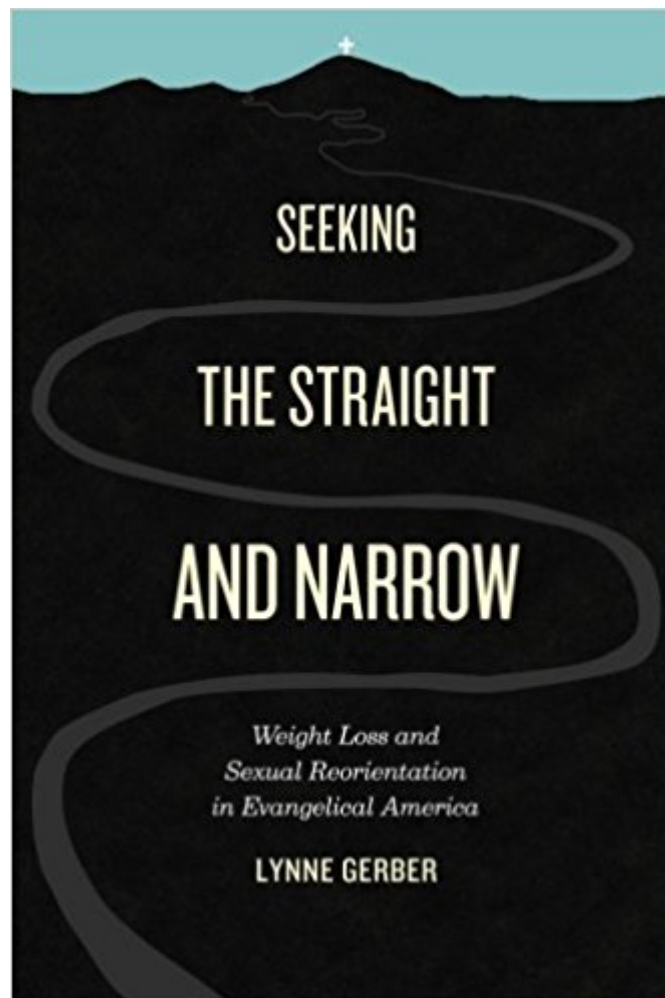




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# Seeking The Straight And Narrow: Weight Loss And Sexual Reorientation In Evangelical America



## Synopsis

Losing weight and changing your sexual orientation are both notoriously difficult to do successfully. Yet many faithful evangelical Christians believe that thinness and heterosexuality are godly ideals—and that God will provide reliable paths toward them for those who fall short. *Seeking the Straight and Narrow* is a fascinating account of the world of evangelical efforts to alter our strongest bodily desires. Drawing on fieldwork at First Place, a popular Christian weight-loss program, and Exodus International, a network of ex-gay ministries, Lynne Gerber explores why some Christians feel that being fat or gay offends God, what exactly they do to lose weight or go straight, and how they make sense of the program's results—or, frequently, their lack. Gerber notes the differences and striking parallels between the two programs, and, more broadly, she traces the ways that other social institutions have attempted to contain the excesses associated with fatness and homosexuality. Challenging narratives that place evangelicals in constant opposition to dominant American values, Gerber shows that these programs reflect the often overlooked connection between American cultural obsessions and Christian ones.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"*Seeking the Straight and Narrow* explores with sensitivity, respect, and nuance the ways participants focus on the problems of the body and its unruly desires. A thoroughly original book, it absolutely enriches our understanding of the significance of the straight body - in both senses of that term - in American Christian culture. (Amy Farrell, Dickinson College)"

Lynne Gerber is a lecturer in the religious studies department and research fellow in the Religion, Politics, and Globalization Program at the University of California, Berkeley.

Lynne Gerber has written a beautiful, respectful book about the effort to manage "unacceptable" desire. There are many things to admire about Gerber's work, but what I find most remarkable is the wealth of insight the reader gains through her comparing/contrasting weight loss program vs. reorientation therapy, evangelical beliefs vs. popular culture ideology, and the background of very little progress in weight bias vs. significant progress in LGBTI rights. Our culture is saturated with distrust of and alienation from our bodies, and people are struggling to manage, using the tools they trust. What I take away from this incredible study is that rather than trying to - unsuccessfully - change our bodies, we need to change the ideas in our culture that make some bodies wrong.

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