



# Under the rainbow you are not alone

Survivalguide for queer kids  
who are christian



## Christian AND lgbtq+! How many times does one actually have to come out?

To define oneself as both a Christian and lgbtq+ can mean that you may have to defend yourself or explain yourself in two contexts. It is as if you come out in two worlds where some will think that they clash. It can be especially frustrating if there are people in both contexts who mean a lot to you and who are important for your identity. All that is you must fit in everywhere. It is you who must choose which worlds you belong to and no-one else can decide this for you.

Even if we can give you examples of how you can respond to questions and opinions, we wish to emphasize this: you do not have to defend all Christians or all lgbtq-people who have ever existed just because some people expect you to do so. You are not obliged to answer questions or teach people things, but if you think it is fun and challenging then do it. It may help others. (Otherwise you can just give this guide to someone who needs it and leave that person in peace.)

## Does one have to come out?

"Coming out" is a notion that is used when someone with an identity that goes against the norm tells about their gender identity or sexual orientation. Usually it is not sufficient to come out once, but many times, in many different contexts.

It is you who must decide for yourself where you will come out and for whom. It is a good idea, if you are able to choose, to come out in a context that you trust, because coming out can be dangerous. Nor is there any obligation to tell. You are completely true to yourself even if you choose not to show all of yourself or all of your super powers to everyone. Who does that anyway?

## Wardrobes can lead to magical worlds where you can be the one you feel you are.

The expression "out of the closet" or "wardrobe" comes from the idea that if you have to hide your identity it is like being locked up. That it is like having to hide in a dusty wardrobe and that it is wrong. It should not have to be like that. Sometimes we have to hide in safe places in order to protect ourselves, but it is you who decides which places you can trust or wish to come out in.

In his stories about Narnia the author C.S. Lewis reminds us that wardrobes can lead to other worlds where you can be who you really feel that you are just now. In the wardrobe you perhaps find surroundings you did not believe existed, where it is easier to be yourself. Places and contexts that can make you strong and where you do not have to defend the person you are. Some of these places can be found on the internet or in clubs like those we give you tips about in this guide.

## Terms and expressions you may encounter in different contexts.

**Biological gender/sex** One perspective on gender based on internal and external sex organs, sex chromosomes and hormone levels.

**Gender attribution** Ascribing a certain gender onto a person. People are sometimes ascribed the wrong gender; meaning that they are perceived according to a gender that they do not identify as, which could mean that they are violated or made invisible.

**Gender dysphoria** Gender dysphoria means that you suffer; or experience obstacles in your everyday life, because your gender identity does not correspond to the gender you were assigned at birth. A common form of gender dysphoria is what is known as physical gender dysphoria.

**Gender expression** The way in which a person expresses their gender: Gender expressions are coded and linked to a certain gender according to the norms that exist in that context. These have changed over time.

**Gender identity** The gender that a per-

son identifies as. Only you can decide and comment on your gender identity.

**Hate crime** When someone attacks a person or group due to, for example, their perceived sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression, or religious affiliation.

**Heteronormativity** A system of invisible norms that assumes that people are heterosexual cis people and that the genders man and woman complement each other.

**Legal gender/sex** All children are assigned at birth a legal gender based on their biological sex. The legal gender is registered and is recorded in a person's identity number. There are two legal genders in Sweden, unlike, for example, in Germany and Australia.

**Norms** Expectations and unwritten rules concerning what is generally desirable in a particular context. Heterosexuality, the gender binary, monogamy and whiteness are all examples of norms.

**Norm critique** Uncovering, trying to understand and questioning norms.

**Passing** This term is sometimes used if the gender identity that a person identifies as corresponds to how others perceive them. This is different from the term “being read as”, which is only about how others perceive the person and not about how the person sees themselves.

**Pronoun** A word class. The word pronoun means “instead of name” and is used to avoid unnecessary repetition in a language. A pronoun is what a person wants to be called when someone talks about them in the third person. A pronoun can be connected to one’s gender identity, but it does not have to be. Everyone has the right to choose their own pronoun. Examples of pronouns are she, he, ze, hir, they, one.

**Queer Theology** One way of thinking norm-critically about God. Perhaps one can see queer theology as a way of “outing” God. In other words, to see parts of God that have not been a part of the traditional teachings.

**Queer theological bible study** A way to read the Bible with norm-critical glasses and to question norms about sexuality and gender or to look beyond them

**Rainbow Masses** Several parishes in the Church of Sweden celebrate worship services that especially welcome LGBTQ people. They are usually called Rainbow Masses and often have an inclusive and queer theological perspective.

**Same-sex marriage ceremonies** Since the 2009 decision of the Church Assembly, same-sex couples can be married in the Church of Sweden. The marriage ceremony is the same as for a heterosexual couple.


**Sexual orientation** Sexual orientation is a person’s identity in relation to who they fall in love with or are sexually attracted to. In Sweden, you have the right to love who you want by law.


**The gender binary** A norm connected to the expectation that people are either men or women.


**Ze** Used by some as a transgender pronoun for people who identify


## Short answers when someone says/asks


It says in the Bible that it is wrong to be homosexual!

 No, it doesn't, because the word homosexual doesn't exist in the Bible. (The word didn't exist before the 19th century).


 The parts that have been interpreted as being about homosexuality do not tell about a homosexual love relationship but about exploitation or rape.


 Show me where!


 People have different thoughts about that, but I don't care what you think.


 No, but it does say in the Bible that you may not cut your hair on the sides of your head or have a tattoo. What do you say about that?


## Are you a girl or a boy?

 No, are you?

 Yes, are you?

 Do you think that there are only boys or girls and that you can see it?

 That's not your business!

 Why do you have to know?

# What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

Religions have played a crucial part in the ill-treatment of LGBTQ-people and Christianity has often referred to the Bible in order to motivate discrimination and persecution. Therefore it is important to know a little about what it actually says. The Bible does not say very much about homosexuality. *The word homosexual cannot be found in the Bible* and the expression did not exist before or during the time when Jesus lived. It was first used in the middle of the 19th century. Sometimes certain passages in the Bible are highlighted as if they say something against homosexuality. These passages are not about a love affair between two equals of the same sex as we understand a homosexual relationship today, but about abuse, pedophilia or rape.

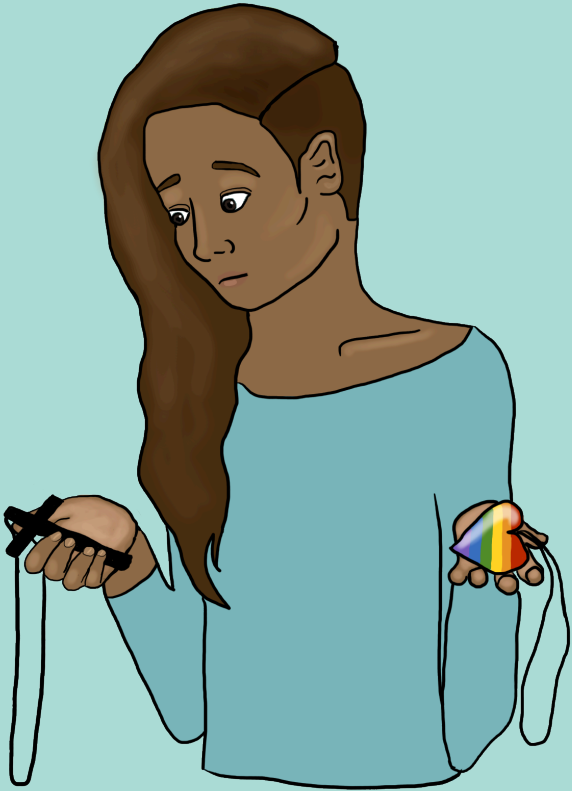
## **Are there LGBTQ-people in the Bible?**

In the Bible you can find many different descriptions of how to be a human being and what it means to live in a relationship with others. We can read several stories about people's lives that have become very important for LGBTQ-people. There are those who are transgender or asexual and who are treated with great respect by Jesus. (Matt 19:11)

*Here are a few examples of stories that have become important to LGBTQ-people. There are more.*

## **David and Jonathan**

In the stories about David and Jonathan we can read about a strong love between two young men. "And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself." David and Jonathan entered into a holy bond with one another and the text that tells us about this can be read at a wedding. (1 Sam 20:17,41-42)





# What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

## **Ruth and Naomi**

Ruth chooses to live together with and have children with her mother-in-law Naomi. In spite of that meaning she had to leave her own country and her people. This story has become a declaration of love that is suggested as a text to be read at weddings. A strong text for those who have perhaps had to leave their family or home for the sake of love. (Ruth 1:16-17)

## **Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus**

Mary is a girl who dares to break the traditional gender norms in a patriarchal society when she chooses to listen to Jesus together with the men instead of helping her sister with the housework. Her choice is excused by Jesus, "it will not be taken away from her", which can give courage to those who dare to break with the expectations that are connected with gender. (Luke 10:38-42)

## **Joseph**

Joseph is described as a dreamer and his father's favourite son. In a large family of brothers. His otherness is felt to be so threatening that he is almost in danger of being killed. In the original texts it seems as if Joseph breaks the norms regarding gender expression and probably went around dressed in a garment intended for the daughter of a king. We do not know for sure but the stories about Joseph have given many the courage to believe in themselves, dare to dream and to be the one they want to be in spite of risking being disowned by siblings and friends. (Genesis 37:3-36)

## **Was Jesus queer?**

Jesus was in many ways a man who broke against the norms and what was expected of him. Some call him queer because of his way of life and that he acted provocatively and questioned the standards and ideas of the day. He spoke with women, touched the sick, associated with the unwanted and looked upon children as models. He did many things that were considered weird and antisocial.

Neither did he stand up for the traditional family but broke with his own and called on his followers to do the same. Instead he formed a new family around himself, where he welcomed all sorts of people. Many have been inspired by Jesus, found other ways of life than in a traditional marriage. For example, in a convent or monastery or in a commune.

### **Jesus and love**

We can see in the Bible that Jesus loved many people, both men and women, some named. We do not know exactly what that love implied, but we do know that when Jesus spoke about human beings and their lives he spoke with love and a great awareness of people's differences. It is through the love-spectacles of Jesus that we should see ourselves when we feel condemned by others and feel that we do not fit in.

### **Name and identification** *(Swedish ruling)*

You are allowed to change your name, regardless of whether it is considered a typical girl's or boy's name or not. If you are not of age but more than twelve years old then you can apply with your parent's or guardian's approval. If you are under 12 then your parent or guardian can apply for you.

In the early Christian Church they changed their name when they were baptized to show that they had another identity. The Christian identity. Among other things the Bible tells us about Saul who after he had become Christian took the name Paul. In the church your name is important and is said when you are baptized. Some trans persons who were baptized as children wish to have a reminder of their baptism where their new name is said before God.



## Definitions A - Z

Sometimes definitions can help to understand and organise the world, but no definition can embrace all that is you. You do not have to put yourself in a box or define yourself if you do not want to. You are also entitled to change your mind. You may define yourself in one way today and tomorrow you may change. There is no limit to the ways of being a human being. What these definitions mean to you can also change. If you call yourself a Christian, for example, it can mean one thing now and something quite different in five years' time even if you choose to use the same words to describe yourself. Someone has perhaps told you that "It is just a phase you're going through". The idea of phases comes from a time when development psychologists thought that one's sexuality developed in phases that passed if the development was "normal." We do not think in this way nowadays. You can answer the adults who say that to you by saying that this is an outdated way of seeing a person's development. If it is a phase for you, what you feel now is true and should be respected even if you feel quite differently in a week's time. Remember that it is you who decides how you wish to define yourself. Nobody else can decide for you. It is you who decides what you are when it comes to sexual identity, gender identity and religious identity.

**Asexual** A person who does not feel sexual attraction or lust or who is not interested in having sex with others during certain periods of their life. You can be asexual in many different ways.

**Believer** A person who counts on the existence of something bigger outside themselves. It can be a force or God.

**Beloved** God's definition of you, no matter how you define yourself.

**Bisexual** A person who falls in love with and/or is attracted to people regardless of gender. Some prefer to call themselves pansexual in order to signal that they see their sexual orientation as beyond the binary

gender norm. But it is the person who defines themselves as bisexual who defines what the concept means to them, and many bisexuals do not connect it to the binary gender norm but can be attracted to people who define themselves as non-binary. (“Bi” comes from the Latin word for two and “sex” comes from the English word for gender. “Pan” comes from Greek and means all or whole.)

**Christian** A person who in some way belongs to or wishes to relate to Christianity and Jesus’s life, death and resurrection. There are many different interpretations of what it means to be Christian but it is only you who decides if you define yourself in this way.

**Cis Person** A person whose gender identity and gender expression match the legal gender that was assigned to them at birth and who defines themselves as a Cis Person. (The word “Cis” is Latin and means “on the same side”).

**Gender fluid** A person with a floating or changeable gender identity. Sometimes they can feel more like a boy, sometimes more like a girl, sometimes as something in-between and sometimes as nothing at all.

**Heterosexual** A person who falls in love with and/or is attracted to someone of another sex than their own. (The word “hetero” is Greek and means different and the word “sex” is the English word for gender.)

**Homosexual** A person who falls in love with and/or is attracted to someone of the same sex. (The word “homo” is Greek and means the same, and the word “sex” is the English word for gender. The expression homosexuality was first used in the 1860s.)

**LGBTQ** An umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. It should be noted that the abbreviation includes both sexual orientation and gender identity. A+ or other letters are sometimes added to include more identities and sometimes the order of the letters is changed in order to allow other perspectives to come first.

**Non-binary** A person who is neither a boy nor a girl but who instead feels themselves to be beyond the boy/girl division or both and/or in-between. Non-binary does not mean the same for all those who define themselves as such and some prefer to use terms like bigender, gender-queer, intergender, non-gender or agender.

**Queer** *We're here. We're Queer. Get used to it!* The word queer comes from English and means odd/ strange. It was previously used as a word of abuse for people who defined themselves as LGBTQ-people. The LGBTQ-movement reclaimed the word in order to add a critical perspective to the norms. For many who call themselves queer, it is a way to show that they consider that there should be room for other norms in society apart from heterosexuality, and that you have the right to choose to not define yourself. Queer is an idea that can have several different meanings, and it means different things to different people. Therefore, it is difficult to define the word queer in just one way. How we perceive queer and ourselves is up to each and every one of us.

**Transsexual** A person who identifies more with the other binary gender than with the one they were assigned at birth.

**Transgender** Transgender is an umbrella term that includes different transgender identities. In common for all transgender people is that one's gender identity or gender expression does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. (Trans means across or beyond)

**Transvestite** A person who sometimes or always wears clothes or otherwise expresses themselves in ways that are considered typical for another gender than that which the person was assigned at birth. There are also many people who do this without calling themselves transvestites. Some use the term cross-dresser, which can also mean that they mix male and female gender expressions. Being a transvestite is not the same as being a drag king/queen and does not say anything about the person's gender identity.



## *Are you a unicorn?*

Do you sometimes feel that you do not fit in at all, that you are different and cannot conform with the standards that exist. Perhaps you feel that you are both in a world that demands that you choose. Or that you are like some mysterious fairy-tale animal that nobody believes exists or should be exterminated! Then you are in good company. In early church art Jesus is depicted as a unicorn. Perhaps they wanted to catch Jesus' otherness, that which is odd that does not quite fit in or that is impossible to describe. Is it possible to be truly God and truly human being at the same time? Jesus' identities that are just as impossible to divide as a twisted unicorn horn. Perhaps the church artists also thought of the legend of the tracks of the unicorn's hooves that are

## under the rainbow you are not alone!

The Bible (Genesis 9:13) tells us how God, after the Great Flood, makes an agreement with Noah and all living things on earth. The rainbow became the sign that would remind God and mankind of this. In the Jewish-Christian faith the rainbow has become a symbol for future hopes and God's protection even though it sometimes feels as if life is flooding and we are drowning. For the lgbtq-movement the rainbow has been used since the 1970s as a sign of pride and tolerance. A fluttering rainbow-flag tells us about the fantastic diversity of humanity and reminds us to respect each other's differences. If everyone was the same the world would be boring and colourless.

Sometimes, perhaps, you feel lonely and insignificant, but remember this.

Beside you under the rainbow, to your right, stand all those who have gone before you. They have fought for their rights and wrestled with prejudice and they give you, as a gift, the possibilities you have today that they did not have. For example to be able to get married to the one you want. To your left are all those who will come after you. Those whom you hope will be able to be themselves and feel at home in any connection they wish. Everything you do will be a gift to them.

And we are many who stand together with you but whom you do not see. We are everywhere, in school, in the Church and online.



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you are not alone

If you want to know more or  
get in touch with others



[www.rfslungdom.se](http://www.rfslungdom.se)



[www.umo.se](http://www.umo.se)



[www.ekho.se/unga-l](http://www.ekho.se/unga-l)



[www.transformering.se/](http://www.transformering.se/)

We who have made this guide come from the Diocese of Västerås and the Church of Sweden Youth and the Camelot Rainbow Guild. We arrange camps and meetings for children and young people who define themselves as lgbtq-people. If you want to know more .....

**Illustration:** E Ånndrake

**Idea, inspiration and important input:** Wilda, Elvira, Denver:

**Form:** Åke Paulsson **Text:** Cecilia Redner



