

# THE BIBLE AND SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

## • CONVERSATION GUIDE •

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Pursue conversations in the context of relationships.
2. Share your story and why inclusion matters to you.
3. Ask for their story and listen closely.
4. Identify common ground and shared values.
5. Assume the best in others.

## 5 KEY CONVERSATIONS

### 1 MARRIAGE—Genesis 1-2 & Matthew 19:1-12

#### *Non-affirming message:*

- From Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 to Jesus's teaching on divorce in Matthew 19, every marriage described in Scripture is heterosexual, so same-sex marriage can't be acceptable.

#### *Affirming message:*

- Same-sex marriage was not on the radar screen in the ancient world, which is why the Bible never addresses it.
- Ephesians 5:21-33 teaches that marriage is about keeping covenant with one's spouse to reflect God's covenant with us. Same-sex couples can live that principle out in their relationships.



## Christians can affirm the Bible and affirm same-sex relationships.

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### 2 SODOM AND GOMORRAH—Genesis 19

#### *Non-affirming message:*

- The men of Sodom call for Lot to bring out his male guests "so that we can have sex with them," and God destroys the city as punishment for their attempted same-sex behavior.

#### *Affirming message:*

- The men are threatening gang rape, not expressing romantic interest.
- Ezekiel 16:49 says, "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy."
- Out of 20 biblical references to Sodom after Genesis 19, only 2 Peter 2:7 and Jude 7 mention sexual sin, but not same-sex behavior specifically.

### 3 THE LAW—Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13

#### *Non-affirming message:*

- Each of these passages prohibits male same-sex relations, so Christians should oppose same-sex marriage.

#### *Affirming message:*

- The New Testament states that Christ is the "end of the law" (Romans 10:4), and Christians have never regarded all Old Testament laws as being applicable today.
- Sex during a woman's menstrual period is also called an "abomination" (Lev. 18:19), and the death penalty applied to working on the Sabbath as well (Exodus 35:2).

### 4 SEXUAL EXCESS—Romans 1:26-27

#### *Non-affirming message:*

- The apostle Paul condemns same-sex behavior as "shameful" and "unnatural."

#### *Affirming message:*

- In 1 Corinthians 11:14, Paul says long hair in men is "shameful" and against "nature," but most Christians interpret those terms as being culturally limited.
- In ancient societies, male passivity or female dominance in sex was seen as "unnatural" because it violated patriarchal gender norms. Those norms were also culturally limited.
- Romans 1 refers to lustful same-sex behavior—not to loving, monogamous relationships.

### 5 VICE LISTS—1 Corinthians 6:9 & 1 Timothy 1:10

#### *Non-affirming message:*

- Paul warns against the *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, meaning "men who have sex with men."

#### *Affirming message:*

- These terms may refer to same-sex behavior—*arsen* means "male" and *koites* means "bed"—but to lustful, exploitative forms of same-sex behavior.
- The main forms of same-sex behavior in the biblical world were pederasty (sex between men and adolescent boys), prostitution, and sex with enslaved men.
- Same-sex marriages between equals did not exist in the ancient world.

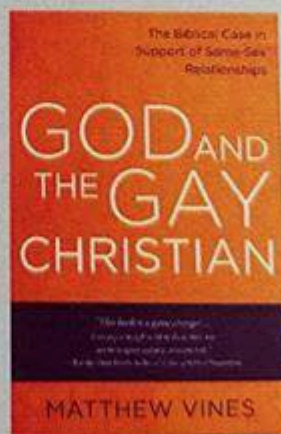
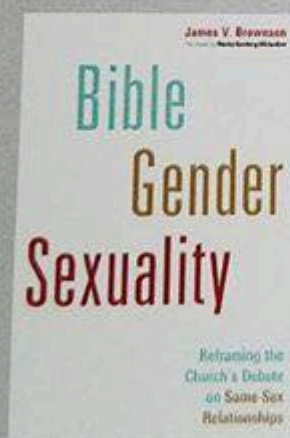
## GET INVOLVED

The Reformation Project is a Bible-based, Christian direct action organization whose mission is to promote inclusion of LGBT people by reforming church teaching on sexual orientation and gender identity.

We run national conferences, leadership development cohorts, and offer trainings and resources to empower LGBT Christians and their allies. If you'd like to become a more vocal advocate in your church, we'd love to partner with you.

Sign up at [www.reformationproject.org](http://www.reformationproject.org).

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