

# Talking to others about faith and identity

## Conversation Starters

Sometimes, it's easiest to start potentially awkward conversations with my friends or family around something specific. National Coming Out Day, Pride Month, and Transgender Day of Remembrance are all national events that could spark a conversation. You don't need to wait for a special occasion to talk about sexual orientation or gender identity with those close to you however. It could be as simple as "Hey, got a sec to talk?" Or bringing it up over burgers and fries. Ultimately, you'll know what's best. Here are some things to think about:

### **Why do you want to talk to this person about the intersection of your faith and LGBTQ identities?**

- While it's not the whole of who we are, for LGBTQ people, sexual orientation and gender identity are important parts of our lives and experiences. It's important for people close to us to have the opportunity to love and understand are full humanity.
- Vulnerability strengthens us. We won't be shy about it—these conversations can be tough. We follow a crucified Lord who asks us to make tough decisions and who promises to see us through them. Our trials—the ones that we chose to meet head-on—form us, mold us, and perfect us. We remember the old church song "Nobody told me it would be easy, but I don't believe God brought me this far to leave."

### **With a roommate or friend**

- Do you talk about romantic relationships (or potential romantic relationships) with your roommate or friend? This could be a time to talk about sexual orientation.
- How does gender play into your experiences? How do gender roles and assumptions affect you? A specific event could serve as a conversation starter?
- Can you find common ground in the experience of falling for someone for the first time?

### **With a family member**

- We want and expect our parents to "have our back" and to be involved in our lives. It can be important to remind our family members of our motivations behind bringing up tough topics.
- Have your parents said anything relating to gender or orientation which made you uncomfortable in the past? This is an opportunity for reconciliation and growth.
- Are you pursuing a relationship? It is natural for children to tell their parents about relationships, for LGBTQ people, it doesn't have to be different. "Mom, Dad, I recently started dating someone and I want you to know because it brings me joy and I want you to be a part of this with me!"

### **With a pastor**

- If your church teaches that LGBTQ identities are sick and sinful, you can talk to your pastor about how that doctrine has affected your life.
- When I talked to my pastor from home, we focused the conversation mainly on pastoral concerns and I referred him to books and articles for his theological questions. We had plenty to talk about - how growing up and realizing I was gay affected my relationship with the Lord and with the church, how comfortable I would feel attending, if I would still attend regularly, etc.
- Your pastor may have a different viewpoint than the denomination or even the church. If so, how can you help them be an ally?
- What are other religious leaders in your denomination or area saying?
- Does the church have any openly LGBTQ members? If not, why don't they feel safe or comfortable coming out?

