

# Most gay Christians don't feel safe in church. What's the answer? Stop idolising sex and get back to Jesus



By **David Bennett**, Author of A War of Loves | 14 February 2022 | 3 min read

Two thirds of LGBT+ Christians do not feel safe in Church. Is it any wonder, asks David Bennett, when we've idolised heterosexual love? This Valentine's Day, he challenges us to remember that Jesus was far more interested in a greater love, and so should we be



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We live in a time that is bent on forgetting the past. This includes the wisdom from the pages of

scripture regarding the nature of love. We have often sold love for the cheap and atomised world of 'sex' and 'sexuality'.

We scroll on dating apps. We lust after images of perfection on Instagram. We find our deepest value in our experience of gender and of sexual attraction. And yet Jesus speaks to us from ancient pages about a greater source of meaning which has very little to do with any of these categories: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13).

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## *WHAT THIS RESEARCH REVEALS IS WE HAVE LOST OUR GRIP ON THE GREATER LOVE*

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Jesus started the movement of spiritual friendship. This movement of the greater love rode on the waves of early church life, theology and history. Jesus' church attempted to echo the great friendships of ancient Israel, particularly David and Jonathan, whose love exceeded that of sex or sexuality. Such a spirit-to-spirit and non-sexual connection most intimately reflected God's love for us in Jesus laying his life down for us on the cross. This love involved safe and free friendship with women, and relativised sex and procreation to the background. It showed us that sexual relationships weren't necessary for human flourishing or for the purposes of the kingdom of God to be achieved.

### **A PURE BEGINNING**

In ancient traditions of Christianity, where the good failed often, saints emerged who fought for this greater love of friendship. Aelred of Rievaulx started a monastic movement which prized 'spiritual' and ecstatic friendship. He wrote that: "No medicine is more valuable, none more efficacious, none better suited to the cure of all our temporal ills than a friend to whom we may turn for consolation in time of trouble, and with whom we may share our happiness in time of joy."

However, this beautiful image of a world charmed and enchanted by the greater love was torn apart by war and power-based marriage. Slowly the early modern world moved to delete friendship as a sinister cover for disordered or hidden sexuality. Soon, the terms 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' were coined in modernist psychology to forensically class human beings. Love was equated with sexual desire.

Romance was limited t

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## *HOW DO WE STOP SERVING THE FALSE SAVIOUR OF SEXUALITY AND RETURN TO JESUS CHRIST?*

Soon postmodernism and late existentialism broke open this elevation of sex and marriage with a critique of conservative society. This postmodern surge embraced desire as love. And yet, Sartre broke De Beauvoir's heart. The experiment failed and we were left with constructions of sexuality and gender flocking to sex to save us.

### **LOSING OUR GRIP**

In this world, it is no wonder a new report has revealed that the majority of LGBT+ Christians don't feel comfortable in churches.

Research undertaken by the Ozanne foundation found that more than two thirds of LGBT+ Christians do not feel "safe to be themselves" when visiting places of worship. There were 1,121 responses from UK residents, with 754 stating that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender or non-binary Christians. Of that group, 69 per cent said that they went to church almost every week – most were part of Church of England congregations.

What this research reveals is that we have lost our grip on the greater love. Factions have attempted to tear down a Church which has tried to embody this love from the ancient pages of scripture, and its Lord. This Church has taught us to return to the greater love of self-sacrificial friendship, and to stop persecuting the voices which are now marginalised for trying to live it.

### **RETURNING TO LOVE**

We have drunk the Kool-Aid of sex and sexuality which will continue to tear the Church apart with the idols of yesteryear. Boomer activists will constantly come on the scene trying to enforce their sexual politics and idolatries from both sides to 'solve' the 'LGBTQI+ problem.' The liberal solution will continue to be to worship sexuality as vital for human flourishing by enshrining a gay union which ignores God's creation. Premier Christianity uses cookies [Read our cookie policy](#). Sexual marriage as the good without which you cannot flourish is the true gospel of the greater love, which celebrates the

This Valentine's Day, it might be worth asking yourself the question: How do we stop serving the false saviour of sexuality and return to Jesus Christ, who had little personal interest in sexuality but who pointed us to the love that will truly and eternally fulfil all of us?

He spent his life practising safe, ecstatic and wildly satisfying forms of friendship that reflected the universal love of the new creation which will not involve marriage or sexuality. As a celibate, gay or queer Christian - but primarily a human being and child of God - that is the love and future-come-now that I live for, and without which all of us will be lost.

My prayer this Valentine's day is that all of us, regardless of labels, will live our lives in devotion and gratitude to Jesus, who delivered us from the idolatry and slavery of overvaluing the lesser loves of sex and marriage. He died to free us to love universally, regardless of our sexual status, and to find the cure to the problem of sin - which is the greater love. We all know that such a love does not insist on its own desires, nor is it a love which erases the importance of sex, or even commercially worships it on Valentine's day. Rather, Jesus invites us to the joy of giving up our lives, and serving the needs, large or small, of a diversity of significant others, whether our spouse, enemy, neighbour, stranger, child, friend, partner, family-member - but God chief among them.

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