

*Swipe Up* is sane, funny, honest, powerful and moving in equal measure. Jason Roach does a marvellous job in presenting the Bible's beautiful vision for sexuality in our broken world in a way that is utterly realistic and completely recognisable. It's both sensitive and courageous. No-one—married or single, Christian or not-Christian—could read *Swipe Up* without laughing, rethinking or even shedding a tear. Read it, talk about it, pass it on!"

**GARY MILLAR; Principal, Queensland  
Theological College, Australia**

"In a world where our Western culture's narrative about sex and relationships so easily steals our minds, this little gem of a book helps us lift our gaze and see a far more beautiful story. Seamlessly weaving together personal experience and biblical truth, Jason Roach reminds us of God's astonishing love and the privilege it is to love others in ways that honour him. It's not a book of "don'ts" but a book that helps us rejoice in our risen Lord. Accessible, practical and wonderfully engaging—a great read for anyone desiring purity, intimacy and joy."

**HELEN THORNE; Director of Training and Mentoring,  
London City Mission; Author, *Purity is Possible***

"This week you'll be gazing at numerous screens that reinforce our culture's fantasies of love, sex and relationships. Why not give up some of that time to gaze at the reality of God and his better love stories? Reading Jason's personal and practical book will do you so much more good."

**ED SHAW; Pastor; Co-founder, [livingout.org](http://livingout.org);  
Author, *The Plausibility Problem***

"Jason Roach must have swallowed a truth pill to write this book! It's so real about intimacy, loneliness, adolescence, singleness, marriage and friendship. Amid the searing honesty, he shows us how he discovered an amazing map that enabled him and can help us to stay clear of the storms. It's a map and a story you'd be mad to miss. I'll be thoroughly recommending it across the generations at All Souls."

**RICO TICE; Senior Minister, All Souls Langham Place, London;  
Founder of Christianity Explored Ministries**

“Jason tells his story of finding real intimacy through his life experiences and faith. God has a purpose for our lives that we need to discover through his Son. This wonderful book invites us to find true, long-lasting, fulfilling, intimate love through Jesus Christ.”

**DR KAROWEI DORGU; Bishop of Woolwich**

“Jason helpfully gives us biblical truth and pastoral wisdom, wrapped up in a deeply honest and personal narrative. Rather than confront, he gently persuades us that God offers a better way of navigating the pitfalls of modern romance and relationships.”

**MATT FULLER; Senior Minister, Christ Church, Mayfair, London;  
Author, *Perfect Sinners***

“I’m very thankful for this book, and I couldn’t recommend it more highly. Jason is both honest and realistic while also being witty and practical. This is a book for both single and married people alike, because no matter who we are or where we’re at in life, we all need pointing to God’s better story for our lives, and Jason does exactly that.”

**RACHELL MICHELL; Family and Youth Worker, South London**

“Here is a gem of a little book explaining why God’s blueprint for our sexuality isn’t limiting but is actually liberating. Jason combines his personal story with powerful and pastoral application. And because it’s accessible and concise, it’s the kind of book you can buy, read and pass on.”

**MARTIN SALTER; Bedford Community Church; Editor, *Foundations***

“This book is deeply honest, real and human. Jason reflects on his own story through the lens of his faith in Jesus. He opens up a conversation about sex, relationships, intimacy and holiness. It is a conversation that the whole church needs to be having. This book will encourage you and challenge you, and at all times it will point you to Jesus.”

**KATE WHARTON; Vicar of St. Bart’s Roby, Liverpool;  
Assistant National Leader, New Wine**

“Jason is so honest, clear and real. He gets who we are and who God is. I love ‘thanks, sorry, please and never’ as a summary of the Bible on sex and the sexual revolution. It’s a great read, and you’ll be reading it again and giving it away to all your friends.”

**KEITH SINCLAIR; Bishop of Birkenhead**

JASON ROACH

# Swipe Up



A better way to do love,  
sex and relationships

the goodbook  
COMPANY

Swipe Up

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# Foreword

Glynn Harrison

*Psychiatrist and author of A Better Story*

**T**his is a big book. Not because it's long or very detailed—you could get through it in an evening. Not because it brings to life the Bible's teaching about sex and relationships in a different way, although it does that. Not even because it's a page-turner (and it is).

It's big because *it's real*. It's about life. It's about you and me.

The new attitude to love, sex and relationships in our culture has been a massive wake-up call to Christians who want to take the Bible seriously. It has exposed our shallow teaching and pastoral care in the area of sex and relationships; it has called out our hypocrisies and flushed out our culture of shame. People are telling us they know what Christians are against—but what are we *for*?

In contrast to the fear and shame offered by religion, the sexual revolution gives us stories of justice and

equality. It casts a grand narrative of freedom from the straightjacketing shame from small-minded bigots with their boundaries and rules. Over and over again it gives us stories with the same happy ending—the liberation of just “being yourself”. *What’s not to like about that?*

In my book *A Better Story* I argued that you can’t respond to a good story with facts. You need to tell a *different* story. Christians need to rediscover and to tell our own story, which is at the heart of the Bible—a life-giving story of how humans truly flourish as we learn to live in harmony with our design. And then we need to tell that story in ways that connect with hearts as well as minds. We need to signal that we get what our culture is saying to us about oppression, abuse, hypocrisy and shame. We need to acknowledge the questions before we rush out the answers. That is what this book sets out to do.

Jason brings a unique set of skills to the task. Because of his background, he knows something about the issues surrounding “inclusion”. He’s a doctor who knows about the body and how sex works. He’s a Christian minister, working in a challenging urban context. He knows about kids, because he has four of his own. And as an advisor to the Bishop of London, his voice is heard in other corridors as well.

We owe him a great debt. With so much going on, Jason has carved out time to tell us his story, which starts with a pole dancer and ends with the Saviour. He inspires us to imagine that following the Jesus way can leave us feeling more fully alive than ever we imagined.



# Swipe up

**S**he walked into the room, took off her coat and looked over at me. One smile and I was utterly transfixed. Her mouth was moving, but I had no idea what she was saying. I was charged; magnetically pulled towards her. On the stage of my life, a spotlight had just lit her up and I was the only person in the audience. As crazy as it seemed, all I wanted to do was step up from my seat and join her in the light. So I did.

But if that part of the journey proved easy, the voyage that followed wasn't.

Going out with her was often hard work for me. There were days when it felt like a huge struggle to keep my hands off her. At other times though, making basic conversation felt exhausting. When it came to handling intimacy, I was all over the place.

I first met the woman I am now married to in the days before dating apps had become popular and widespread. But as a teenager and as a younger man, I conformed to all the stereotypes of the day. While I was hungry for genuine love, affection and meaningful intimacy, I was also laddish and shallow. On meeting girls, I would mentally *swipe left* (not for me) or *swipe right* (I'm interested) and instantly drop people into categories based on what I wanted.

But then there would come the rare moment when the fireworks went off. I would meet someone and “super-like” them. *Swipe up*.

I guess I'm a romantic at heart, but when you meet someone like that, you're no longer just flirting for fun. The stakes are much higher; the implications reach much deeper inside you. There is the possibility of scary, deeply affecting life-changing intimacy.

## **The problem we all have**

By intimacy, I mean that experience of affection when you are with someone. We can experience intimacy in many different ways: catching up with a lifelong pal, meeting someone for the first time, or enjoying a special time with a group of friends or with a lover. Experiencing intimacy can be fun and fiery. Heart-racing magnetism makes our hairs stand on end. And yet at other times it's frightening and frustrating. We can feel unsettled, out of our depth and desperately alone.

This book is about how we navigate the choppy, turbulent waters of intimacy, whatever our relationship status. We all have an instinct to head for the fireworks and steer clear of the storms. Yet, often we're just not sure what that looks like. If God is our compass in life and relationships, we struggle to work out which way He's pointing.

I want to share the story of how, as a Christian, I came to hear God's voice and let him direct me through the exhilarating, terrifying waves of intimacy.

That last sentence might make you feel nervous. After all, it is so different from the message of our culture. That message seems to be that we should set our own course—"set sail in your own direction". In other words, do what feels right for you—*follow your heart*. So what happens if God's direction feels like stepping out of your skin? What if *his* direction is the opposite of what your heart is saying?

## **Our fear**

I've experienced that concern myself, both before and after starting to follow Jesus. I've found myself thinking, when it comes to intimacy—do I want guidance at all? But a couple of things have kept me coming back to God.

First, I've made some monster mistakes in life—and frustratingly I seem to keep making them! My mistakes remind me that relying on my own judgement doesn't always end well. The truth is that sometimes I just don't know what is best for me or those around me.

The second thing is the flip-side of this. Getting the best advice available can help me make up my own mind. For example, I find that it's generally worth listening to what my doctor has to say, even when I'd rather not. To chart the best course in life, I need the wisdom of others.

### **An opportunity**

Now, what if you could access wisdom for intimacy that was more reliable than a doctor's diagnosis? What if someone knew our situations better than we did and could tell us the best way to navigate? And what if that route meant we could head for the fireworks and steer clear of the storms? I believe that God has provided that wisdom. His words have energised me to approach the search for intimacy with joy.

I've discovered that all of us are part of a shared story of God's love. It's this story that has given me the power to grow a satisfying life of love through all of the different stages of my life.

I don't want to mislead you about myself or this book—because my journey has been complicated and messy. Of course there have been setbacks along the way, because doing life, whatever situation you are in, is tough. But God's story lights up a path through the turbulent waters of intimacy.

## **An invitation**

I want to invite you to sail with me on a journey through my experiences of intimacy in my teenage life, a period of singleness as a young adult, and now in marriage. You might be in any one of those life stages. A teenager just trying to work out your feelings. A single person battling with loneliness. A married person struggling for contentment. Whoever you are, I hope that you find something here that speaks to you.

The details of your particular journey will be different from mine. I am a black British man in my mid thirties, married with young children. I grew up in the nineties and noughties in south London, with all the cultural baggage that comes with that. You will be different. I apologise if what I say comes across as laddish towards women—I'm just being honest about what I was, and the things I struggled with then, and continue to struggle with now.

But, different though we are, the Bible leads me to believe that the shape of our struggles will overlap—we all connect with this very basic human experience. We long for intimacy with its agonies and the ecstasies.

My biggest prayer for you, as you read this book, is that God's story might light up a path through the troubled waters for you.