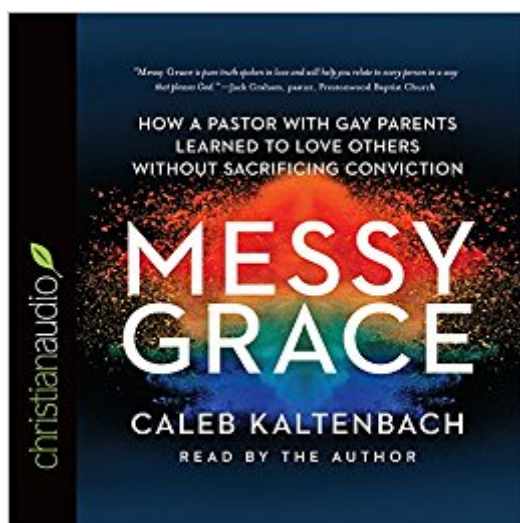


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# Messy Grace: How A Pastor With Gay Parents Learned To Love Others Without Sacrificing Conviction



## Synopsis

Sometimes grace gets messy. Caleb Kaltenbach was raised by LGBT parents, marched in gay pride parades as a youngster, and experienced firsthand the hatred and bitterness of some Christians toward his family. But then Caleb surprised everyone, including himself, by becoming a Christian and a pastor. Very few issues in Christianity are as divisive as the acceptance of the LGBT community in the church. As a pastor and as a person with beloved family members living a gay lifestyle, Caleb had to face this issue with courage and grace. "Messy Grace" shows us that Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself doesn't have an exception clause for a gay neighbor or for that matter, any other neighbor we might find it hard to relate to. Jesus was able to love these people and yet still hold on to his beliefs. So can you even when it's messy. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

## Book Information

Audio CD

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## Customer Reviews

“There is no shortage of books on how Christians can lovingly and meaningfully engage their gay family members and friends. Caleb Kaltenbach has an important message for everyone who shares a commitment to both grace and truth.” —Jim Daly, president, Focus on the Family

“Caleb Kaltenbach came out to his parents. This is the story of that coming out. Only this time, it was a Christian teen coming out to his gay parents. The book combines undeniable experiences with clear biblical arguments. Add the gracious tone throughout and you have a powerful book.” —Mark Dever, pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, president of 9Marks.org

“Caleb Kaltenbach

cuts through the confusion and talks about what it really means to love people and what is really means to follow God – and how they are not mutually exclusive ideas. The answer the world is looking for is messy and it's full of grace. Reggie Joiner, CEO and founder of Orange – Caleb's story is surprising and unique, and he weaves it together compellingly. He states his views clearly, leaves room for disagreement, and champions love no matter where you are in this conversation. Jud Wilhite, senior pastor, Central Christian Church – "Messy Grace, written by my friend Caleb Kaltenbach, is a personal story of God's incredible grace and a call to love people as God loves. The message of this important book combines grace and truth and offers hope to a broken generation. Messy Grace is pure truth spoken in love and will help you relate to every person in a way that pleases God." Jack Graham, pastor, Prestonwood Baptist Church – "Caleb Kaltenbach came out to his parents. This is the story of that coming out. Only this time, it was a Christian teen coming out to his gay parents. The book combines undeniable experiences with clear biblical arguments. Add the gracious tone throughout and you have a powerful book." Mark Dever, pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, president of 9Marks.org – "Caleb's story down categories, crushes stereotypes, and will make you think differently than you thought before – regardless of your convictions. Anyone who loves Jesus and loves friends and family members who are LGBT is going to want to read this fascinating book. Okay, scratch the conditions. I think anyone is going to want to read this book." Carey Nieuwhof, author of Leading Change without Losing It, blogger and lead pastor of Connexus Church – "There may be no greater mess for the church than the question of how to engage with the LGBT community. Messy Grace shows how grace can enter into the mess of life and draw people to God's love and goodness of God." Darrell L. Bock, executive director for cultural engagement and senior research professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary – "I loved Messy Grace! These pages are filled with humility, compassion, and powerful insights as Caleb's story profoundly demonstrates that grace is both messy and beautiful." Mike Foster, People of the Second Chance – "This is an important conversation for the church today and no one's story makes them better suited for it than Caleb Kaltenbach. In a world that tries to force everyone to take sides, Caleb speaks from the inside of both worlds. Gay or straight, Christian or non-Christian, everyone can learn from and be impacted by Messy Grace." Lane Jones, director of North Point Strategic Partners, North Point Ministries, and co-author of Communicating

for a Change” Pastor Kaltenbach gives his readers much help on what to do and what not to do among LGBT people. At the same time, he recognizes, and emphasizes, that this is a messy world, and that God calls us to affirm Jesus in the midst of the messiness, rather than to expect a precise answer to every question.

•Dr. John Frame, J.D. Trimble professor of Systematic Theology & Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary

“Some authors have inspirational stories to tell while others have insightful points to make, what makes Caleb’s writing so powerful is that God has given him both.”

•Kyle Idleman, author of Not a Fan and teaching pastor at Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY

“No matter what your opinion is on the Bible and sexuality, this book provides a very worthwhile and refreshing look into a very amazing grace-filled story threaded with compassionate truth.”

•Dan Kimball, pastor, Vintage Faith Church and author of They Like Jesus But Not the Church

“I appreciate how Caleb has personally walked in the midst of this issue. He does a good job balancing compassion with those who are self-proclaimed homosexuals and the church’s response.”

•Chap Clark, professor of Youth, Family & Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary

“The church needs to get this issue right. Messy Grace is an outstanding book that every Christian needs to read. Not only will you enjoy Caleb’s casual and humorous writing style, you will be challenged to live in grace and truth, just like Jesus.”

•Sean McDowell, PhD, professor at Biola University, popular speaker, and the co-author of over fifteen books including Same-Sex Marriage

“Caleb Kaltenbach is not your usual pastor. And I thank God for that. His story is approachable, authentic, and an important contribution to the conversation of Christianity and sexuality.”

•Gene Appel, senior pastor, Eastside Christian Church

“Messy Grace describes perfectly the ominous, yet delightful, assignment of the church to paddle its boat between the Scylla of grace and the Charybdis of truth. While I would not have said everything exactly like Caleb Kaltenbach expressed it, I do affirm that this book is one that any church taking seriously the command to follow Christ must read and seriously contemplate.”

•Paige Patterson, president, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Messy Grace is a wonderful, well-written and highly readable account of the author’s remarkable journey being raised in the gay community and how he came to faith. Caleb Kaltenbach provides insightful guidance to churches and families in dealing with LGBT issues that goes beyond the worn-out platitudes that have characterized this discussion for some time.”

•Scott B. Rae, Ph.D., dean of faculty, professor of Christian Ethics, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

“An Evangelical minister and the son of a

gay father and a gay mother, Caleb is in a unique position to help us view the LGBT community as valued souls needing salvation instead of unworthy degenerates deserving condemnation. Many of us grew up in traditional churches that were sometimes long on truth but short on grace, especially concerning the LGBT community. Caleb's book goes a long way in helping develop a more biblical understanding of this controversial issue.

•Bob Russell, retired senior minister, Southeast Christian Church"Through the eyes of someone who has seen the dark side of modern day Pharisees in the church, Caleb shares a perspective on the way words and actions alienate the very people who need to hear the Gospel message of love, grace, repentance, and forgiveness. Just ignoring this issue in churches will not make it go away.

•Dr. John Derry, president of Hope International University"We're living in a culture where it is more important than ever to understand how to balance grace and truth when it comes to same-sex issues. We can be loving and hold on to truth at the same time. This book will encourage you and challenge you to love others as Jesus did.

•Jim Garlow, senior pastor, Skyline Wesleyan Church"Finally a book on a divisive issue that is handled with grace and truth. Caleb has seen both sides of the issue firsthand and his counsel is something the church today needs to hear. This is a must read for pastors and church leaders.

•Don Wilson, senior pastor, Christ's Church of the Valley"I found this book impossible to put down and read it one sitting. The story is riveting and the gospel pulsates throughout the book. Kaltenbach charts out for us what it looks like to be people of grace and truth, to be people of mercy with a mission.

•Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner, James Buchanan Harrison professor of New Testament Interpretation, associate dean at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary"Caleb Kaltenbach has seen both sides of this controversial and complex topicfrom his parents and from his pulpit. While it's tough for everyone to agree on such delicate issues, Caleb takes us back to Scripture.

•Pastor Dave Stone, Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY"I have known Caleb for many years and know of no one more imminently qualified to address the single most controversial subject of our day and to do so with love and grace. Sharing his challenges as a son of gay parents and his convictions as a servant of Christ will keep you engaged to the very last page. What at first may appear to be an inconceivable fictional tale turns out to be absolutely true and impossible to ignore.

•Barry Cameron, senior pastor, Crossroads Christian Church"Whether you are straight or part of the LGBT community, a Christian or not a follower of Jesus, it will benefit you to read this book. Prepare to be challenged. Prepare to repent. Prepare to be changed. It will transform the way you look at and treat others. I couldn't put

it down. • Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary “A story that will move you. A spirit that will inspire you. A pastor’s wisdom that will teach you. Questions that will challenge you. Kaltenbach’s exhortation to both treat gay people lovingly, and hold true to one’s convictions, is both winsome and challenging. His wisdom flows from life, being raised by two gay parents, coming to Christ, and sharing Christ’s love with his parents and loved ones. I read with rapt attention, wanting to see his story unfold, and to benefit from the insight his experiences yield for the church. Grace is messy, and that’s OK. It’s possible to live in grace and truth. Christ’s love is higher, purer, and truer than the positions we take, or the sides we join. A rich, readable, provocative, and persuasive read.” • Jenell Paris, Ph.D., professor of anthropology, Messiah College and author of *The End of Sexual Identity* “Everyone has a story, but I don’t know anyone with a story quite like my friend Caleb’s. Growing up with gay parents, Caleb’s life was completely rewritten when he met Jesus. Here he shares his story with a leader’s wisdom, a preacher’s convictions and a pastor’s tender heart. When I talk with families (and churches) wrestling with how to love someone who is gay, I will put this book in their hands.” • Matt Proctor, president at Ozark Christian College “Caleb has communicated how Jesus answered the issues of messiness and my prayer is many will be helped and prepared to help those who face the challenges in our world in the future.” • Douglas Crozier, CEO of The Solomon Foundation “Real, relevant, and relational” • Messy Grace steps right into the existing chasm between the Christian community and the gay community and provides the sound biblical direction about how the gospel is the grounds for how we can mend and connect in a Christ-honoring way.” • Bryan Carter, senior pastor, Concord Church, Dallas, TX “Caleb Kaltenbach has the most unique perspective on the LGBT issue humanly possible. Because of his parents’ orientation, he was bred to hate Christians. Then he became one. Now he leads them. Caleb fluently speaks both the language and the emotion of both sides of the issue. And he desperately wants to help us stop picking sides and learn to love like Jesus. He is a great leader, writer, and friend—as well as a walking example of how love Messy Grace works.” • Dr. Tim Harlow, senior pastor, Parkview Christian Church “With uncompromising conviction, Kaltenbach teaches each one of us to hear the heart of God and to be the face of Christ in a broken world. The call for mercy, love, grace and compassion are written on every page and are both highly courageous and poignantly

raw. •Michelle Anthony, author of *Spiritual Parenting and Building a Spiritually Healthy Family* "Pastor Caleb Kaltenbach's story is one of pain and alienation, pride and determination, brokenness and eventually the healing love of Jesus Christ. This powerful book is a must read for both Christians and non-Christians alike, sure to illuminate those dark moments that we are all guaranteed to encounter as well as the glorious plan of redemption that can only be weaved by the Master Himself. •Frank Sontag, host of The Frank Sontag Show on 99.5 KKLA "The narrative in *Messy Grace* is strong and compelling. It's an easy read, and the writing is clear, funny, and profound. Readers will learn how to stand in the tension of truth and grace as they identify with Caleb through all the messiness, tears, victory, and sin." -The Gospel Coalition "A fascinating story about how this young man, born to two gay parents and raised by his mother and her partner, ultimately came to faith in Christ and is today a pastor of a growing church. In the process of reading Caleb's story, he also offers readers valuable insights about how to engage gay people with the gospel in a faithful yet winsome manner that shows the love of Christ rather than anger and rejection. This is an important issue in today's culture, and church leaders need to understand the realities discussed so effectively in this book. •Preaching Magazine --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Caleb Kalenbach is the Lead Pastor at Discovery Church in Simi Valley, CA. Raised in the LGBT community, he was exposed to how some Christians treated the LGBT community, and grew to hate Christians. In high school, he joined a Bible study to disprove the Bible, but ended up following Jesus instead. Later, his parents followed Jesus too. This is the subject of his first book, "*Messy Grace*" --holding on to the truth of God's Word while being filled with grace. Caleb is a graduate of Ozark Christian College, Talbot School of Theology (Biola University), and is finishing his doctorate at Dallas Theological Seminary. He speaks widely on the subjects of reconciliation, faith, diversity, and grace/truth. Caleb and his wife, Amy, reside in Southern California with their two kids.

Caleb Kaltenbach is a pastor with a unique past. When he was still a child, his mother divorced his father and married another woman. Meanwhile, his father hid his own homosexuality until Caleb was in college. He grew up completely immersed in gay culture: going to pride parades, tagging along with his mom and her partner to parties, and watching his parents maligned by 'Christians.' One story in particular broke my heart. When he was a teenager, he went with his mom and her partner to a gay pride parade. While there, they met a group of 'Christian' hecklers waving signs that said, "Fags go away," and "Jesus has no room for you." The hecklers used water-guns to

shoot them with urine. As they were being verbally and physically demeaned, Caleb looked at his mother and asked her, "Why are those people acting like that?" Her response was heartbreaking: "Well, Caleb, they're Christians, and Christians hate gay people. Christians don't like anyone who's not like them." It would be easy for us, as Christians, to immediately object, "I don't hate gay people. I'm just speaking the truth." But what do our actions say? Are our lives proclaiming God's Gospel of love to all creation? Or, have we predetermined who is worthy of hearing God's plan to reconcile all humanity back to himself? If there's one issue that many in the Church have dropped the ball on, it's the issue of homosexuality. Most Christians simply haven't been equipped to deal with this complex and sensitive subject. And by the way, this is a topic that isn't going away. We need to learn how to deal with this issue in a way that reflects both the truth of God's Word and his great love for every member of the human family. 'Messy Grace' is an important book for Christians to read and understand as they meet their gay friends, family members, or neighbors. Kaltenbach is plain about his purpose for writing this book: "I wrote this book for anyone who wants to know how to relate with grace and truth toward members of the LGBT community." He delivers exactly what he hoped to. He walks the fine line between grace and truth, never making room for sin on either side. One whole chapter is dedicated to what the Bible says about homosexuality - he even deals with some common arguments against what scripture plainly teaches (his rebuttal to the argument that "Jesus never said anything about homosexuality" is fantastic). However, he also lambasts Christians who act more like self-righteous Pharisees than Jesus - unwilling to befriend or reach out to their gay neighbors, treating them more like lepers than people who have been made in the image of God. He tells about one of his mother's friends who got AIDs. Right before he passed away, they visited him in the hospital and watched as his family stood far away from him. Unwilling to touch their dying son and brother because of his sickness. How tragic! And what a contrast to the way Jesus was willing to touch those who society deemed unclean. Throughout this book, Kaltenbach encourages Christians to follow in the footsteps of Christ by pursuing others while they are still sinners. Paul tells us in Romans, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). This verse followed me the whole time I was reading this book. God loved me, he pursued me, he sent his son to die for me - all while I was a sinner, despising and rejecting him. If we are truly going to be followers of Jesus, we must reenact this same pursuit of those that God loves. We ought to pursue, love, and give our lives to those that God is loving. We ought to show sacrificial love to our gay neighbors while they are yet sinners. We need to once-and-for-all do away with the notion that someone must get their moral act together before we extend grace and love. Grace and love must be shown while they are yet sinners. Grace and love



are the catalyst for life-transformation; not the reward for it. Over the course of the book, Kaltenbach tells his own story, the story of becoming a Christian pastor despite having two very liberal, gay parents. Throughout each chapter, he draws out important lessons about how to show our gay neighbors the love of God. He includes a lot of practical information and even points a way forward for churches to help people who are experiencing homosexual temptations. Was there anything I didn't like about it? Honestly, I had to try to find something negative to say. In the last chapter or two, he tells about how his parents finally began attending church and got saved. In his discussion on homosexuals who get saved, he makes it clear that living a homosexual lifestyle is not compatible with Christianity; however, there was a time or two that I wished he had used the word 'repent' to describe the complete turning involved in coming to faith in Jesus. I believe the idea is in the text but there was a time or two when someone reading a sentence out of context might think that he doesn't see a complete change as necessary. But ultimately, this is a very minor issue. The book as a whole is clear that the issue of homosexuality needs to be addressed via the middle way of love, holding on to both grace and truth. It's a fantastic guide for every believer that wants to see the Kingdom advance in our culture. We need to be equipped to talk intelligently and sensitively about this subject. This book is a great introduction for that exact purpose. May we all learn to walk the way of grace, truth, and love.

Amazing book! Definitely should be on the reading list of many believers especially those who have questions about how to interact well with LGBT community. I appreciate how the author presents truth, grace, and love in this conversation. He also leaves room for some disagreement and for the reader to apply biblical truth and grace in a different manner given the uniqueness of a situation. This topic is quite difficult to discuss at this level as there are some clear doctrinal points made in Scripture but also the reality that Christ lived out His doctrine in a fully loving way that brought sinners close instead of driving them away. All in all, I highly recommend this book, and it is probably one of the best that I will read this year.

This is a tremendous book worthy of all of God's people to read. Pastor Kaltenbach provides us with ways we as a church can better understand homosexuality and most importantly to me, he shares how we should respond to such persons in a godly manner. I was quite impressed that we as Christians should not change the truth of God's Word as we have opportunity to interact and minister to those within the homosexual community. Please read it and you will be amazed how a man was raised by a lesbian mother and her partner while living at times with his homosexual

father. And out of this background becomes a Christian minister. You will receive a quality education if you peruse this book. I urge you to do so!

I just finished reading this and thought it was well-written, realistic and faithful to the truth of the gospel. The author's story is amazing and unique and he does a great job trying to help Christians and the homosexual community understand each other a little better, as well as understand God's heart for all of us. His communication style is humble, honest and loving. I work at a church and really appreciated the opportunity to read this.

This is a must-read for 221st Century believers, though the personal theology expounded in these pages is relevant to many divisive issues, not just homosexuality. Every sinner can benefit from a little messy grace in his life. I highly recommend this book specifically to church leaders and lay-leaders, and to college students who will find their beliefs challenged on a higher academic level than the emotional browbeating of high school.

This book was a great read and well balanced. The author had lived through homosexuality because of his parents lifestyle but having come to the knowledge of what God's Word said realized how our identity in Christ should be lived out. He didn't deviate from the scriptural basis of truth but also valued what love and God's grace can do to win the heart of another as they come to see that their identity is being a disciple of Christ. I think the book would be of value to be read both by Christians and those struggling with their sexual orientation . Christians should seek how Jesus views people. We need a heavenly lens rather than a judgmental lens. Jesus brings love and hope.

The answer, well if I tell you that you won't read the book. However, you asking yourself if this is a book I should read and that I can answer... YES! Caleb unpacks a very tense subject with honesty and clarity. He gives insight as a boy who grew up in the LGBT Community and then explains how Christians and leaders within the Church should balance the idea of grace and truth. You see Caleb's heart and his love for people in his writings, but more you see his passion for Jesus and the local church. Anyone who serves on staff at a church must add this book to their library and refer to it often. I hope you will get as much out of Messy Grace as I did.

i highly recommend this book. Every Christian should read it, especially those who are in the habit of pointing fingers. Explores the tension between grace and truth while not compromising biblical

principals. We are all messy.....ALL of us. Love our neighbors as ourselves.....not just the ones we "approve" of. A thought provoking read that I could not put down.

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