

A Question of faith: Sexuality BBC Programmes for Religious Education

Age range	12-16 https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01w6th1
Topic	Homosexuality and religion. How do religious communities respond when people are threatened with persecution because of their sexuality and is it good for gay and lesbian people who are, for example, Christians to have separate congregations for their worship and community life?
Clip content described 12 minutes	<p>This programme begins by noting that equality for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people is not secure, and that religions sometimes seem to be the last to accept the importance of this equality. Why do religions look anti-gay? And what if you are both gay and religious?</p> <p>Three young people, a Catholic Christian, a Muslim and an atheist – who is also gay – travel to London to see what happens at the Metropolitan Community Church, a congregation which makes safe space for LGBT Christians. They meet two young Christian women who fled from central Africa because they were lesbians and they were persecuted, including threats to their lives. The worship service our three researchers attend comes as a surprise to them: liturgy is a little different from usual, worship has a different style. It's a challenge – especially to our Roman Catholic believer, who finds he cannot join in. The minister explains why, for the moment, LGBT Christians often find it good to be part of an LGBT church. She asks what God might say to us all about issues of sexuality if we arrive at the gate of heaven and are asked about how we treated each other.</p> <p>Back in the studio there is a keen debate between our twelve young people. No one thinks the example from Africa, where human rights have been denied to LGBT people, is other than wrong. But does God approve or disapprove of gay sexuality? Is it allowed or forbidden? And why, when Christians and Muslims teach and preach mercy, have these religions sometimes been persecutors of gay people? There is no agreement!</p>
Short synopsis	An atheist, a Muslim and a Christian visit a church for gay and lesbian people. Provoked to look afresh at equality questions, they join Angellica Bell in a studio discussion about the reasons why religions don't seem fair to LGBT people. What must be done for equality to flourish?



Here are some learning activities which teachers could use to bring the programme's potential into focus for their students.

Three Dilemma Scenarios: give pupils these three dilemmas and ask them in pairs to research the teachings they need to know about and make recommendations to the key character about what to do. They then write the 'what happened next' section of the dilemma.

1. **A Muslim teenager asks for help.** Imagine you are a Muslim community leader, and often speak with young people about how to follow the faith. A keen young Muslim comes to talk to you about faith and life one day, and is clearly rather distressed. You explore the reasons for his/her distress, and eventually the young person says: 'Well, the truth is that I'm pretty sure I'm a homosexual, and I'm terrified that I will be thrown out of the mosque, and my family will reject me. I've tried to be 'straight', but it feels like Allah made me this way.'" How do you reply? What are your options? What happens over the next two weeks, and the next two years? Write extensions of the scenario called 'Two weeks later...' and 'Two years later...'
2. **Is the church homophobic? If it is, should you stay or should you go?** With a partner imagine you are two young Christians in an ordinary London church who are taught that if LGBT people want to be Christians they should not have sex with same sex partners, and that gay marriage is against Christian belief (many – but not all - Churches teach this idea). The two young Christians disagree, arguing that if God makes people gay, they should be allowed to marry. The two Christians discuss whether they should continue to be a part of what they think is a 'homophobic church' or move to the one we saw in the film, the Metropolitan Community Church. Write the script for this conversation, and decide what conclusions they might come to, considering the alternatives. What happens over the next two weeks, and the next two years? Write extensions of the scenario called 'Two weeks later...' and 'Two years later...'
3. **The atheist attack.** Imagine you are invited by friends who are atheist, gay and lesbian to a protest meeting. The local inter faith council is having a meeting where people from the different religions explain their views on issues of sexuality. Your friends are pretty sure they will all speak negatively about LGBT people. They are planning banners and protests outside or inside the meeting. You agree to go along. There are banners to choose from. Which would you choose?

'Religions are homophobic. Shut them up'

'If you don't like gay marriage, then don't get gay married'

'Why do you think God keeps making gay people?'

'Gay Love is not a sin: Equal Love, Natural Love, Human Love.'

You choose your banner. When you all arrive at the meeting, some people outside are getting abusive and chanting. Others go inside to listen and ask questions. What do you do? A reporter asks why you are there, and what you hope to achieve. What do you reply? Christians and Muslims at the event ask you: "aren't you more prejudiced than us if you won't come and hear our views?" What do you say? What happens over the next two weeks, and the next two years? Write extensions of the scenario called 'Two weeks later...' and 'Two years later...'

	<p>Controversy: What do the religions actually say? Ask your students to research religious views for themselves through a webquest. A suitable starting point is a website like https://www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk/ created by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. Students should find answers to questions like these:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Why do religions seem anti-gay? If you are very religious, does that stop you being gay or lesbian? Is there a moral argument for celibacy among Christians and Muslims? Should religious people (who claim to support marriage strongly) be the biggest supporters of gay marriage? Why (often) aren't they?
<p>Key words</p>	<p>Christianity, Islam, Atheism, sexuality, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), prejudice, persecution, homophobia, ethics, morality, religion, spirituality, discussion, opinion, thinking skills, debate, dilemma</p>
<p>Take Note</p>	<p>The National Union of Teachers publishes some high quality work on prejudice reduction and on dealing with homophobic bullying in schools. Teachers may find it helpful to relate this material to religious perspectives.</p> <p>Stonewall's recent work on faith and sexuality is exemplary in its attempts at fairness to faith and people living with a wide range of gender and sexual identities Start here: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/faith-and-lgbt-inclusion</p> <p>Vicky Beeching's interesting story of leaving her life as a worship leader and singer because the churches found her lesbian identity threatening or unacceptable is a good place to work from: here's an interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_3f0bNsB4s</p>