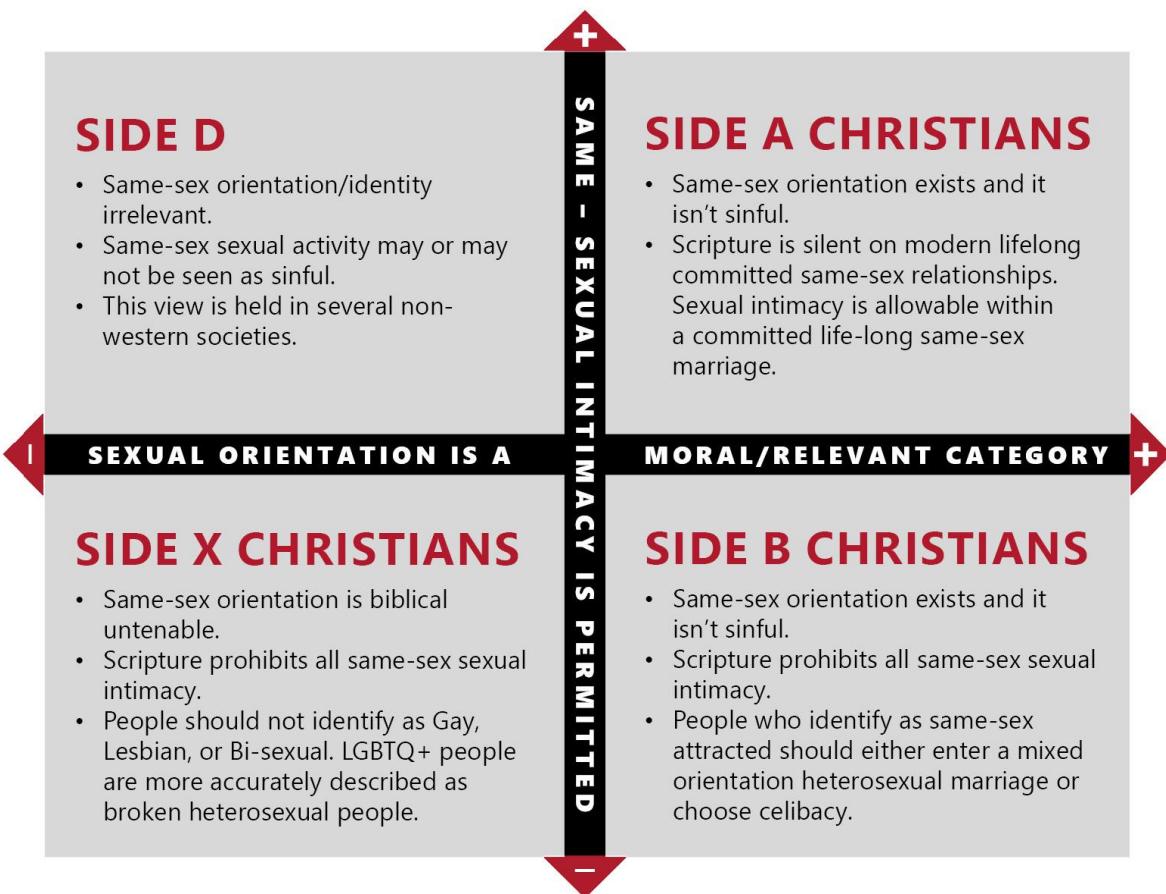


# Views of Same-Sex Sexuality Matrix

The terms “liberal”, “conservative”, “affirming”, “traditional” don’t always convey the complexity of beliefs and opinions held by Christians as they work to understand God’s will for human sexuality. The matrix below is one attempt at including something beyond an either/or duality in the conversation. This matrix of views of same-sex sexuality is also not all there is to say on the subject. For instance, this matrix has little or nothing to do with conversations about transgender, asexual, aromantic and other kinds of queer experience. However, we offer you this tool (something we offered at the 2014 General Conference) because you will still come across these kinds of terms in a lot of popular writing among Christians.



## Side A Christians

- Same-sex orientation exists and it isn't sinful. Same-sex sexual intimacy is allowable under certain circumstances.
- Scripture is silent on modern lifelong committed same-sex orientation/relationships. Same-sex sexual intimacy is allowable within a committed life-long same-sex marriage.
- Statement from Side A: "We believe that all people are created with dignity and intrinsic value being made in the image of God. All are equally capable of experiencing God regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. *Therefore, we welcome LGBTQ+ persons to participate in the life of Commons Church: sharing in the sacraments, serving in ministry, joining in membership, and leading in community.*"<sup>1</sup>

## Side B Christians

- Same-sex orientation exists and it isn't sinful.
- Scripture only prohibits same-sex sexual intimacy not orientation. It is not a sin to feel an attraction to the same sex.
- People who identify as same-sex attracted should either enter a mixed orientation heterosexual marriage or choose celibacy.
- Statement from Side B: "Same-sex attraction is not what God intended and is a result of the Fall. But, we do not choose who we are attracted to and there is no formula for changing one's attractions. There is no context for same-sex sexual or romantic activity that God blesses, so they are sins. God calls all Christians to a vocation of celibacy or marriage with someone of the opposite sex. Side B gay Christians may identify as "gay" in a limited way, finding it helpful to identify with those of a shared heritage and similar life experiences."<sup>2</sup>

## Side X Christians

- Same-sex *orientation* or *identity* is "biblically untenable."<sup>3</sup>
- Scripture prohibits all same-sex sexual intimacy, desire, AND identity.
- Named Side X because of links to ex-gay Ministries. People should not identify as same-sex attracted or oriented as that is sinful. LGBTQ+ people are more accurately described as broken heterosexual people. One of the main goals of ex-gay ministry is to

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.commons.church/lgbtq?fbclid=IwAR3v5wlFggDZaU-W8Z3FxtNC5h31gpqmGPf6soJn\\_PBBlaR0Nqvw\\_z3c0h8](https://www.commons.church/lgbtq?fbclid=IwAR3v5wlFggDZaU-W8Z3FxtNC5h31gpqmGPf6soJn_PBBlaR0Nqvw_z3c0h8) - accessed July 14, 2021

<sup>2</sup> <https://equipyourcommunity.org/blog/2019/2/11/sexual-ethics-and-empty-words> - accessed July 12, 2021

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/09/06/ex-gay-christianity-movement-is-making-quiet-come-back-effects-lgbtq-youth-could-be-devastating/> - accessed July 14, 2021

help gay people change their orientation from Lesbian, Gay, or Bi-sexual to Heterosexual or a person who simply experiences “Same Sex Attraction(SSA).”

- Statement from Side X: “How can any of us fight a sin that we don’t hate? Hating our own sin is a key component to doing battle with it. At the same time, we need to separate ourselves from the sin we hate. This can be a very challenging issue for a Christian who experiences SSA, an issue that becomes exceedingly more challenging if one assumes the social identity of ‘gay Christian.’ We must maintain that we who repent and believe stand in robes of righteousness as beloved sons and daughters of God, even as we do daily battle with any an[sic] all sexual lust and unbiblical desire that claims our affections. We are not our sin, and we ought never to let it define us. Side A and Side B both support the idea that sexual orientation is an accurate category of personhood, and therefore they both are outside the bounds of biblical teaching.”<sup>4</sup>

## Side D

- Same-sex orientation or identity is not a relevant category. Same-sex sexual activity does directly equate to something you are, it is something you do.
- Same-sex sexual activity may or may not be seen as sinful or immoral. This depends largely on cultural context and beliefs.
- Named Side D from the term “Down-low.” A subculture of men who identify as heterosexual but who also engage in same-sex sexual intimacy. These sexual encounters are practiced “on the down-low” meaning they are engaged in secretly. These sexual encounters are not seen as evidence of a gay sexual orientation or identity. It just a kind of sex they engage in.
- This view is not uncommon in the majority world. In societies where male/female roles are more strictly defined as are roles within marriage—having “gay sex” does not necessarily mean that the persons involved see themselves as having a gay sexual orientation or identity.
- Statement about Side D: “In the Roman Republic, a citizen's political liberty was defined in part by the right to preserve his body from physical compulsion or use by others; for the male citizen to submit his body to the giving of pleasure was considered servile. As long as a man played the penetrative role, it was socially acceptable and considered natural for him to have same-sex relations, without a perceived loss of his masculinity or social standing. ‘Homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’ were thus not categories of Roman sexuality, and no words exist in Latin that would precisely translate these concepts.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>

<https://rosariabutterfield.com/new-blog/2018/2/14/what-is-wrong-with-gay-christianity-what-is-side-a-and-side-b-anyway> - accessed July 14, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_homosexuality#Ancient\\_Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_homosexuality#Ancient_Rome) - accessed July 14, 2021

## Sorting the Statements of Others

Take a look at the following statements and ideas. Discuss with your group where would you place the statement or idea on the Same-Sex Sexuality Matrix? Why do you think it belongs there? What kind of clues do you look for and why?

1. It was not uncommon for Roman soldiers to engage in gay sex while on extended military campaigns. These campaigns could last for years or even decades. Low ranking soldiers were not permitted to marry during military service. Same-sex sex was not uncommon between soldiers, though often it was punished. Prostitutes of all kinds (male and female) would follow military encampments as they moved about. It was not uncommon for military commanders to find it necessary to remind troops that once they returned to civilian life, especially after a long time in the field, that they should resume normal relations with women, marry and have children when they got home.
2. “Accept one another, then,” Paul wrote, “just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Romans 15:7) We have been deeply drawn toward and influenced by this example of mutual embrace in the scriptures. We believe it is where God is leading us as a church. We suspect God is leading us to a place that is neither “open and affirming” (with no room for alternative positions) nor “traditional” but a third way: an alternative place of radical acceptance and inclusion rarely seen in this world. To be absolutely clear, this posture leads us to embrace and include all LGBTQ+ folk, including those who identify as SSA. It also asks us to embrace those who hold more traditional views, and consider same-sex marriage to go against Scripture. We acknowledge that individuals within the community will hold a diversity of perspectives within (and perhaps beyond) this range. But we, Artisan Church—as an embodiment of Christ, in order to glorify God—choose to accept and embrace one another within this tension.
3. “We left LGBTQ because we wanted to. Changed[sic] is possible! We are a community of friends who once identified as LGBTQ+. Today, we celebrate the love of Jesus and His freedom in our lives.”
4. “We affirm that gender and sexuality are gifts of God, and welcome people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.”
5. “I love my husband, but I also experience same-sex attraction. But I live a heterosexual life.”
6. “a spiritual community where people seek to be about having a safe place to BELONG, not worrying about what to BELIEVE. This is a community where people of all ages, sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome and affirmed and where the spiritual journey of each person is nurtured and supported.”
7. “[W]e believe that to follow in the footsteps of Jesus means that we need to choose to be a community of radical inclusion – a place where everyone has an opportunity to explore what it means to follow Jesus as his disciple. In order to ensure that, we believe it is important that we are a safe space for those who feel like they are outsiders for any reason – race, disability, mental health issues, addictions, spectrum disorders, economic or spiritual experience, gender or sexuality – a place where each person who comes will find there is no condemnation, just grace. We know this is a big goal because as humans we have this tendency to exclude. And we know how often we can feel

uncomfortable with people who are different than us, and how frequently our response is to simply shrink in and close ourselves off from each other. But the way of Jesus is not this kind of ‘small-table’ way of thinking or being. Instead, Jesus lived a life that time and time again demonstrated this idea of making the table bigger.”

## Sorting Our Own Statements

Take a look at the following statements from Chapter 6 of our manual. *Please take the time to read the scriptures passages that are referenced in the statements.* Discuss with your group where would you place our statements on the Same-Sex Sexuality Matrix? Why do you think it belongs there? What kind of clues do you look for and why?

1. *We are committed to the worth of all humans regardless of sex, race, colour, or any other distinctions (Acts 10:34-35) and will respect them as persons made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and redeemed by Christ’s death and resurrection. The Old Testament law commands such respect (Deuteronomy 5:16-21). Jesus summarized this law as love for God and neighbour (Matthew 22:36-40). He ministered to all without distinction and His death on the cross was for all (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).* We must be actively concerned whenever human beings are demeaned, abused, stigmatized, or depersonalized, whether by individuals or institutions (Galatians 3:28; Mark 2:27). We recognize that oppression and exploitation is ultimately rooted in demonic influences operating in the world to control individuals through violence, to exploit them because of greed, and to deprive them of personal freedom. We are committed to give meaning and significance to every person by God’s help, including those who endure slavery in its modern forms. Remembering our tendency to be prejudicial, as Christians we must grow in awareness of the worth, rights and needs of others (Philippians 2:3-4; James 2:1, 8-9).
2. The biblical vision for healthy sexual intimacy is that it is a gift from God reserved for marriage between one man and one woman. Sexual intimacy creates a unique life-long bond that Scripture describes as “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:16). When expressed within the commitment of the marriage covenant, sexual intimacy is a great blessing and source of fulfillment. The marriage covenant is designed to protect this one man and one woman bond against that which is destructive and harmful to the couple, their children, the extended family, and society as a whole when one acts contrary to God’s design for sexual intimacy.
  - The biblical word for “fornication” or “sexual immorality” includes pre-marital sexual intimacy and lists it along with other forms of immorality as sin (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-5). Bonding sexually to a person to whom one has not covenanted in marriage robs the bond of an eventual marriage of its exclusivity. Similarly, sexual intimacy outside of a marital union occurring after divorce or the loss of a spouse is also fornication and undermines the biblical design for healthy sexual intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:8-9).
  - Extra-marital sexual intimacy, which Scripture calls “adultery”, transgresses God’s moral law and betrays the marriage covenant. Adultery damages the one

- flesh union in that it contaminates the exclusive bond of marriage and undermines trust (Exodus 20:14, Mark 7:20-23).
- In keeping with our reading of the scriptures (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:21-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11), we do not believe that the above biblical vision is fulfilled by same-sex sexual intimacy. We maintain a distinction between same-sex sexual activity and same-sex sexual attraction. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the church has often rejected, condemned, and mistreated LGBTQ people. As followers of Jesus, this grieves us, and we strive to live out our convictions about sexuality in ways that are gracious and Christ-like.

## Sorting the Perceptions of Others

Discuss with your group your answers to the following questions.

1. Many of our members have never read the statements in our Manual. If you were to quiz the people in your church—where would they place our overall denominational stance on the Same-Sex Sexuality Matrix? Why do you think they would place us there? What kind of clues are they looking for and why?
2. Many of our neighbours cannot sort out whether we are Catholic, Protestant, or Historically Evangelical. Rarely would we meet someone who knows what the term Free Methodist means. Based on your interactions with your “neighbours” where would they place our denomination on the Same-Sex Sexuality Matrix? Why do you think they would place us there? What kind of clues are they looking for and why?