

A Hermeneutical Porch
For Human Sexuality
Dr. Steve Harper

Note: This is a work in progress. This is the first edition of the document. Any subsequent editions will be identified at the beginning of each draft. Note too that this is not a full manuscript, but more nearly a guide into further exploration. I may eventually develop this into a more detailed presentation, but for now, this format must serve the purpose for which it is created: to provide a hermeneutical guide for an affirming theology of human sexuality. In addition to the text, footnotes will direct you to the expansions of particular ideas...and...at the end of this document, I have prepared a basic bibliography of resources that are arranged in relation to the Wesleyan quadrilateral.

I am assuming in writing this document that you are sufficiently engaged to follow the links that I will be suggesting. This paper will be long enough as it is, but for the economy of space and writing time, I am deliberately filling in many details in materials that are not included here. To get the most out of what you are about to read, you must make the effort to go beyond this document.

Introduction

In his writing *The Principles of a Methodist* (1746), John Wesley used the metaphor of a house to explain the essence of the early Methodist movement. He arranged his view in relation to the porch, door, and house of religion. The porch was the starting point—the place of beginning, with much more to discover. I choose to use the metaphor for this document. I offer you a hermeneutical porch to do much further study of human sexuality in the Christian tradition, as interpreted through an affirming theological lens.

The need for this has become obvious in the requests I have received to provide aspects of what you are about to read as a whole. The requests have come for years, and I have responded as best I can. Following the special called session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church in St. Louis in 2019, the requests resumed with a fresh sense of need. Again, I responded to each as best I could, but in doing so, I decided it would be better if I sort of "put it all in one place" so that particular requests not only could be addressed, but so that inquirers could see how the request fits into a larger picture of biblical and theological interpretation.

So, here we are standing on the porch—at the starting point for an exploration which has led me to read more than 5,000 pages of materials (both affirming views and non-affirming ones), a reading which has led me to much of what you are now about to read. But what you are about to read is not primarily an academic project, it is the story of a personal transformation. So, I begin this paper with my story, so that you can understand why I have devoted myself to all this in the first place. This section is linked to a video presentation I made in 2015 entitled, "How I Changed My Mind."

Following that, I will write some about the hermeneutical base for the theological position I now hold with respect to human sexuality, and for the decision Jeannie and I made years ago to become outspoken allies with our LGBTQ+ siblings in the human family, and particularly with those we have come to know as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ. In many ways, this paper is a tribute to them for their love, encouragement, and support—when it was absent from other Christians. This paper is unapologetically a call for any who read it to give a careful look to a credible, biblical view (informed by tradition, reason, and experience) that affirms the sacred worth of LGBTQ+ people, but goes on to advocate the full inclusion of these good folks into the Body of Christ, including full access to the Church's sacraments, means of grace, and all other ministries (e.g. leadership, marriage and ordination) it offers to its members and to the world. This section is also linked to a video presentation that I have made.

Following a section on the hermeneutical base, I will write about the passages in Scripture usually cited by those who are non-affirming of full inclusion and access of LGBTQ+

people. I will show how it is possible and credible to read them in an affirming way—a way in keeping with the larger hermeneutical view. This is the section which is most "in process," and much of it must (at least for now) awaits further writing on my part. This section is linked to specific footnoted resources and to the bibliography included at the end of the paper.

Finally, I will write a concluding section of where I believe God is leading us in our life together and in the creation of a Church where full inclusion and full access offer light, life, and love to every human being, and particularly to those who continue to look to the Church for a message of meaning and hope. A growing number of people are not looking to the Church for such a message, but some are still turning to it despite how they have been labeled and treated by Christians. In ways I openly admit, I am writing all this as a way to counter the non-affirming narrative and to profess again what I did in the first days of my Christian journey, "For God so loved ***the world*** that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth in him** should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This paper is a way of declaring that when words like "the world" and "whosoever believeth in him" are embraced, we stand on solid ground and we manifest the spirit of the excarnate and incarnate Christ when we declare, "All means all!"

The Journey

I could write a whole book about this, but I will summarize it in two main points. The first point is that I understand how Paul felt when he wrote that he was the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). For decades, I identified as an Evangelical. And that identification included institutionalized expression as a board member of the Good News movement, and as a principal speaker at the launch conference for what became the Confessing Movement. In addition, I served for thirty years as a professor, dean, and vice president of Asbury Theological Seminary whose Ethos Statement has expressed a non-affirming view of LGBTQ+ persons largely in keeping with the "incompatibility" language of The United Methodist Church's *Book of Discipline*, an ethos that also limits the definition of marriage to the holy wedlock of one man and one woman.

In order for you to understand why and how I have traveled another path since Lent in 2014, you must understand how deeply embedded in the conservative position I was, and for how long. The surprising thing for me is that during these many years of teaching at Asbury, I was approached by LGBTQ+ students (Asbury has always had, and now has them) who themselves concluded that I was among a handful of ATS professors who (to use their words) were "a safe place" to come out and have conversation, even though they knew that I did not have an affirming theology at that time. Looking back, I find this both amazing and humbling. I include this fact to illustrate the element of Mystery which runs through my journey.

The point of this section is to make it clear that from roughly 1966 through 2014, I was non-affirming. If nothing else, this should make it clear that my change of mind and heart was neither casual nor quick. It is the most profound theological change I have ever made, and I give thanks to God that I made it, despite what others think about me for having done so. I have experienced another Pauline sentence as a result, "Christ has set us free for freedom" (Galatians 5:1)—a freedom from legalism and judgmentalism akin to that which had overtaken the Galatian Christians, and one which has again overtaken many fundamentalist Christians today,

The second point of this section flows out of the first. When I changed my mind during Lent of 2014 and began this new journey, I felt like the people in Jesus' parable who came late to working in the vineyard (Matthew 20:6). So many others had worked longer and harder than I ever will. I knew it, and I know it still. My first response was to think that perhaps I was to make the change but keep it largely to myself—that is, to simply live as a quiet ally with LGBTQ+ people. But it was the parable which prevented me from doing so. All the laborers worked "in the vineyard." None were employed to sit on the sideline and watch everyone else work. They were all called to work. The next thing I noticed was that the landowner was totally unconcerned with how long anyone worked. The focus was on the necessity of the work, not on the time any given laborer worked. Working all day or only a little while was totally beside the point. The point, after responding to the invitation was—to work! I knew I had been called to work, even as a latecomer. And finally, the parable revealed the amazing fact (which even upset some of the laborers) that everyone was paid the same wage at the end of the day. This

realization literally brought (and sometimes still brings) tears. I found myself singing with Charles Wesley, "tis mercy all, immense and free, for O my God it found out me"....and again..."my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee."

I took that initial experience and wrote about it in my book, *For the Sake of the Bride: Restoring the Church to Her Intended Beauty*.¹ I point you to it, rather than write here in detail about it. Essentially, it put into print an account of my change of view regarding LGBTQ+ people, and it proposed three means (love, non-judgement, and holy conferencing) for preserving the unity of the Church in the midst of intense debate (and threatened schism), a contest which was, at the time, consuming The United Methodist Church—and has continued to do so. If the book were to go into a second edition, there are places where I would write differently, for I have learned so much since I wrote it. But it remains an accurate description of why and how I came to be an ally with LGBTQ+ people.

About a year later, I was invited to speak at a conference sponsored by Reconciling Ministries Network. They asked me to speak on the topic, "How I Changed My Mind."² Again, rather than writing about the specifics of my message, I point to the YouTube video entitled "Drawing the Circle Wider." You can also find it by searching under my name "Steve Harper," but there are numerous folks by that name who have made videos. The title of the video seems to be the easiest way to discover firsthand what I said about my transformation.

My change brought an immediate and ongoing pushback. But "this is my story, this is my song," and as the years go by and the journey continues, I sing it even more clearly and loudly. I do so primarily because of the LGBTQ+ people who have come into Jeannie's and my life, confirming in spades (even through their stories of being rejected by family and friends, and by Christians) that they are as fully devoted to Christ as I ever hope to be, and that they are as beloved by God as any other human being. They bear witness in their singleness and in their marriages, as laity and clergy, and as fellow members of The United Methodist Church and siblings in other parts of the Church. In contrast to the mean-spiritedness some Christians have

¹ Steve Harper, *For the Sake of the Bride: Restoring the Church to Her Intended Beauty* (Abingdon Press, 2014)

² David Gushee used this as the title for his book that came out shortly after mine, so they wanted me to give a "Methodist version" of that account. I recommend his book to you, *Changing Our Minds*, 3rd edition.

shown to Jeannie and me, they have personified the spirit of Jesus. And so, I sing, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back!"

The Hermeneutic

When I was in seminary, I took a half dozen courses in Inductive Bible Study Methodology. It clicked for me, and I have used it in one form or another for nearly every day for fifty years. I taught it as a pastor to members of the churches I served, and for the first three years of my professorship at Asbury Theological Seminary, I taught one of the introductory courses in Inductive Methodology (using at that time, the Gospel of John).³

Because of my ongoing use of inductive methodology, I recognize that the allegation that some views of human sexuality are "biblical" and others are "unbiblical" in varying degrees, is a straw-man allegation, unsupported by the input of the Wesleyan theological method we refer to as the quadrilateral. The truth is, the debate is not about the inspiration and authority of Scripture. There are multitudes of people like me who believe in the Bible as much as any conservatives do. The pivot with respect to a theology of human sexuality is not biblical authority, but rather biblical interpretations. It is about hermeneutics, not revelation.

And that's where my inductive methodology has played a crucial role in the development of my theology of human sexuality. The first principle of the method is to survey the text as-a-whole before exploring the parts. The first task is to discover the big picture, and then look at the smaller ones. Just as puzzle workers keep the box top in front of them (to see the big picture) while they pick up and place the pieces, we are taught to first establish the meta narrative, and then use it to interpret particular passages.

³ This long and deep exposure to the Bible has formed my faith, and has provided the Scriptural foundation for my theology. My PhD study from Duke University in Historical Theology/Wesley Studies has added the additional pieces of the Wesleyan quadrilateral to my theological method: tradition, reason, and experience. The insights from this way of doing theology are legion, but two are especially noteworthy now: (1) that there has been more variety of belief in the Christian Church than some would have you believe, and (2) that there is a credible and substantive biblical view of human sexuality that is affirming with respect to inclusion and access—again, something certain Christians falsely allege not to exist.

After several years of following the conventional process being used mostly today—i.e. taking five or six passages and trying to "work up" to a Christian message about human sexuality, I realized I had been going about it backwards. And I discovered in my reading of other books and articles that the same was true for both conservatives and progressives. Almost everyone landed on the same verses, and then used them to (as we say) "lobber" those with whom we disagreed. For decades now, this has been the usual approach—an approach that tries to "out argue" the other side, salting the attempt with hyperbolic language that vilifies those who see things differently. And in The United Methodist Church, the debate has been contextualized in spiritual-warfare language and in the cage-match language of the wrestling world—neither of which represents or personifies the spirit of Christ.

So...just as I had had an "enough is enough" experience in 2014 with respect to my theology of human sexuality, somewhere in 2017 or early 2018, I had a second "enough is enough" experience with respect to how to go about articulating my view. My inductive methodology rescued me, saying in effect, "Steve, get the big picture before you turn to the little passages." That has been my pursuit. Hermeneutics says, "Get the meta narrative, and then use it to work your way down to the passages, not the other way around."

After a little over a year of taking this approach, I have found the meta narrative in the word love, and in the streams which flow from that revelation to give substance and form to a theology where "all means ALL"—a theology of full inclusion in the Church and full access to its sacraments, other means of grace, and to all its ministries. I was recently asked to speak about this at First United Methodist Church in Orlando in a presentation (and conversation) entitled, "The Bible's Affirmation of LGBTQ+ Persons: All Means All." You can watch it on YouTube by searching the "FUMC Orlando" site, and going to the video posted on February 20, 2019.⁴

The discovery of the meta narrative comes to us through six lenses: the creator, the creation, the covenant, the Christ, the church, and the consummation. I spoke about each of these in the presentation at First UMC Orlando, essentially showing how the message of love (e.g. through words like *hesed* and *agape*) pervades the entire Bible, and gives rise to the way

⁴ Don't panic when you see the 1hr 53 minute time designation. The video began before the session started and continued for a while after it ended. I spoke about 45 minutes, with an additional 30 minutes for conversation,

we read particular passages. In this paper, I will briefly refer to the lens of covenant, where four major principles for holy sexuality emerge: sacredness, fidelity, permanency, and (with the coming of the new covenant) monogamy.⁵

The big-picture hermeneutic which emerges from this six-lens revelation in Scripture is that sexuality is rooted in love (as everything else of God is), and it is expressed through vows and behaviors which are loving and which express sacredness, fidelity, permanency, and monogamy. The meta narrative can be summed up in two words: affirmative accountability. With respect to affirmation, ALL people are made in the image of God and are capable of living in the will of God in all aspects of their lives. All people can keep the covenant. All means all.

Accountability means there is a singular standard for everyone: holiness (defined in the Wesleyan tradition as holy love). When applied to our sexuality, the four principles define how we make and keep commitments to holy love. And again, all people can do this. All means all. It also means that all people can break the covenant, and in that respect heterosexual people have no higher moral ground to claim than do LGBTQ+ people. Moreover, the same avenues for sexual expression for heterosexual people are (or should be) available for LGBTQ+ people. The Bible nowhere explicitly says two people of the same sex must not be married, nor does it enjoin lifelong celibacy upon LGBTQ+ people. These prohibitions are interpretive, not textual. God affirms holy sexuality as possible for all people: in singleness and in marriage.⁶

This is the meta narrative, the hermeneutic, which emerged from my study of the Bible as a whole: an exegesis that is rooted in love and is expressed by covenant love—love which has its origin in the nature of God and creation, in the ministry and witness of Christ and the New Testament Church, and in the final consummation of all things. With this "all means all"

⁵ The writings of Walter Brueggemann about covenant and additional studies of covenant by Gushee and Song (see bibliography) have given shape to my use of these principles.

⁶⁶ The topic of marriage is worthy of mention. The allegation that marriage must be between one man and one woman is drawn from the illustrations of marriage in Scripture, not from a specific prohibition against same-sex marriage. The mistake is to equate normativeness with definitiveness. One man/one woman marriage is normative but it is not definitive. It is still normative today, given that between 90-95% of people are heterosexual in orientation. But it is not gender or identity that defines marriage; it is covenant. And all persons can make and keep vows that establish and maintain a marital relationship that is sacred, faithful, permanent, and monogamous. I go into more detail about this in the video presentation at First UMC in Orlando referred to above.

message of affirmative accountability, we can then "work our way down" into the passages which are typically used to deny same-sex relationships.

The Passages

This is the most challenging part of this document because it is no exaggeration to say that thousands of pages have been written in recent years about the verses used to deny LGBTQ+ sexuality—to say nothing of as many, or more, pages written over the course of church history. It would be laughable to assume that one section of one paper can reflect all that has been written, and I am not writing here to do that. That's why I have added a bibliography to this document, and even it is a drop in the bucket of what is available.

But what is possible here is to take the above-mentioned hermeneutic and show how I have come to see that, while the passages used to deny same-sex relations and/or marriage are prohibitive, they do not prohibit what conservatives allege that they do.⁷ What the passages turn out to be (written over a span of 1400 years and in a variety of cultural/religious contexts) is the Bible's prohibition of non-covenant love, not homosexual love. The Bible gives us a half-dozen passages to show how same-sex relations can be non-covenantal, rounding out the picture provided by hundreds of passages where non-covenantal heterosexual relations are similarly forbidden. From this vantage point, I offer only brief commentary on the selected passages. Each of them violates covenant love in all four ways, and it is the violation (not the violators) which is the focus of the texts.⁸ Each of the passages has a "key" which unlocks its meaning, showing what specifically it is prohibiting, and how the prohibition is a violation of covenant love. As a matter of interest, I will also refer to John Wesley's explanatory notes about each passage.

⁷ Let me be clear. This is probably the lightning rod section of this paper. I write fully aware that the conservative view is very much different from what I am presenting. I am not writing here to attempt to change anyone's view, but only to show that an affirming view is (from a hermeneutical standpoint) possible and credible. This section is not an argument, it is a witness—a witness that has the same dimensions of faithfulness to Scripture and substantiveness in scholarship as the conservative view does.

⁸ A more-detailed writing is still ahead of me, but it can be found authored by others in the resources I have included in the bibliography.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13---the key is in the Hebrew word (*sakab*) which is translated in English as "lie with." The root meaning is "roaming"—a promiscuous sexual behavior that is driven by lust, with no love and no commitment to the other (using them as we would say today as objects of self-gratification). Dr. William Mounce notes that a contemporary rendering of the Hebrew word would be "sleeping around."⁹ The act described here violates all four of the covenant-love principles. John Wesley has no explanatory note for either verse.

Romans 1:18-28---there are three keys in this passage. (1) the people described are heterosexuals who "exchanged" (Greek means "temporarily set aside") their orientation to engage in same-sex relations in ways that were prevalent in Roman society: prostitution, pederasty, and other promiscuous activities; (2) the acts were unnatural because they went against their orientation; and (3) the behavior was the culmination of a sordid downward spiral of reason and morality, attitudes and actions which were deliberately idolatrous—which is to say were self-glorifying, not God-glorifying, rooted in egotism not in the *imago dei*. Surprisingly, this is a passage about one expression of heterosexuality, not homosexuality. The act violates all four covenant love principles. John Wesley's explanatory note references the idolatrous promiscuity of this sin, not those committing it.

1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10---the key is found in the two words *malakoi* and *arsenakoi*. *Malakoi* is only found in this one verse in the entire New Testament, making it more difficult to interpret. But the consensus of New Testament scholarship is that it describes sexual indulgence—what we would today refer to as sexual addiction and/or sexual behavior without regard to boundaries. In the Corinthian context, it carries forward the same cultural downward spiral which Paul noted in Roman society. John Wesley describes *malakoi* as indulgence (i.e. living a soft life without hardship), and he describes *arsenakoi* as "man stealers," which he then applies to slave trading-- what we call today sex trafficking.

This is a thumbnail sketch of the passages which conservatives use to deny same-sex relations, and what we find is that they do not prohibit such relations in general, but only those which violate non-covenant love. Every passage is against...

⁹ William D. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Zondervan, 2006), 403.

- behavior that is promiscuous
- behavior driven by lust
- behavior expressed for the purpose of self-gratification
- behavior that is sexually exploitation (e.g. prostitution, pederasty)
- behavior that is non-committal

So, the Bible is absolutely against sexual activity which violates sacredness, fidelity, permanency, and monogamy. But here is the point: it does not ascribe those violations exclusively to homosexual people or limit them to homosexual people. Each of these passages (and all the others as well) are prohibitions against non-covenant love; they are about the violations, not the violators. They apply to all. So, everyone can break/reject the covenant in singleness and in marriage...and... everyone can make/keep the covenant in singleness and in marriage.

Here is the summary of these passages taken together, a summary which connects them with the meta narrative of love. The Bible affirms sexuality that is **sacred** (treating each other as beloved persons made in the image of God), **faithful** (expressed through the making of vows and the resultant behavior that ensues), **permanent** (a commitment for life), and **monogamous** (a relationship between two people). This is covenant love, and it is a love for which all are made, and to which all are invited. All means all.

There is one important point that goes along with these passages: I know of no LGBTQ+ Christian (either as a friend or as someone whose writing I have read) who is asking for anything other than this. They understand and believe in covenant love (affirmative accountability). They have no hidden agenda as some conservatives falsely allege; they only want to be recognized for who they are--God's beloved made in God's image, and to be allowed to express their sexuality through the covenant principles just as heterosexual Christians do. They have no malevolent intent and seek no double standard, despite what some Christian groups say about them as they vilify and caricature LGBTQ+ people.¹⁰

Conclusion

As lengthy as this paper has been, it does not even scratch the surface in providing an account of my views or the views of the scholarly/ecclesial affirming Christian community. But reading back over it, I do believe it is what I intend for it to be: a **porch hermeneutic** (an opening, a beginning step) into a much, much wider exploration. While leaving a lot out, enough is here for you to hear my story and understand my witness.

But it all comes together, not as a document, but as a decision. And so it becomes to each of us who believe that an affirming theology is not only credible, but also possible and necessary if the Church is to be the Body of Christ. Everything turns into action; theology must be enacted in what John Wesley called "living faith" and "practical divinity." It is our failure to do this which has brought us to the place of having "dead orthodoxy" defining and directing the life of the Church. So..what then shall we do? A few thoughts for those of you who want to become part of a resistance to unloving, judgmental attitudes and actions wherever they occur.

First in our resistance we are not allowed to violate the two great commandments or to ignore the fruit of the Spirit in our resistance. We cannot advocate love while not practicing it. I begin here because it is right here where we all fail, when our passions overtake our perspectives. If historic resistance movements teach anything it is that the way of life is "overcoming evil with good"—what Richard Rohr calls "the practice of the better."

Second, we must resist with humility, not hubris. John Wesley taught that the distinguishing mark of sanctification is humility. It is first and foremost humility based in the fact that "there is none righteous, no not one" (Psalm 14:1), and that "we have all sinned and

¹⁰ They seek to be released from the stereotypical prison in which they are placed (and that by some Christians), a confinement that says they are creationally defective and spiritually devious. The Bible never says they are, and it is to the shame of portions of the Christian community that they are made to believe that they are. When we do this, we are in league with those Jesus said "cause these little ones to sin" (Mark 9:42) by labeling them in ways that destroy their sense of sacred worth and limiting them in ways that only leave open non-covenantal avenues of sexual behavior. Studies abound which confirm the harm being done to the LGBTQ+ community by both the society and the church, leading to a much higher than average suicide rate among them. I have listened to heartbreaking stories told me by LGBTQ+ people who have been shamed and shunned by parents, friends, and congregations. Such rejection is undeniable and unjustified—and blatantly un-Christian.

fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). None of us is 100% correct, or 100% wrong. The only way to discover this is through holy conferencing, round-table experiences where we listen to and learn from each other. We are not at war with fellow Christians; this is not a cage match. And so long as we think of it that way, we will perpetuate the cancer of condemnation of LGBTQ+ people in the society and the church.

Third, we must resist with advocacy. There are a multitude of ways to do this, both in the community and in the church. I make no list here, but only call you to an active resistance. I know Christians who say to me, "we agree with you, but we just cannot speak out." I have no right to judge anyone's silence, but only to make the strongest appeal that I can to abandon the sidelines and move onto the field, come out of the shadows into the light, break silence with speech, and unexpressed affinity with action. We have moved in both our nation and our church to a time when proactivity is required; otherwise, we become the "lukewarm ones" Jesus told us not to be.

And finally, we must resist with our aim in mind. It is full access, not just full inclusion. Since the General Conference of the UMC met in St. Louis, many churches have flown banners, taken out newspaper ads, posted church signs, and made statements to the effect, "We love everyone. Everyone is welcome here." I rejoice in that swift and public witness. It is good. But it is not enough. Given where we are in the UMC right at this moment, we must realize that at the end of the day, our LGBTQ+ people are not just asking for affirmation, they are asking for access—access to the sacraments, the other means of grace, and to all the ministries of the church. Affirming churches are wonderful, but they are just a few questions away from being tested-- questions such as these: (1) "Can I serve in any leadership role in this congregation? (2)"If I fall in love, will you marry me, and marry me here in the church, and (3) "If I have a call to ordained ministry, will you approve me for ordination?" In the midst of our affirmations, we must also be aiming for access along these lines, and all others which are afforded to heterosexual people.

We are compelled to do these things through the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. Through infant baptism (and adult baptism too, for that matter) we initiate persons into Christ's

holy church without knowing or asking about their sexual orientation. In the eucharist, we United Methodists have an open table, and we do not make orientation a determinative factor in who may receive holy communion. Our sacraments leave us facing in the direction of affirmation...and...access. We must not turn subsequently in any other direction, or change the game halfway through for roughly 5% of the population after we have told them they are our siblings in Christ.

Only time will tell if I write about all of this in more detail. I offer it only to those who have asked to have a relatively easy way to hear my story and think about these things. I come to the end of this paper hoping that somewhere in it, you have found help and hope.

A Basic Affirming Bibliography On Human Sexuality

Below are books which have shaped my theology of human sexuality. The list began as an attempt to gather biblical references, but in the course of doing so, I realized that a full orb'd Wesleyan theology must include resources pertaining to tradition, reason, and experience.

So, I have organized this list in relation to the Wesleyan quadrilateral. Most books fit into more than one aspect of the quadrilateral. I have placed each in the category it most helped me understand human sexuality...

**= suggested first book to read in category

(1) Scripture

Mark Achtemeier, 'The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage'

James Brownson, 'Bible, Gender, and Sexuality'

Richard Elliott Friedman and Shawna Dolansky, 'The Bible Now'

Luke Timothy Johnson, 'The Living Gospel' (Chapter Eight)

Austin Hartke, "Nonbinary Gender and the Diverse Beauty of Creation," *The Christian Century*, 4 /16/18

Jennifer Knust, 'Unprotected Texts'

William Loader, 'Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition'

William Loader, 'Sexuality and the New Testament'

Linda J. Patterson, 'Hate Thy Neighbor: How the Bible is Misused to Condemn Homosexuality'

**Dan Via's section in 'The Bible and Homosexuality'

Walter Wink, 'Homosexuality and the Bible'

(2) Tradition (General and Church History)

(A) General History

Francis Mark Mondimore, 'A Natural History of Homosexuality'

(B) Church History

**"Cheryl Anderson, 'Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies'

John Boswell, 'Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality'

(3) Reason (Theology & Science)

(A) Theology

Megan Shanon DeFranza, 'Sex Differences in Christian Theology'

Karen Keen, 'Scripture, Ethics, and the Possibility of Same-Sex Relationships'

Jack David Rogers, 'Jesus, the Bible & Homosexuality (Revised Edition)

** Robert Song, 'Covenant as Calling'

(B) Sciences

Jaques Balthazart, 'The Biology of Homosexuality'

Jerold Greenberg, 'Exploring Dimensions of Human Sexuality'

Justin Lehmiller, 'The Psychology of Human Sexuality'

Simon LeVay, 'Gay, Straight and the Reason Why: The Science of Sexual Orientation
(Second Edition)

Dawne Moon, "Culture and the Sociology of Sexuality,"

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences

**Michael Regele, 'Science, Scripture, and Same-Sex Love'

(4) Experience (Pastoral Tone)

**David Gushee, 'Changing Our Minds' (3rd edition)

Steve Harper, 'For the Sake of the Bride'

James Martin, 'Building a Bridge'

Tim Otto, 'Oriented to Love'

Matthew Vines, 'God and the Gay Christian'

Mel White, 'Stranger at the Gate'

United Methodist Focused...

Phillip Cramer & William Harbison, 'The Fight for Marriage'

Reuben Job & Neil Alexander, 'Finding Our Way,'

Kenneth Carter, 'Embracing the Wideness'

Karen Oliveto, 'Our Strangely Warmed Hearts'

Feel free to share this document as you like, but if you do, please do me the courtesy of referencing me as the author. Thsnk you.