

Theological and Pastoral Responses to Gays and Lesbians in Committed¹ Relationships

	5: Welcoming and affirming	4: Redemptive accommodation	3: Pastoral concession	2: Consistent witness	1: Purity of the Church
	Committed lifelong marriage is God's intention for partnership and sexual expression of gay and lesbian persons (whom God both created and intended to be gay or lesbian). Such marriages should be celebrated and consecrated by the church.	God's intention for human sexuality is that it should be expressed in the lifelong covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. But God's redemptive accommodation for gays and lesbians is that they express their sexuality either in celibacy or within a single committed, lifelong relationship. Such a relationship is under God's redemptive blessing.	God's intention for faithful human sexuality is either heterosexual marriage or celibacy. Yet gays and lesbians should be welcome in the church, and if they are unable to remain celibate, committed lifelong partnerships can be tolerated as a concession to brokenness, but should not be understood to be under God's full blessing.	A homosexual orientation is not usually chosen. Despite this tragic dimension to the issue, the only paths of faithful Christian expression for human sexuality are either heterosexual marriage or celibacy. The church must welcome gays, but must also call them to abstain from homosexual activity.	Homosexual activity is quite simply a choice against God's will for human life. The church must call gays and lesbians to repent, resist temptation, and change their behavior. The only issue at stake here is the truth of God's Word and the integrity of our obedience.
Is "gay marriage" legitimate?	Yes	Maybe	No	No	No
Are "civil unions" good public policy?	Not preferred	Some yes, some no	Maybe	No	No
Ordain gays and lesbians in committed relationships?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Committed gays and lesbians come to the Lord's table?	Yes	Yes	Maybe	No	No
Key ethical analogy	Marriage as committed love	Remarriage after divorce	Cohabitation without marriage	Incest or adultery	Addiction to pornography
Key theological category	Goodness of creation	Sanctification as partial and progressive	Sin as brokenness	Sin as departure from divine intention	Sin as rebellion against God

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¹ All of these positions agree that sexuality should only be fully expressed in committed, lifelong relationships. This assumption sets all these positions apart from much of the discussion of sexuality in North American culture generally, both "gay" and "straight." Of course, they differ about the nature of such relationships and the meaning of "commitment." The various positions outlined here may also adopt differing approaches to issues such as divorce, as well.