


parent tips

A stylized white logo on a dark background. It features a circle containing a stylized 'P' and 'T' on the left, and a checkmark on the right. A diagonal line crosses through the circle from the bottom left to the top right.

LGBTQIA+ Conversation

We know that Jesus loves all people and we preach this with our lives through actions. Yet, somehow over the last handful of decades, the perception of Christ-followers on this topic is one of hate and exclusion. Before we even begin a conversation on the topic we have to navigate this perception of hate. So, this guide will give some direction for defining the terms in the conversation, some tips on disagreeing in a true but loving way, resources that you can get to learn more, and we'll end on Biblical terms. We won't be able to cover every scenario or every detail, but this is a simple framework that can give you something to build off of when this conversation comes up!

First off, let's define the letters. The acronym is most commonly used without the 'I' or 'A,' LGBTQ+. And the meaning of each letter can change depending on who is using it.

But here is the definition of the full acronym, LGBTQIA+:

L - Lesbian

G - Gay

B - Bisexual

T - Transgender

Q - Queer/nonstraight or Questioning

I - Intersex

A - Asexual or Ally

+ - The '+' sign is to indicate everyone else that aligns with the group. This includes the term, *non-binary*. Meaning they claim a sexual orientation.

An interesting thing I've observed is a cultural shift in vocabulary. More and more students with sexual feelings that are opposite of the norm for their gender are saying that they are bi or trans. Where in the past most students would say that they are gay. Gay is used more to point to the LGBTQ+ community vs. a definition of what the student's sexuality is defined as.

Guide for Responding

1. **Don't freak out.**

Bill Henson in his book *Guiding Families of LGBTQ+ Loved Ones* says that your response is critical! "It will determine the difference between safety or fear, peace or anxiety, secure love or sense of rejection." My biggest piece of advice for this topic and ANYTHING that your student brings up to you is, don't freak out. **Don't freak out.** If your response is shock, vivid concern, terror, anxiety, and if they see that, you'll be

labeled as 'not safe.' You are the biggest and best source to influence their life, so be careful not to shut a door by freaking out. Breathe. Say to yourself, "don't freak out. Just breathe." This will be a helpful tool for anything your student brings to your attention.

2. Pray for the right words.

When telling the disciples that they would be in situations where they would not know what to say, Jesus told them in Luke 12:12 "The Holy Spirit will give you the words to say at the moment when you need them." Pray for the right words to come from the Holy Spirit as He will guide you when you don't know what to say! Pray to yourself, *"Jesus, give me words to say and when to say them. Guide me as I have no idea what to say."* You can even say, *"Before we talk about this, I'd love to pray that we would hear from Jesus while we talk. Let's pray for 10 seconds."*

3. Thank them.

Thanking someone for being honest with you does not mean you are condoning what they did or said. But it does help to foster a welcoming environment for your students to see you as a safe place to process and a loving person who appreciates conversations. Say, *"First off, thank you for asking me, I am honored that you want to know what Jesus says about LGBTQ+ people."* Say, *"I appreciate that you trust me enough to be open with me about your feelings. I am so thankful that you recognize I can be trusted to always care for you."*

4. Be careful to avoid positioning God against your child's identity.

Be careful not to weaponize God's Word. This will cause more drifting from Jesus than to help them encounter His truth. Take them to Psalm 91 or Psalm 23 to nourish a holistic approach to their faith identity.

Quick Hitters

5. Suggest dialogue but do not force it.

6. Ask thoughtful questions and listen well.

7. Respond to differences in belief with respect.

8. Avoid hurtful labels or accusations.

How to Respond

We'll look over common questions as they may be phrased to you and a responses that you can use and tweak:

Question: "Does God love gay people?"

Answer: "Of course God loves gay people. Jesus died for people with gay feelings just like he died for everyone else. Are you asking if he loves them or if he is okay with their actions?"

Question: "Why do Christians hate trans people?"

Answer: "Christians don't hate trans people. There are people out there who think it is ok to tell the truth out of anger. When you look at the way Jesus lived his life He always spoke truth with love. We need to forgive the people who just want to argue or shame people in the LGBTQ+ community and show all people that Jesus loves

all people, first and foremost. If we love them, then maybe they will be open to what God's Word has to say. Where did that question pop in your head from? Just thinking about it?"

Question: "Does our church/Hope affirm LGBTQ+ people?"

Answer: "First, we believe that two people can disagree and still deeply care about each other. We see Jesus saying in Scripture (Matthew 19) that marriage is meant between one man and one woman forever. Again this is not out of hatred for those in the LGBTQ+ community. We use Scripture as our guide and lens to show us what leads us closer to Jesus and Scripture is clear on this topic."

Question: "Does being gay send you to hell?"

Answer: "Good question, thank you for asking me! Being gay or straight does not answer that question. The Bible is pretty clear that if we believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior then we are saved. Bottom line - end of story. The Bible then goes on to say that we have to continue to walk out our belief in Jesus. For every person that means that we have to come before Him continually and ask if our actions line up with our beliefs. The Bible states that we need to continually be in a mode of evaluating our actions to make sure they honor Christ. Every person must continually ask, "Is my sexual expression honoring Christ's guidance?"

Question: "Mom, I've thought a lot about this and I know that I am bi/trans/gay. Do you still love me?"

Answer: (Breathe. Don't freak out) "I will always love you and thank you for being vulnerable with me. That means a lot. You mean the world to me. All I ask is that you keep including me and always include Jesus in who you are as you keep processing and learning who He made you to be. You know you can always count on me (us) to support you when things are tough or you are processing something?"

Question: "What about the people in the OT that have multiple wives? Why was God okay with that?"

Answer: "That is a great question and not one that many people think about! Both Jesus and all of Scripture approve of no other sexual union than that between a husband and wife forever. Yes, concubines and multiple wives are found in the Bible, but doesn't make them "biblical." In fact, they go against the Genesis narrative Christ points us to in Mark 10."

Question: "I'm trans, does God hate me and am I going to hell?"

Answer: "Wow, what a tough question. I can tell you've been thinking about this a lot. I don't think your feelings alone separate you from Jesus. You are not a body. I am not a body. We are souls that are inside of a body. As a result of being in a body, we will have different feelings. Having sexual feelings alone does not equal sexual sin. The bigger question have you given your feelings to Jesus and filtered them through his Word? At the core of who you are, have you given yourself fully to Jesus, and are you trying your best to follow his guiding? "

Question: "Doesn't the Bible say not to judge people? Then why should we judge LGBTQ+ people?"

Answer: "You're referencing when Jesus said that in Matthew 7, and I agree. As Christians we have to filter everything through God's Word. We can't harshly judge people, that's not what God's Word tells us to do. Instead, we know that we're supposed to lovingly help other Christians be accountable to scripture. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 5:9-12 that Christians can't hold non-Christians to the same standard. That is judging outsiders. But if someone says they are a Christ-follower then one of our roles is to help each other stay accountable to God's Word (Ephesians 4:25, Hebrews 13:17-18, James 5:19-20)."

Question: "Okay, so what does the Bible say about LGBTQ+ people?"

Answer: Let's find out!!!

So, what does the Bible say?

- The OT definitely mentions homosexuality but they are often tough and straight to the point. While we want to keep that in mind, I believe the New Testament says the same thing in a very similar way, but is often received better. So, focus on using NT scripture!
- **Matthew 19:4-6 & Mark 10:6-9** - Jesus discusses marriage in the context of their time and talks about HOW God created marriage to be. 1 man and 1 woman and Jesus goes even further by mentioned that sex binds two souls together into one.
- **Romans 1:18-32** - Paul shows that the whole world is unrighteous compared to God, and therefore needs salvation. He zeroes in on the Gentile world, describing how it has turned away from God and embraced idolatry.
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** - In this chapter Paul talks directly about sexual immorality. Paul addresses many different sin/behaviors that are unrighteous in these two specific verses making sure to add homosexuality to it. Biblical scholarship David Guzik points out to Paul's usage of two words *malakoi* ((homosexuals, which literally refers to male prostitutes) and *arsenokoitai* (or sodomites, a generic term for all homosexual practice) as being evidence that homosexuality is not a Christ honoring sexual expression.
- **1 Timothy 1:8-10** - In this instance, Paul is talking specifically about men who have sex with men. They do not conform to the life Christians are called to live. Instead, they go against the grain of the new identity we have in Christ by trying to forge a different identity with their actions.

If/When They Disagree

What do we do when there is pushback and rebuttals? How can we avoid letting this conversation become a wedge in the relationship?

1. Be respectful and not dismissal

- We cannot act quickly to dismiss our students as ignorant or be too harsh when responding to their rebuttals. If we do, it will close them off and truth cannot walk through a closed door.

2. Keep emotions in check (Don't freak out)

- Sexual orientation can be an emotional topic to process. If we are not careful, differences can also cause people to separate others into "them" groups opposed to "us" groups. Our families are for each other, even if we disagree with each other. Raised emotions can be emotionally translated as an attack, don't freak out. Don't make it easy for someone to put you in a "them vs us" box.

3. Find and mention common ground

- In her TED Talk on debate, Julia Dhar says, "...the way to reach people is by finding common ground." We have to intentionally find places to use the phrase "I agree that _____" or "I can see how _____ can make sense."
- A great example of common ground can be found when Mr. Rogers presented to a US congressional subcommittee to get more federal funding. To begin the chairman was abrasive and not having it, but through presenting common ground he got his funding - [VIDEO HERE](#)

- Finding common ground can look like:
 - i. “I agree that Christians should love LGBTQA+ people. No one is going to see who Jesus is if we don’t act like Jesus would.”
 - ii. “I can see how you would see it that way.”
 - iii. “I can tell you’ve thought about this.” or “I can tell that you have been thinking about this.”

4. Probe a disagreement with questions

- Questions are usually a better use of rebuttal than spitting out our thoughts.
- Ask them,
 - i. “Where did you learn that?”
 - ii. “How do you see it differently?”
 - iii. “What brought you to this conclusion?”

Resources You Can Buy

- [Guiding Families of LGBT+ Loved Ones](#) by Bill Henson
- [A People to be Love](#) by Preston Sprinkle
Preston Sprinkle also has a website centerforfaith.com that has some great content and you can find him on YouTube as well!
- [Gay Girl, Good God](#) by Jackie Hill Perry
- [Teaching Your Children Healthy Sexuality](#) by Jim Burns (he also has many great resources that you can start with your kids at a young age)
- [Transforming Homosexuality](#) by Denny Burk & Heath Lambert
- [Sexuality](#) by Bruce B Miller

We hope that this can be a useful outline for such a sensitive topic. Our students are having these conversations and this guide can help parents/guardians (the most important people in their lives) be the guide as we all navigate through it. If you have any questions or need help, we would love to be there with you! Contact your campus staff or email us at students@hopefellowship.net