The Bible and LGBTQIA+

The claim that the Bible condemns LGBTQIA+ persons is widespread, but it depends on reading a small number of passages apart from their historical and cultural contexts. When these texts are examined carefully, they do not address loving, mutual, covenantal same-sex relationships or the diverse realities of LGBTQIA+ identities known today. Instead, the overarching witness of Scripture points toward justice, inclusion, fidelity, and the recognition of the divine image in every human being.

The so-called “clobber passages” are often cited as evidence against LGBTQIA+ people. Genesis 19, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, is not about consensual same-sex relationships but about attempted gang rape, violence, and violations of hospitality. Later biblical writers identify the sins of Sodom as arrogance, neglect of the poor, and injustice rather than same-sex intimacy.[1] Likewise, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 belong to the Holiness Code, a collection of ritual and cultural regulations intended to distinguish ancient Israel from neighboring peoples. Christians generally do not regard these purity laws as binding, particularly in light of the New Testament's teaching that Gentiles are not subject to the Mosaic Law.[2]

In the New Testament, Romans 1:26–27 is frequently cited against LGBTQIA+ persons. Yet many scholars argue that Paul is describing excessive lust, exploitative sexual practices, and idolatrous behavior common in the Roman world rather than loving, committed same-sex relationships.[3] Similarly, the Greek terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 are notoriously difficult to translate. There is no scholarly consensus that these words refer to all same-sex relationships; many interpreters understand them as referring to exploitation, coercion, or economic abuse.[4]

By contrast, several biblical themes support the affirmation of LGBTQIA+ people and families. Genesis 1:27 teaches that all human beings bear the image of God. The prophets consistently emphasize justice, mercy, and the inclusion of those marginalized by society.[5] Isaiah envisions a community in which eunuchs—sexual minorities in the ancient world—are welcomed and given "a name better than sons and daughters" within God's household (Isaiah 56:3–5). Jesus expands this inclusion by speaking positively of eunuchs who differ from conventional expectations regarding gender and family life (Matthew 19:12).[6]

The ministry of Jesus repeatedly breaks barriers of exclusion. He consistently centers those pushed to the margins and teaches that the greatest commandments are love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:37–40). The early church follows this trajectory. In Acts 8, an Ethiopian eunuch is baptized without condition, signaling the inclusion of those once excluded from full participation in religious life. A short while later, in Acts 10, Peter is told by a voice in a dream to ignore the boundaries separating Jewish from Gentile and commanded to never again regard what God has made clean as unclean (Acts 10:15). Paul's declaration that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) points toward a community where social hierarchies and barriers are overcome in Christ.[7]

Taken together, Scripture's central message is not condemnation or exclusion but acceptance and inclusion. The Bible calls communities of faith to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person, celebrate faithful relationships marked by love and covenant, and embody God's radically inclusive welcome. For many Christians today, affirming LGBTQIA+ persons and families is not a departure from biblical faithfulness but a deeper expression of it.

Notes

1. See Ezekiel 16:49–50; Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, 1955), 1–28.

2. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 117–134; Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 17–22 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1569–1570.

3. Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 115–126; James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 196–220.

4. Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 39–65; David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 205–247.

5. Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:16-17; Zechariah 7:9–10; Isaiah 56:3–8; Isaiah 58:6–12; Jeremiah 22:3; Ezekiel 34:16; Malachi 3:5; Isaiah 25:6–8; Isaiah 19:23–25

6. Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 143–172; Susannah Cornwall, *Controversies in Queer Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 71–89.

7. Walter Wink, *Homosexuality and Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 33–52; Kathy Baldock, *Walking the Bridgeless Canyon* (Grand Rapids: CanyonWalker Press, 2014), 223–247.

Suggested Resources on Christianity, Gender Identity, and Sexuality

Study Bibles

The SBL Study Bible. New York: HarperOne, 2023.

**The Westminster Study Bible*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2024.

(Both are editions of the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition, the most respected and widely accepted translation across all denominations.)

Introduction to Progressive Christianity

Borg, Marcus. *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*. New York: HarperOne, 2003.

Gulley, Philip. *The Evolution of Faith: How God is Creating a Better Christianity*. New York: HarperOne, 2011.

Introductions to the Bible

Bell, Rob. *What is the Bible? How an Ancient Library of Poems, Letters, and Stories Can Transform the Way You Think and Feel About Everything.* New York: HarperOne, 2017.

Mayfield, Tyler. *A Guide to Bible Basics*. Louisville, Westminster/John Knox, 2018.

West, Mona and Robert E. Shore-Goss. *The Queer Bible Commentary*. Second Edition. London: SCM Press, 2022.

Gender Identity

*Hartke, Austin. *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians.* Revised and Updated Edition. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2023.

Herzer, Linda. *The Bible and the Transgender Experience: How Scripture Supports Gender Variance*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2016.

Sexuality

Achtemeier, Mark. *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage: An Evangelical's Change of Heart.* New Edition with Study Guide. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2014.

*Chellew-Hodge, Candace. *Bulletproof Faith: A Spiritual Survival Guide for Gay and Lesbian Christians*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

Hays, Christopher B. and Richard B. Hays. *The Widening of God's Mercy: Sexuality Within the Biblical Story.* New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2024.

*Helminiak, Daniel. *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*. Millennium Edition. Tajique, New Mexico: Alamo Square Press, 2000.

Myers, David G. and Letha Dawson Scanzoni. *What God Has Joined Together: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

*Miner, Jeff and John Tyler Conoley. *The Children Are Free: Reexamining the Biblical Evidence on Same-sex Relationships*. Indianapolis: LifeJourney, 2002.

Robertson, Brandon. *Queer & Christian: Reclaiming the Bible, Our Faith, and Our Place at the Table*. New York: St. Martin's Essentials, 2025.

Vines, Matthew. *God and the Gay Christian. The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships.* Rev and Expanded Edition. New York: Convergent, 2025.

Novels

*Sanchez, Alex. *The God Box*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009.

Documentaries

Call Me Malcom. Filmworks, 2010.

**For the Bible Tells Me So.* First Run Features, 2007.

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* Highly recommended. If you only have time for a few resources, these are the ones to experience.