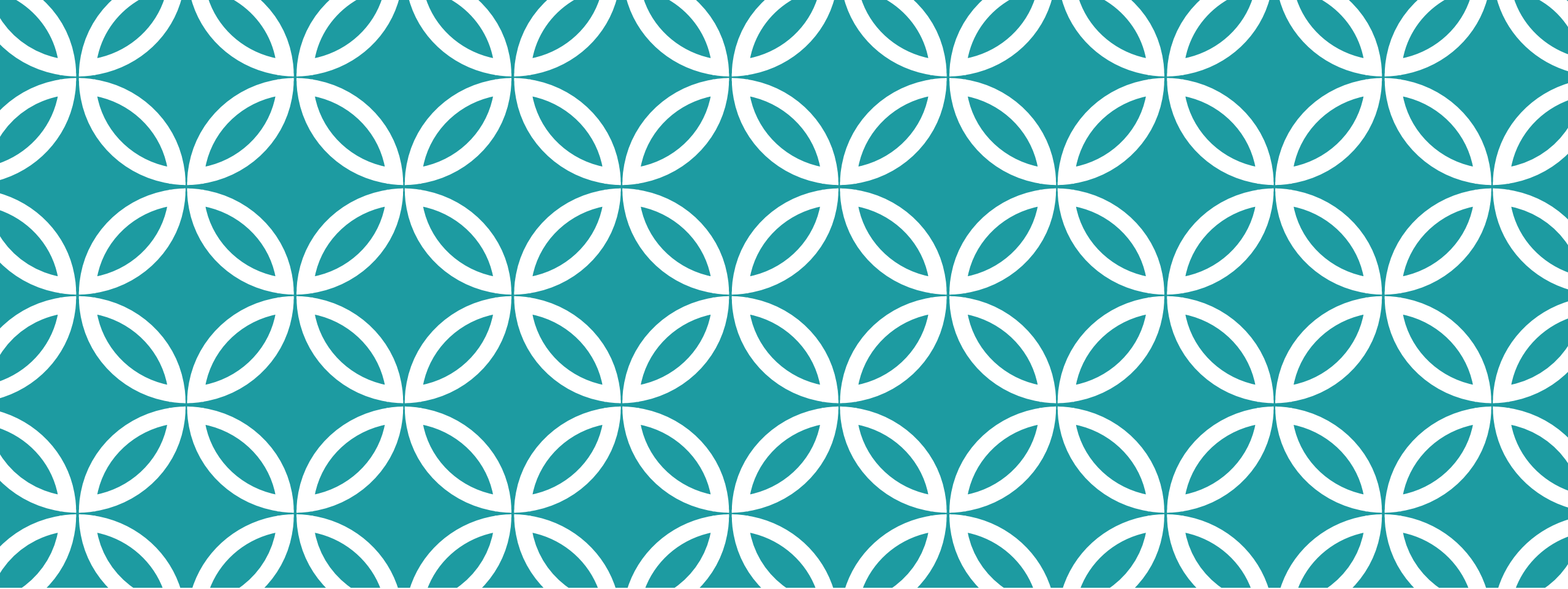
A FINAL CHALLENGE

Reading and interpreting and understanding the Bible requires our full attention, our full mental capacity and our full devotion. And it requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



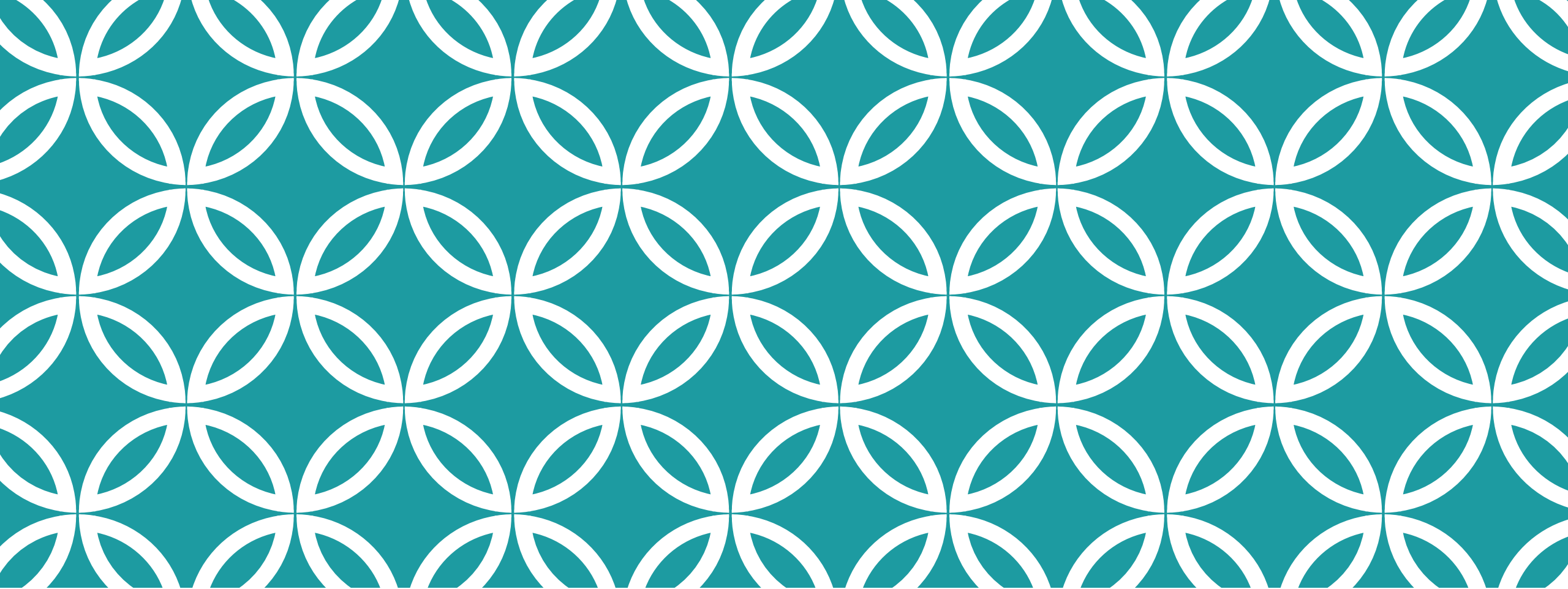
QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION?

PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PRESENTATION. WE ASK THAT YOU SAVE STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES FOR A DIALOGUE SESSION.



LET'S TAKE A BREAK

10 MINUTES



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GENETICS AND SEXUALITY

GAIL BROOKSHIRE

PRESENTER BIO: GAIL BROOKSHIRE



Gail S. Brookshire has a master of science degree in medical genetics and counseling from the Sarah Lawrence College Human Genetics program. Gail is board certified by the American Board of Medical Genetics and the American Board of Genetic Counseling. She has 32 years of experience as a genetic counselor in the Pediatric Genetics and Metabolism Division at Children's Medical Center of Dallas. She has been a member of the Children's Medical Center Ethics Committee for 15 years. Gail is a Wilshire member for almost 40 years, met and married her husband, Steve, and reared their son, Andy, here.

WHY IS THERE SAME-SEX ATTRACTION?

Since our curiosity about what make us “us” continues it was to be expected that questions would arise about why some people are attracted to members of their own sex while the majority are attracted to the opposite sex, or why some people experience differences in gender identity. There remain many unanswered questions as to why this would be so but research has indicated it is likely a combination of genetic, hormonal and other factors.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GAY?

Approximately 3.5 percent to 5 percent of people identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual and 0.3 percent as transgender. So there are approximately 11 million Americans under the umbrella of the LGBT description.

IS THERE A FAMILY CONNECTION?

- ❖ When large numbers of families were grouped together, it became clear early on that a person who is lesbian or gay is more likely to have family members who are also lesbian or gay as compared to the general population.
- ❖ A large, broad-based study in 2000 showed 32 percent concordance (meaning both twins are gay or lesbian) in identical twins and 15 percent concordance among fraternal and non-twin siblings. This was, respectively, 10 times and 5 times the 3 percent occurrence rate in this specific population.
- ❖ Based on this evidence, researchers concluded that there is a significant genetic basis for homosexual orientation but that other factors also play a role.

IS THERE A “GAY GENE”?

Respected scientific researchers have concluded there is no “master” gene, no single gene, for homosexuality but that it likely arises from a complex interaction of multiple genes and other, as yet unconfirmed, factors.

LATEST RESEARCH

- ❖ Last October a paper was presented at the American Society of Human Genetics meeting demonstrating variations, not in the genes themselves, but in “switches” that turn genes on and off in different parts of the body and during different stages of development. These researchers from UCLA found nine regions that were significantly different between gay and straight brothers.
- ❖ This complex multi-gene interaction should not come as a surprise. For example, it is estimated that there are 16 genes involved in determining eye color and 424 in determining height, both fairly straightforward traits.

BIRTH ORDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gay men are more likely to be born after older brothers. Each additional older brother increases the odds of a man being gay by 33 percent. It has been proposed that male fetuses provoke a maternal immune reaction that becomes stronger with each successive male fetus. This effect holds even if the younger child is reared apart from his biological family.



A COMPLEX MIXTURE

Sexuality is biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual. It would be an oversimplification to say that biology is the only factor in its development.

3 WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING GENDER IDENTITY

- ❖ One perspective sees the sacred integrity of maleness or femaleness as foundational and assumes expected roles and relationships are the only ways to function faithfully in light of God's creation.
- ❖ Another point of view is to accept that these gender differences are non-moral realities. They arise because we live in a fallen world and these realities for some may not be the way it's supposed to be but they just happen, in the same way one might think of a physical or developmental disability. This view generally instills a sense of compassion in response to a person experiencing same-sex attraction or identity differences.
- ❖ A third way is to see gender differences as part of the diversity of God's creation with persons experiencing them fully acceptable in their identity as part of the community where they can know meaning and purpose.

ONE MODEL FOR A BLENDED UNDERSTANDING

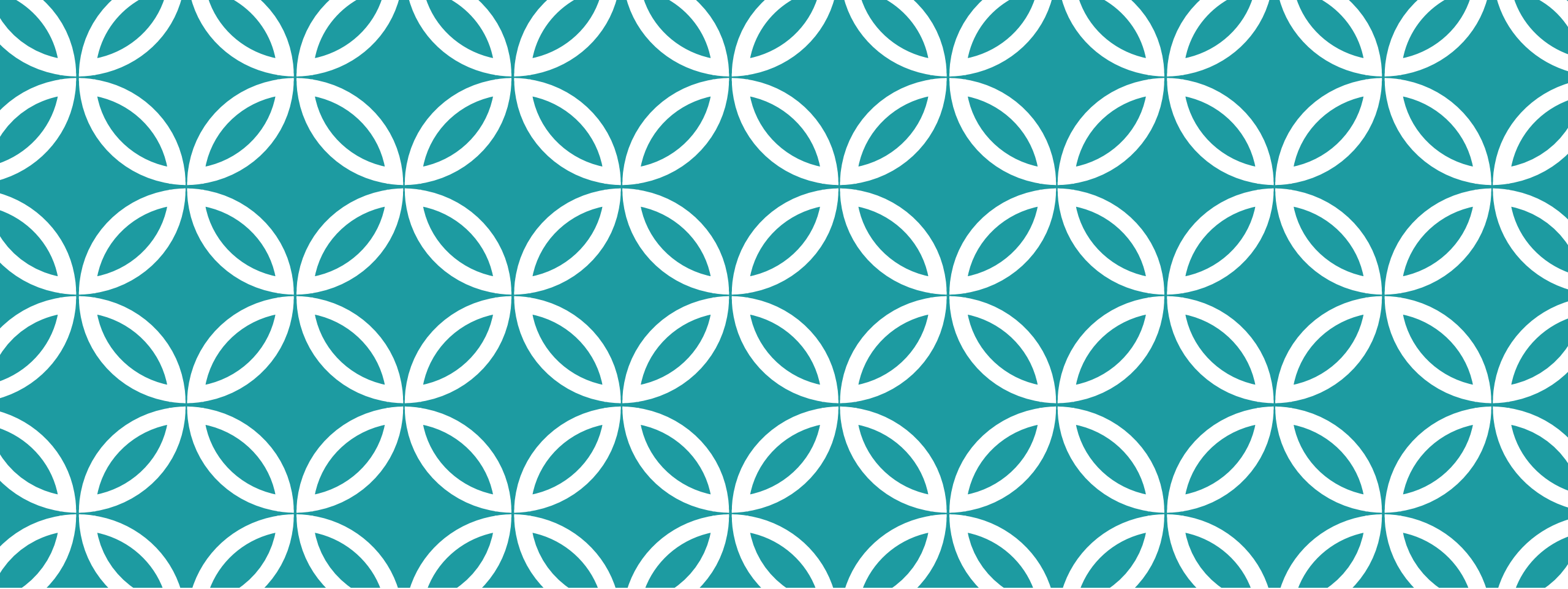
A prominent scholar has suggested Christians might draw on the best of all three points of view: sacredness of creation, compassion and community.

- ❖ The first represents a genuine concern for the integrity and sacredness of gender and the potential ways in which maleness and femaleness represent something instructive for the church and something for which we should have high regard.
- ❖ The second offers compassion and empathy, realizing that differing gender identity or sexual orientation is not the result of willful disobedience.
- ❖ The third offers the opportunity for the church to provide community and meaning making to persons in these situations.



SUMMARY

While there remain many unanswered questions, genes and other biological processes have a significant influence on the development of minority sexual identities. It is our responsibility to faithfully discern how this information, along with our experience, tradition and study of Scripture will inform our understanding.



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ADOLESCENT SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

RHONDA WALTON
with DREW BIRD

PRESENTER BIO: RHONDA WALTON, M.D.



Rhonda Walton, MD, has been a board-certified pediatrician for 30 years. She was in private pediatric practice in Waxahachie for 21 years. She left private practice about nine years ago to work in the CitySquare Community Health Services Clinic, a charity clinic in Fair Park, where the majority of her patients are immigrant adolescents. Rhonda has been married to Jim Walton for 35 years. She has four adult sons and an adult daughter (whom she adopted from Bulgaria at the age of 16). Rhonda currently serves on the Dallas County Medical Society's Access to Care and Vulnerable Populations Committee and Children's Medical Center's Health and Wellness Alliance for Children. At Wilshire, Rhonda serves on the Missions Committee and a resident lay support team.

PRESENTER BIO: DREW BIRD, M.D.



Drew Bird joined Wilshire in 2010. He and his wife, Brenda, have a newborn son, Jake. They are members of Labyrinth Class, where Drew is involved as the curriculum director. Drew was ordained as a deacon in 2013 and is currently inactive. Professionally, he is a pediatric allergist and immunologist at UT Southwestern Medical Center and director of the Food Allergy Center at Children's Medical Center.

This paper was written in collaboration with **Rhonda Walton, MD**, a board-certified pediatrician for 30 years. Rhonda works in the CitySquare Community Health Services Clinic, a charity clinic in Fair Park, where the majority of her patients are immigrant adolescents. At Wilshire, Rhonda serves on the Missions Committee and a resident lay support team.

WHEN DOES SEXUAL ORIENTATION BEGIN?

- ❖ Studies show that core attractions, which ultimately lead to adult sexual orientation, emerge between middle childhood and early adolescence. Experience of gender identity occurs much earlier.
- ❖ Feelings of romantic, emotional and sexual attraction typically emerge prior to any actual sexual experience. Teens can be completely celibate and still be aware of and confused by their emerging sexual feelings.
- ❖ Sometimes adolescents have same-sex feelings, thoughts or experiences that may initially cause significant confusion about their orientation. Typically, that confusion subsides over time, with outcomes that are different for each individual. Up to 26 percent of 12-year-old students express uncertainty about their sexual orientation as compared to only 5 percent of 17 year-olds.

WHAT CAUSES SAME-SEX ATTRACTION?

Scientific research has been unable to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any well-defined genetic, hormonal, social or cultural determinant, but is instead a complicated, multifactorial outcome. Many people believe that both “nature and nurture” play a role, but it is important to note that most LGBT individuals report they never have felt an experience of choice regarding their orientation.

DOES PARENTING PLAY A ROLE?

There is no scientific evidence that abnormal or abusive parenting, parental indifference, sexual abuse or any other specific negative childhood life event leads to same-sex attraction. Nor is there evidence that specific parental actions or characteristics prevent it.

DOES “REPARATIVE” THERAPY WORK?

- ❖ Currently, all major mental health associations and medical societies, including the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, have published policy statements expressing that they do not endorse those therapies that claim to “repair” non-heterosexual orientation.
- ❖ There is no conclusive scientific evidence that this therapy is safe or effective, and it is now generally held that “conversion” or “reparative” therapy may cause significant harm by increasing internalized stigma, frustration, confusion, and depression.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS FACING GAY TEENS?

- ❖ Just identifying as an LGBT teenager is not considered to be a high-risk behavior in medical and psychiatric literature; however, research has rapidly expanded, and much has been published recently about the effects of reported negative perceptions, parental rejection and discrimination on sexual minority teenagers.
- ❖ Many studies report significant health disparities between LGBT teens and their heterosexual counterparts. They suffer significantly higher rates of depression and are more than twice as likely to have considered suicide. Suicide is the leading cause of death among LGBT youth, who are estimated to account for up to 30 percent of youth suicides annually.

DOES TALKING ABOUT SEXUALITY WITH YOUTH ENCOURAGE EXPERIMENTATION?

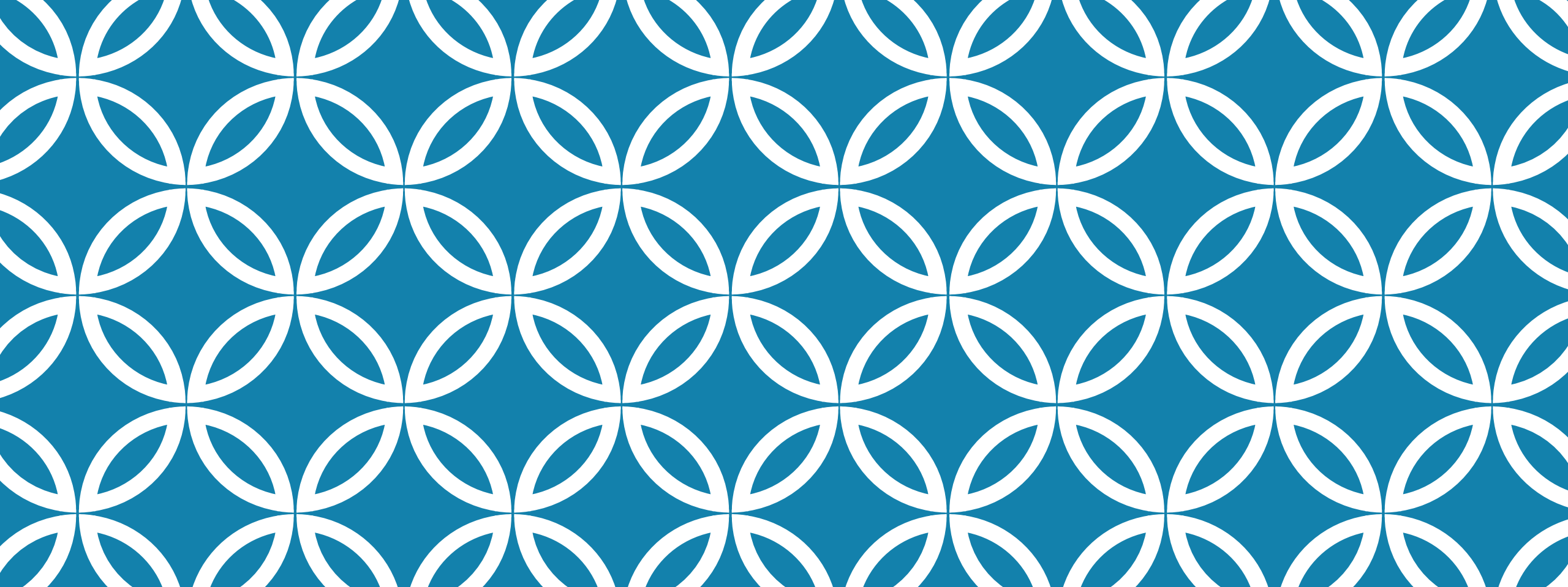
There is a common misconception that talking about sexual topics with teens may pique their curiosity or give the impression that sexual behaviors are condoned. However, there are studies that indicate that adolescents whose parents or other respected adults talk openly with them about sex in general are actually more responsible in their sexual behavior. Conversations in this space may be uncomfortable, but they are very important.

WHAT ARE YOUTH THINKING?

Our youth are trying to determine who they are and how to be in a complicated world. Adolescents can be described paradoxically as “trying to be unique ... just like everyone else.”

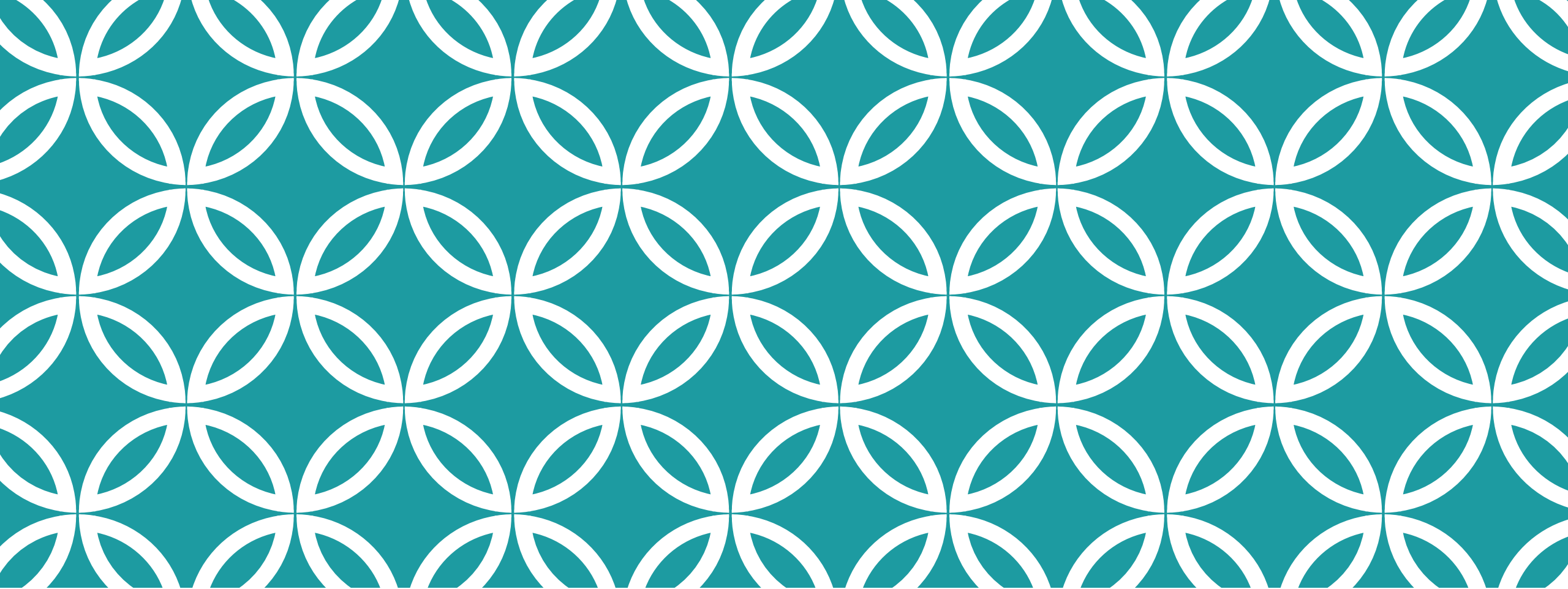
WHAT CAN WE DO TO SUPPORT YOUTH?

- ❖ Provide a safe place for them to discuss and explore their thoughts and feelings.
- ❖ Provide the opportunity for healthy connections with adults who model relationship behavior that is affirming, mutual, committed and empowering, not manipulative, oppressive or exploitive.
- ❖ With unconditional love and acceptance, demonstrate that we will walk alongside them through whatever they're experiencing.
- ❖ Nurture the Holy Spirit inside of them.
- ❖ Consistently reaffirm to them that their identity in Christ supersedes any identity they have acquired by human assignment.



QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION?

PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PRESENTATION. WE ASK THAT YOU SAVE STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES FOR A DIALOGUE SESSION.



A RANGE OF VIEWS WITHIN TODAY'S CHURCH

KILE BROWN
JILL ALLOR
JARED JAGGERS

PRESENTER BIO: KILE BROWN



Kile Brown and his wife, Leigh Ann, joined Wilshire in 1997 after moving from Savannah, Ga. Their two daughters, Chelsea and Alison, have grown up at Wilshire and both are students at Baylor University. Their son, Blake, is currently involved in the Wilshire student ministry and attends Lake Highlands Freshman Center. Kile has taught seventh grade Sunday School for 11 years, was the chairman for Sean Allen's lay advisory committee and has served as a deacon and on several committees. Professionally, Kile has a broad background in leadership, operations, sales and new business development predominantly with cutting-edge communications technologies. He is a 1992 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and a former Army Captain.

PRESENTER BIO: HENRY STONE



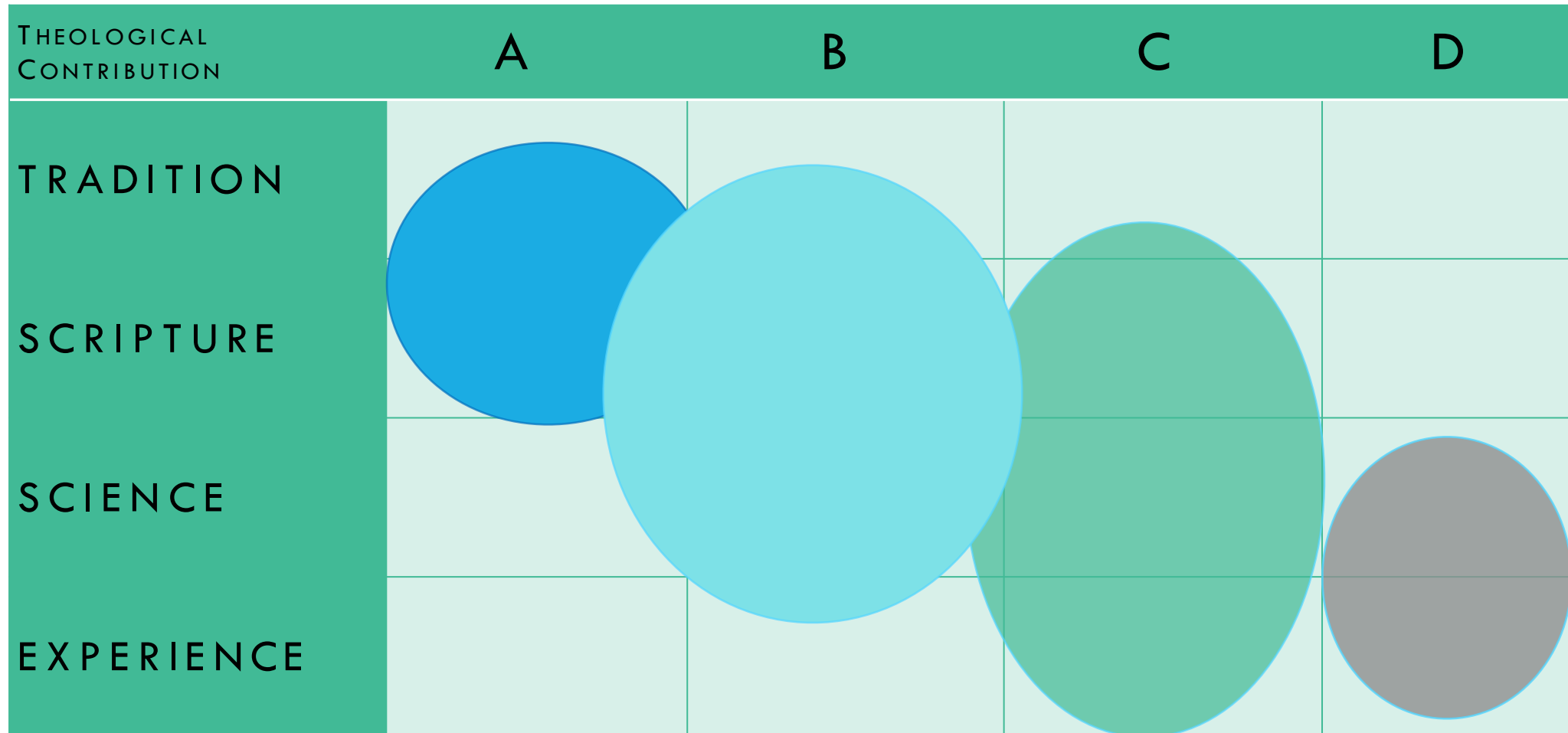
Henry Stone joined Wilshire in 2001. He is a deacon, currently inactive, and an assistant director in Foundations of Faith. He also has served on various committees. A Baylor graduate and former criminal trial attorney, he now works as a land manager in the oil-and-gas industry.

The paper Henry presents today was written by **Jared Jagers**, who holds a master's degree in religious studies from East Texas Baptist University and is a full-time seminary student at Brite Divinity School at TCU. Jared is a member of Labyrinth Class at Wilshire.

A CONTINUUM WITH FOUR VIEWS

- ❖ For ease of presentation today, we will consider a continuum with at least four mileposts along the way that describe significant viewpoints on same-sex attraction.
- ❖ These are arranged in a graph illustrating each view's reliance on Scripture, tradition, science and experience.
- ❖ Some people will have views that fall in between these four markers.
- ❖ To avoid unhelpful labels, we will call these four viewpoints A, B, C and D.
- ❖ The Study Group is not advocating for one viewpoint over another.

A RANGE WITH FOUR VIEWPOINTS



THEOLOGICAL
CONTRIBUTION

A

B

C

D

TRADITION

SCRIPTURE

SCIENCE

EXPERIENCE

'A' Views of Same-sex Attraction

- ❖ Prevents fellowship with Christ and the church
- ❖ Likely caused by environmental factors
- ❖ Can and must be cured for life in the church
- ❖ Change seen by celibacy or opposite-sex marriage

THEOLOGICAL
CONTRIBUTION

A

B

C

D

TRADITION

'B' Views of Same-sex Attraction

SCRIPTURE

- ❖ Not a sin in and of itself
- ❖ Control by spiritual discipline key to life in Christ

SCIENCE

- ❖ Life in the church possible through celibacy

EXPERIENCE

- ❖ Marriage between one man and one woman

TRADITION

‘C’ Views of Same-sex Attraction

- ❖ A mystery of human experience
- ❖ Addressed in Bible as a matter of unbounded promiscuity or lust or violation of power
- ❖ Requires celibacy outside marriage
- ❖ Allows same-sex marriage

SCRIPTURE

SCIENCE

EXPERIENCE

THEOLOGICAL
CONTRIBUTION

A

B

C

D

TRADITION

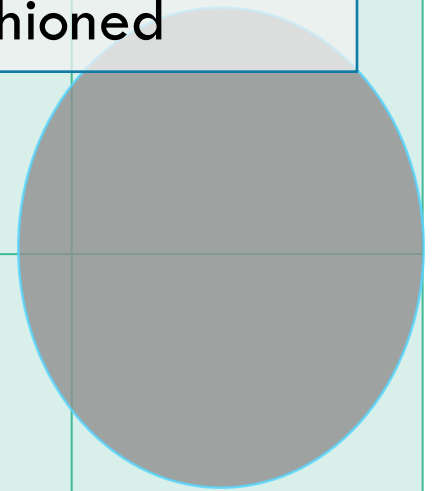
‘D’ Views of Same-sex Attraction

- ❖ Leads to fulfillment without boundaries from church
- ❖ Focus is completely experiential
- ❖ Casts aside biblical direction as old-fashioned

SCRIPTURE

SCIENCE

EXPERIENCE



THEOLOGICAL
CONTRIBUTION

A

B

C

D

TRADITION

A

B

We believe most
Wilshire members fall
within the range of
these two views.

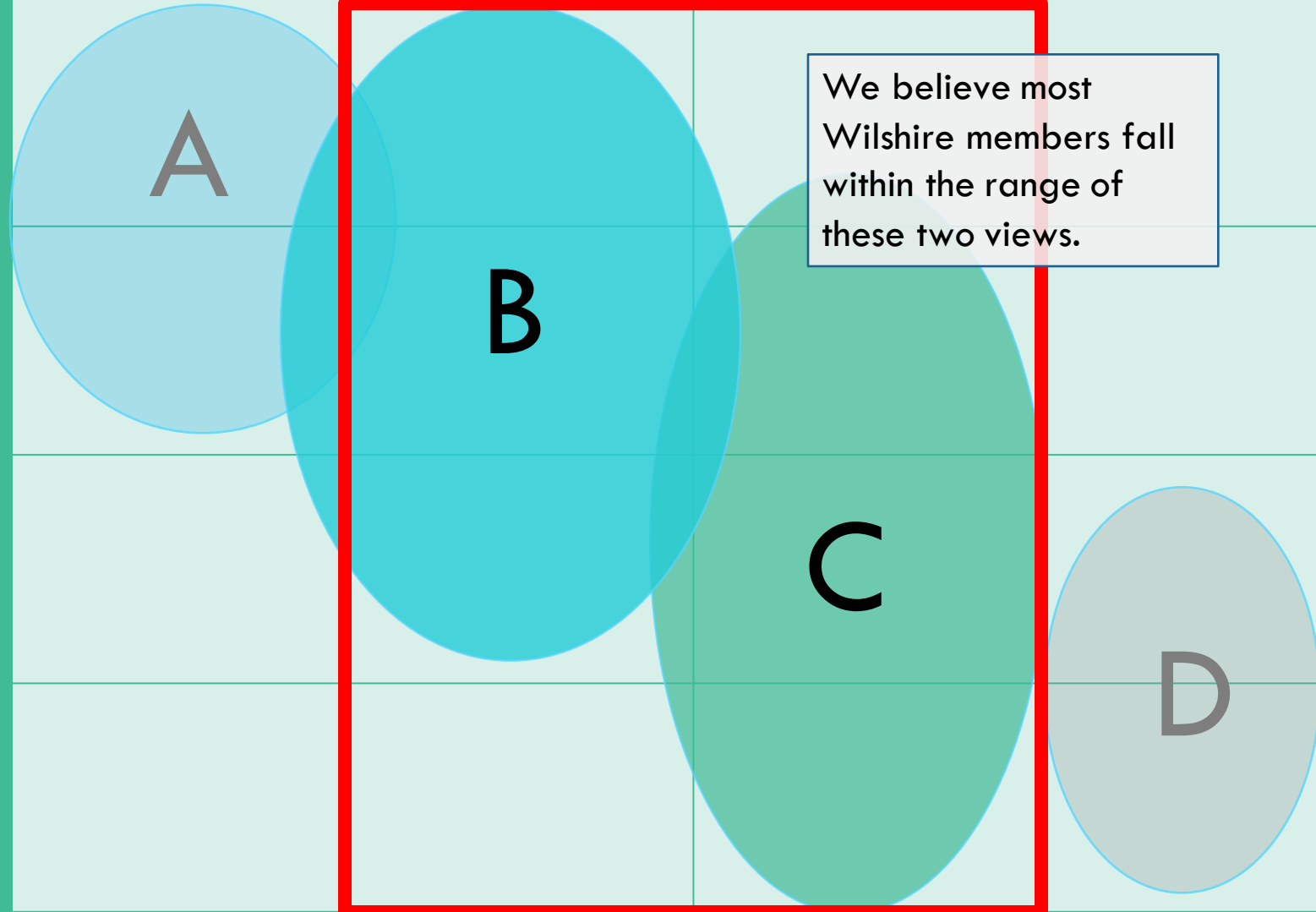
SCRIPTURE

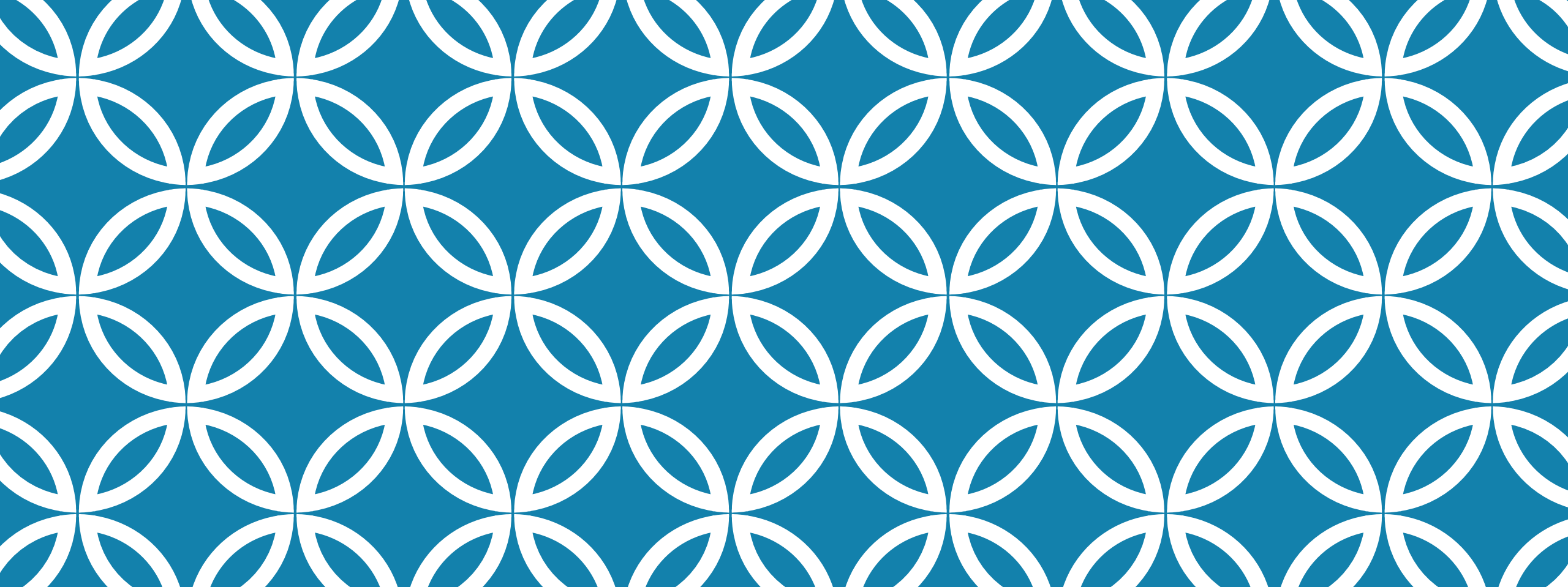
SCIENCE

C

D

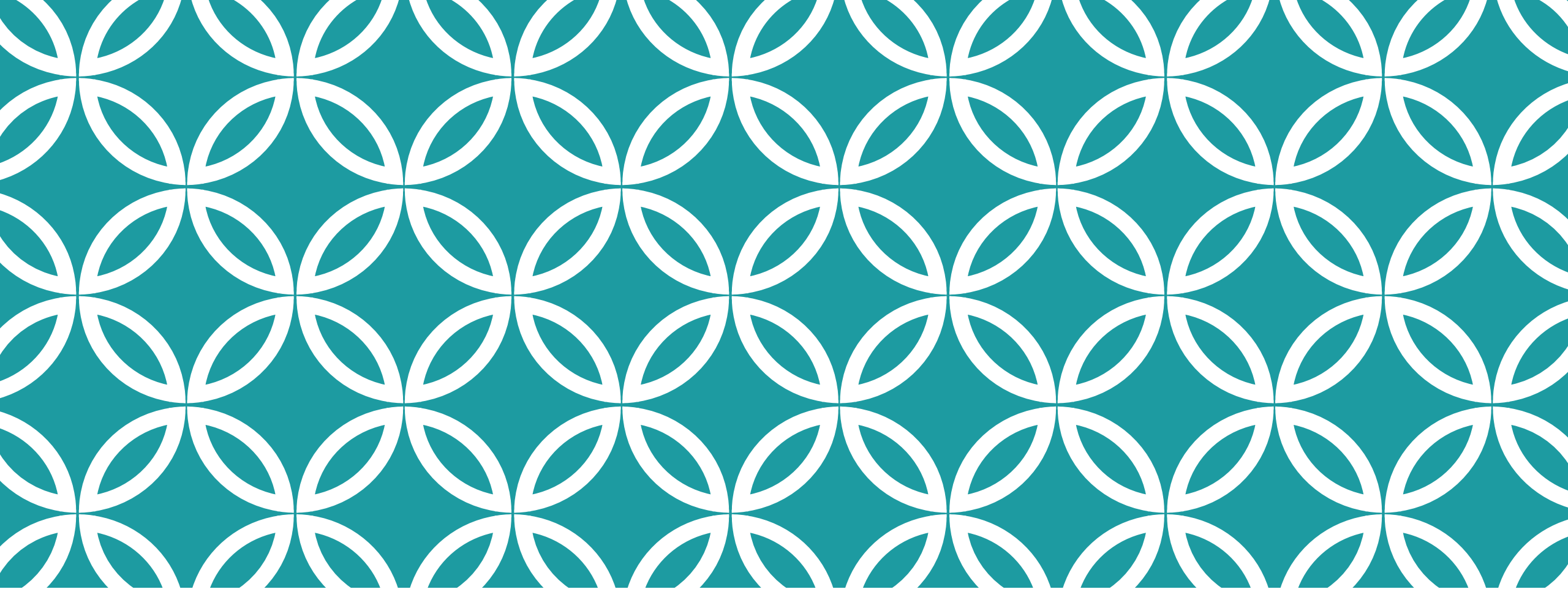
EXPERIENCE





QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION?

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UNDERSTANDING VIEW B

JILL ALLOR

PRESENTER BIO: JILL ALLOR



Jill Allor and her husband, Russ, joined Wilshire in 2012. They have two daughters, Laura (14) and Helena (12). Jill and Russ are members of Journey Class, where Jill teaches in rotation. She has been active in the Baptist church all her life. A former elementary school teacher, she earned a doctorate in education from Vanderbilt University in 1992 and is now a professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at SMU. She conducts research in the area of early literacy for students with and without disabilities.

INTRODUCTION TO VIEW B

- ❖ Represents the historical teaching of the broader Christian church. This view includes two primary teachings that have been held by the Christian church for approximately 2,000 years.
- ❖ First, Scripture teaches that Christian marriage is designed by God to be between one man and one woman.
- ❖ Second, Scripture teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful.

MARRIAGE: ONE MAN / ONE WOMAN

- ❖ **Genesis 1:27-28** emphasizes that God created both man and woman in God's image, blessed them, and told them to be fruitful and multiply.
- ❖ **Genesis 2:20-25** describes how Eve was made from Adam, that she was pronounced by Adam as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” that man leaves his mother and father and “cleaves” to his wife, they become one flesh, and they were naked and unashamed. The argument is that Eve is “suitable” (v. 20) to the man because she is similar — bone of my bones — to Adam AND also because she is different.

MARRIAGE: COMPLEMENTARITY

- ❖ Adam and Eve are both created in the image of God, yet their differences from one another allow them to be fruitful and multiply. The differences are referred to as “gender complementarity.”
- ❖ Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24 when he speaks to the seriousness of divorce, supporting the intention that marriage is a lifelong union of a man and a woman.
- ❖ Paul uses the “one flesh” phrase in 1 Corinthians in a sexual context as he warns against being “joined” to a prostitute.
- ❖ The church is referred to in the New Testament as the bride of Christ.
- ❖ In Ephesians, Paul again references the “one flesh” and “cleaving” terminology as he emphasizes that husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loves the church.

HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ The moral teaching tradition of the Christian church has been that homosexual behavior is contrary to the will of God.
- ❖ Only within the last 30 years have serious questions been raised about this teaching.
- ❖ Although there are only a few biblical texts that speak to homosexual behavior, they all express unqualified disapproval.

ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS

- ❖ Even many conservative scholars do not believe the Sodom and Gomorrah story presents a clear case against homosexuality.
- ❖ Leviticus 18 and 20, on the other hand, clearly identify homosexual behavior, specifically a man lying with a man as with a woman, as a serious sin.

ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

- ❖ Will discuss Romans in a moment.
- ❖ The passages in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy both use the Greek word about which scholars have argued. One interpretation is that Paul's use of the term is a reaffirmation of the Holiness Code referred to in the Leviticus verses that condemned homosexual behavior.

ARE THERE ONLY A FEW NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS?

- ❖ There are more than just a few texts that refer to marriage, and these consistently refer to a man and a woman.
- ❖ The few texts that are written about homosexual behavior are absolutely unequivocal and unambiguous; in all cases, they clearly view homosexual behavior as a very serious sin.
- ❖ The Bible says relatively little about homosexuality because ancient Jews and Christians all viewed homosexual behavior as a sin and, therefore, it was not a topic that needed much explanation.

AN EXAMPLE FROM ROMANS

In Romans, Paul uses homosexual behavior to illustrate a larger point about the gravity of human fallenness and how it distorts God's good created intention. In this passage, Paul goes on to say that we are all equally condemned as Romans 2:1 says, "Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things." We all must take our own sin seriously. All types of sin are taken very seriously in Scripture.

WHAT ABOUT LOVING, COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS?

- ❖ Some people today argue that the Bible does not address loving, committed, monogamous, covenantal same sex unions, as the ancient world had no concept of sexual orientation. This is referred to as the “cultural distance” argument.
- ❖ Scholars agree that in ancient times homosexual practices included extreme promiscuity, master-slave relationships, and pederasty (older men having dominating sexual relationships with younger adolescents).
- ❖ At least some scholars argue that long-term loving homosexual relationships did exist in ancient times.

FROM N.T. WRIGHT

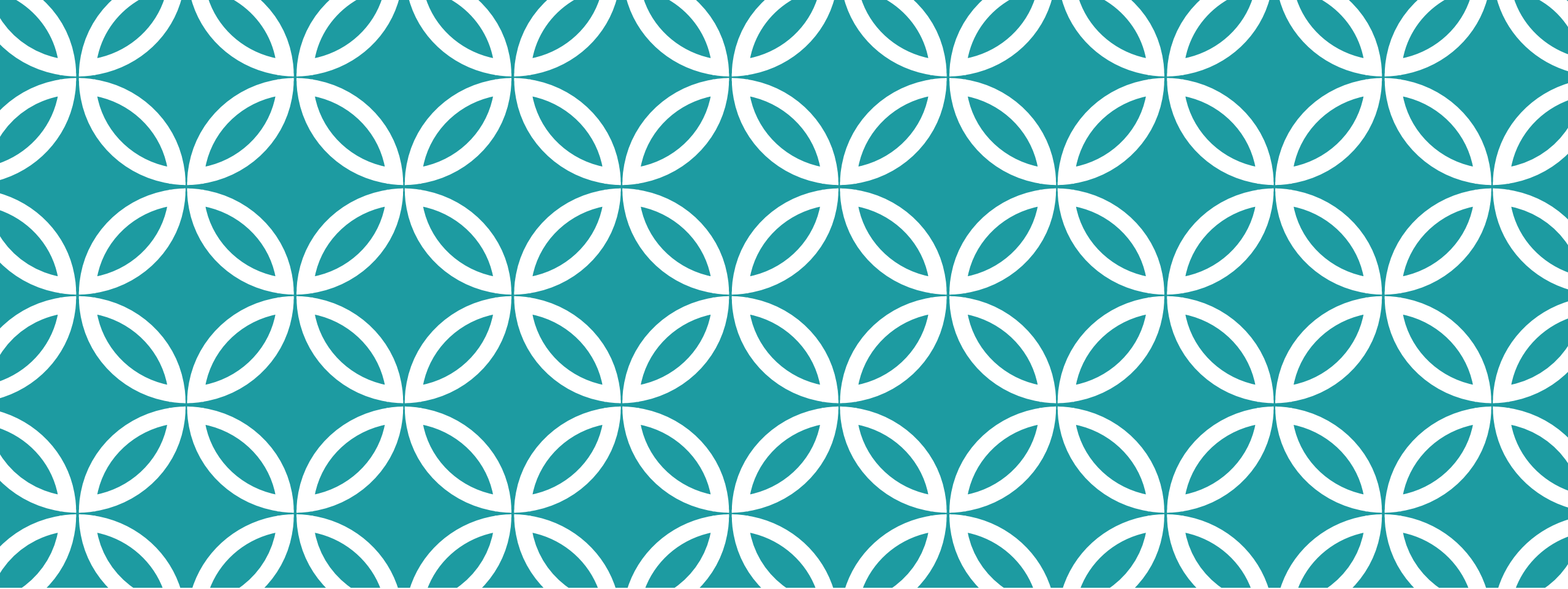
“As a classicist, I have to say that when I read Plato’s *Symposium*, or when I read the accounts from the early Roman empire of the practice of homosexuality, then it seems to me they knew just as much about it as we do. In particular, a point which is often missed, they knew a great deal about what people today would regard as longer-term, reasonably stable relations between two people of the same gender. This is not a modern invention, it’s already there in Plato. The idea that in Paul’s (day) it was always a matter of exploitation of younger men by older men or whatever ... of course there was plenty of that then, as there is today, but it was by no means the only thing. They knew about the whole range of options there.”

SUMMARY OF VIEW B

- ❖ If you look at the totality of Scripture, the overarching picture of marriage is clear and consistent. Sexual behavior outside of marriage is always viewed as sinful and serious.
- ❖ Same-sex behavior is viewed with that same negativity, and marriage between two people of the same sex is not supported in any way within Scripture.
- ❖ This view recognizes that some people, for reasons we do not understand, experience same-sex attraction.
- ❖ Although this view does not allow for homosexual behavior, it does not condemn those who experience same-sex attraction.

A FINAL WORD FROM VIEW B

- ❖ Our identity as Christians first and foremost emanates from the fact that we are children of God. We are of great worth to God regardless of our marital status.
- ❖ Jesus teaches that marriage is temporal and that our relationship with God should be given the highest priority.
- ❖ We all fall short of the goodness of God.



UNDERSTANDING VIEW C

JARED JAGGERS

PRESENTER BIO: JARED JAGGERS



Jared Jagers and his wife, Hannah, moved to Dallas in 2013 shortly after their wedding and Jared's completion of graduate school. He holds a master's degree in religious studies from East Texas Baptist University. Jared and Hannah have been members of Wilshire since February 2014 and are active in Labyrinth Class. Jared recently resigned from his position as an insurance adjuster and is a full-time seminary student at Brite Divinity School at TCU in Fort Worth. Hannah is the graphic designer at Bishop Lynch High School. Jared's professional passions lie in pastoral and educational ministry, and he also is an avid reader, runner, rock climber and coffee drinker.

OVERVIEW OF VIEW C

- ❖ Considers same-sex attraction a mystery of human experience.
- ❖ Admits our limitations for fully understanding sexuality but tends to view same-sex attraction as something that is beyond one's simple choice.
- ❖ Because one presumably does not choose to be gay or lesbian, this perspective would not consider it a sin to experience same-sex attraction.

SEEKING A COMMON STANDARD

- ❖ All people should be held to a common standard regardless of their sexual orientation, which includes celibacy as a spiritual discipline before marriage and faithfulness in marriage.
- ❖ Gay and lesbian people who are not gifted with celibacy should find fulfillment of their love in a committed, covenant relationship.
- ❖ It is inappropriate to require lifelong celibacy of those who experience persistent same-sex attraction but who do not have celibacy as a spiritual gift.
- ❖ Celibacy is a spiritual gift that is upheld as the ideal for Christian life by Paul and by Jesus, although marriage is frequently more celebrated in our churches today. See Matthew 19:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 7.

RETAINING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

- ❖ View C is not a view that rejects biblical authority for the life of Christians, but instead seeks to examine Holy Scripture and Christian tradition alongside our experiences and scientific understanding to discern the Christian response to LGBT persons.
- ❖ A traditional reading of Scripture cannot remain fully satisfactory in light of experience and reason.

RE-READING THE BIBLE

- ❖ There are many cases when we have a straightforward reading of the Bible that doesn't seem to jive with our experience of people and of reality. Example: When the author of Philemon recommends that a slave return to his master after running away.
- ❖ View C likewise considers one's experience of a gay or lesbian child, parent, friend or loved one, then reads passages condemning "homosexuality," and says, "That doesn't seem to match the people I know; it doesn't seem that we can apply that directly today."
- ❖ Cannot read the Bible in a traditional way without profound dissonance between our experience of a loved one who is gifted by God's grace and the idea that God considers that person an abomination. Reason and experience as sources of Christian authority lead the Christian to reexamine the Bible and Christian tradition to discern why they don't seem to coincide.

ABOUT LUST AND EXCESS

- ❖ Most of the Bible's condemnations of same-sex relations are in regard to its being an excess of lust or abusive sexual activity.
- ❖ Those holding View C differ from View B in claiming that the Bible is silent about this topic largely because same-sex relationships in ancient times were of a different nature than what we are contemplating in our time. The Bible refers to something different than we do when discussing loving same-sex relationships, since same-sex orientation was not imagined by biblical authors.
- ❖ The majority of same-sex relationships in ancient times involved (at the very least) an inappropriate power dynamic. A common example is that of a Greek philosopher who would have sexual encounters with his younger, male students.
- ❖ It was assumed that all people were naturally heterosexual, but they may at times have become so overcome by lustful desire that they sought sexual experiences with their own sex as well.



ABOUT COMPLEMENTARITY

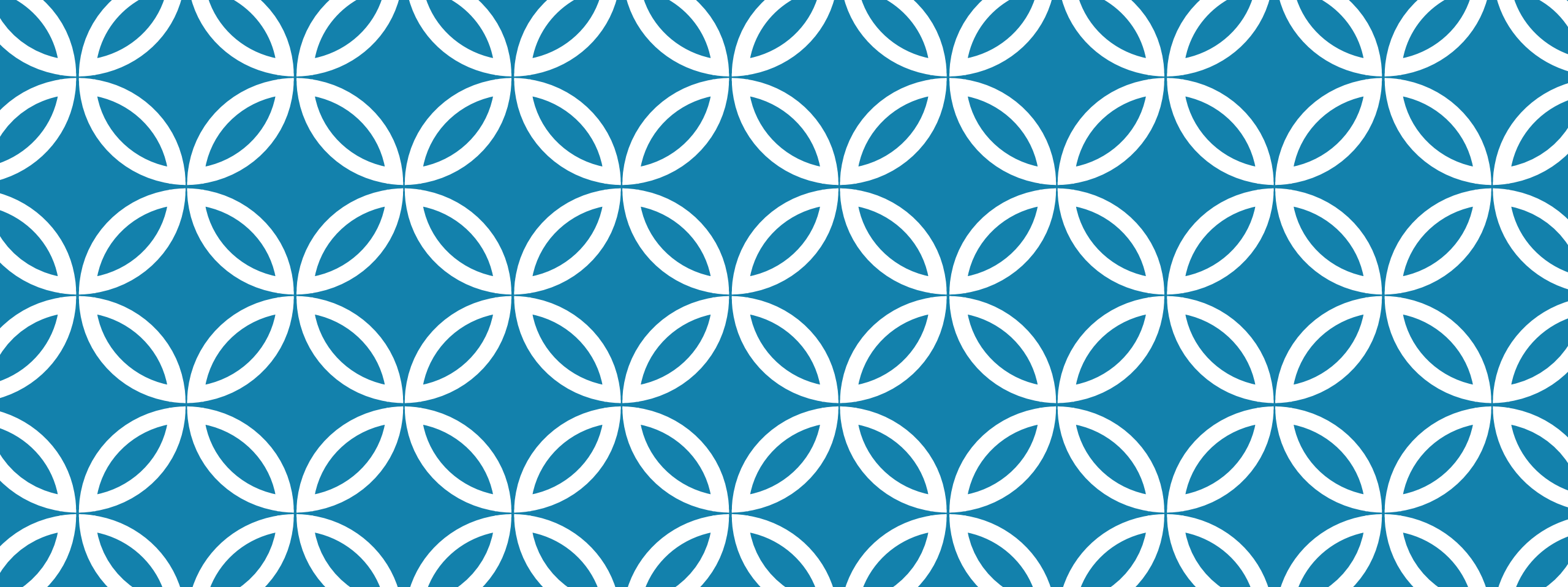
The gender complementarity concept of two people being joined as “one flesh” is based on two people being different human beings, not based on them having different anatomy. It is a relational complementarity rather than a sexual or biological complementarity.

ABOUT THE BIBLICAL TEXTS

- ❖ The Old Testament passages about homosexuality are not definitive.
- ❖ Sodom story is not about homosexuality.
- ❖ Leviticus prohibitions do not settle the matter because Christians have disregarded many sexual and purity requirements of the Old Testament since the earliest centuries after Christ.
- ❖ Regarding Paul's argument in Romans 1, if there is such a thing as same-sex orientation, it would therefore be more "unnatural" for a gay or lesbian person to have sexual relations with a person of the opposite sex than to live according to their orientation.
- ❖ The people of God have to "walk by the Spirit," as Paul says, and discern the Christian response in light of the overall narrative of Jesus and the gospel.
- ❖ Acts offers an example to follow as the church determined to include the Gentiles in light of new information following the resurrection of Christ.

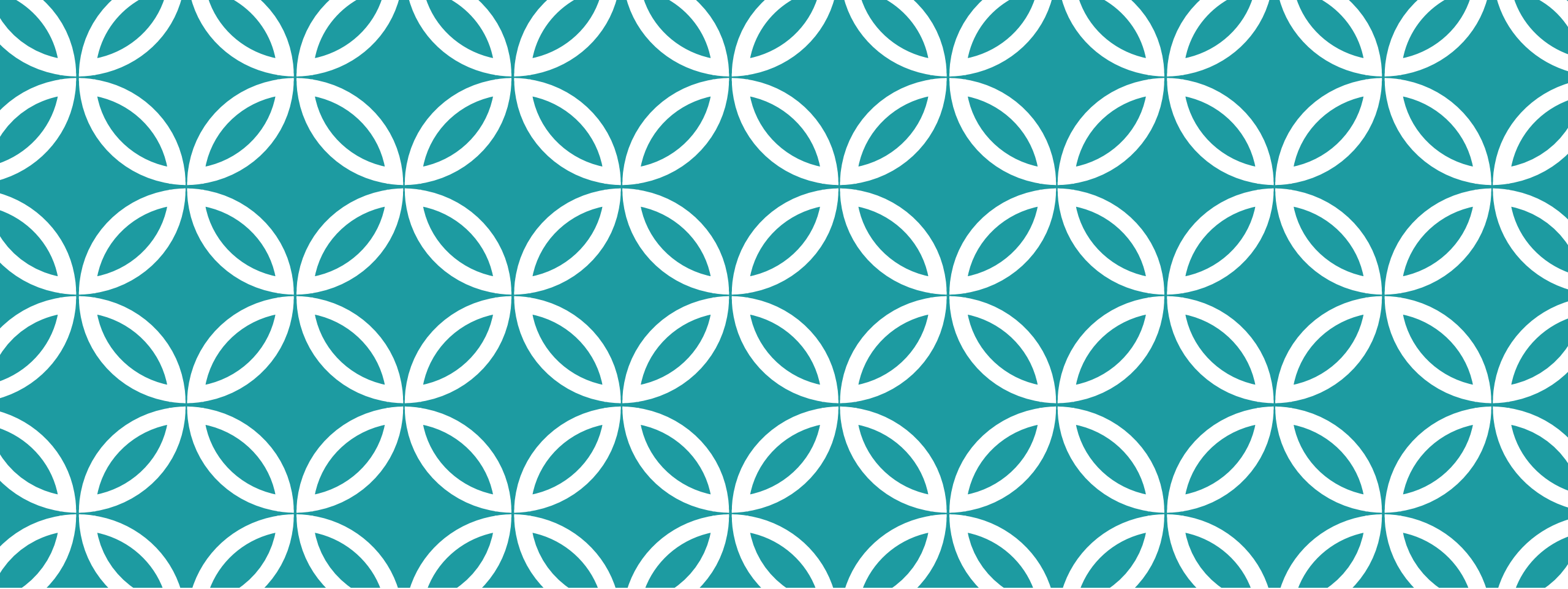
SUMMARY OF VIEW C

- ❖ Same-sex attraction is not a sin and should be viewed as part of the mysterious and beautiful diversity of creation.
- ❖ The Bible is not clear in its ethical admonitions regarding same-sex relationships as we know them in the 21st century, so Christians have to discern an ethic without pointing to proof-texts.
- ❖ Gay and lesbian Christians should be held to the same sexual standards as straight Christians.
- ❖ Faithful Christians with same-sex attraction should consider whether they have the gift of celibacy in singleness, but if they believe their love for another person of the same sex should be fulfilled in the covenant relationship of marriage, the church should consider this as an equally plausible means of glorifying God as a response of human love the same way heterosexual married couples may.



QUESTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION?

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THE PRESENTATION. WE ASK
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DIALOGUE SESSION.



CLOSING COMMENTS

JAMES PERRY

WHAT'S NEXT?

- ❖ More information seminars offered. Please encourage others to attend.
- ❖ Roundtable dialogues for hearing from each other.
- ❖ Study Group will process all input and continue its prayerful work.
- ❖ At some point, the Study Group will report to the deacons. There is no timetable and no preset expectation about this report.
- ❖ Deacons will consider any recommendations before they go to the congregation.

UPCOMING ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUES

- ❖ Saturday, March 19, noon to 1:30 p.m.
- ❖ Sunday, April 3, noon to 1:30 p.m. (lunch provided)