

Passage	Traditional/Conservative View	Affirming/Progressive View
Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-24	God created male and female, both in the Image of God, each with unique characteristics. The fact that woman was provided by God to be the perfect companion for man implies that marriage (leaving home to become one, as this passage puts it) should be between man and woman. Additionally, male and female are part of the system of binaries established in the creation story (land and sea, night and day, etc).	This passage is artistic and poetic, and it teaches us about the goodness of God and the world He created. The ancient author of Genesis teaches us that marriage is a good thing. In this time period, heterosexual marriage was the norm, but we can experience the blessing of marriage according to the different norms of our own culture. Additionally, male and female exist on a spectrum. Just as day and night have evening and morning and land and sea have beaches, so too does gender have overlaps and ambiguities.
Leviticus 18:22, 20:13	This prohibition against homosexual acts is part of a larger sexual code of conduct in the Book of Leviticus, and all of the other rules surrounding it are things that we consider important today. Therefore, we should not disregard this verse.	Jesus institutes salvation by faith apart from works of the Old Testament Law. Therefore, this verse does not apply to us today. While many OT regulations are still important for following Jesus, there is no reason to limit same-sex expressions of love. Some have argued that the Hebrew would be better translated as “do not lie in bed with a married man”, but this understanding has never been considered by Bible translators until very recent years. Most affirming Bible scholars are content to allow for the prohibition of same-sex relationships under the OT Law.
Matthew 22:37-39, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7	Loving our neighbors requires us to point them towards a healthy relationship with God. Living in sin is bad for our relationship with God, so we should encourage same-sex attracted people to pursue a life of singleness which conforms to their sex assigned at birth.	Loving our neighbors requires us to allow them to express their love, even if it looks different than our own. 1 Corinthians 13 describes a love that bears patiently with those with different sexualities than our own.
Romans 1:21-27	Paul straightforwardly speaks out against both gay and lesbian sex, explaining that such relationships are to be expected in a culture that does not honor God. Some say that this teaching is part of Paul’s own cultural understanding of sexuality, and that it can be disregarded in light of modern understandings of sexual orientation. This understanding of Scripture, however, can be applied to almost every command, and would render all teaching on morality to be dependent on culture. On the contrary, Paul seems to believe that his teaching is from God and for the whole world.	In the ancient world, it was assumed that all people could be satisfied with heterosexual sex, but that some people went beyond it due to their insatiable lust—leading them to engage in same-sex behavior. Paul isn’t condemning being gay as opposed to being straight. He is condemning self-seeking excess as opposed to moderation—a concern made clear by his repeated use of the term “lustful,” and by his description of people “exchanging” or “abandoning” heterosexual sex. It may also be that these sexual excesses were taking place in the Roman temples, involving temple prostitutes and the worship of foreign gods. Paul condemns lustful relationships, but this pagan anti-Christ worship has little to do with modern same-sex marriage.

<p>1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Timothy 1:10</p>	<p>There are two Greek words here - <i>malakoi</i> and <i>arsenokoitai</i> - which are somewhat ambiguous in their meaning. <i>Malakoi</i> is sometimes translated as “feminine men”, “soft men”, or “men who behave as women”. <i>Arsenokoitai</i> literally means “sleeping with men”. The presence of these words in these lists of sinful activities seems to place homosexual acts and transgenderism outside of the boundaries for appropriate sexual conduct. This is often connected to Genesis, where male and female are created to compliment one another in marriage. Because of this, it is wrong to act in ways which do not match their genetic biological sex.</p>	<p><i>Malakoi</i> and <i>arsenokoitai</i> are better understood as men who are in an abusive, often pedophilic sexual relationship. “Soft men” refers to weaker, younger boys who are sexually taken advantage of by older men. However, it doesn’t make sense for the one being abused to be included in the list of sinners. Therefore, it is more likely that Paul is speaking about young men who are weak in their self control. If Paul had intended to condemn both partners in male same-sex relations, it’s critical to remember the major gap between same-sex behavior as it was practiced in ancient societies—where it was based on status, power, and lust—and committed same-sex unions today.</p>
<p>Galatians 3:28</p>	<p>This passage has nothing to do with sexuality or gender identity. The point here is that all are equal in the church, and that all have peace and unity in Christ, no matter what their background is.</p>	<p>In this passage we see that all are included in God’s family. God includes everybody as they are, regardless of their sexuality, gender, race, or background. These are qualities which we are born with, and we should embrace them.</p>
<p>Ephesians 5:21-33</p>	<p>Marriage is once again (as in Genesis) portrayed as a commitment between a man and a woman. This mirrors the covenant between Jesus and his church. The assumption that marriage is between a man and a woman does not have to be explicitly stated, as the biblical authors assumed their readers knew it.</p>	<p>According to Ephesians, marriage is fundamentally about commitment—keeping our covenant with our spouse as a reflection of God’s own covenant with us through Jesus. The essence of marriage is covenantal love and faithfulness, and Christian same-sex couples live out that vision of marriage every day. “Male and female” language in this passage shows more about the cultural assumptions of the day than God’s intention for marriage.</p>
<p>UMC Book of Discipline</p>	<p>UMC is officially traditional - not performing weddings for or ordaining those who consider themselves “practicing homosexuals” - but welcomes same-sex persons to worship and membership.</p>	<p>Some in UMC leadership hold these progressive views, and seek to amend the Book of Discipline to reflect these beliefs. Some pastors, bishops, and other leaders have chosen to not enforce these sections of the Book of Discipline as they currently stand.</p>