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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

## Should Christians "Agree to Disagree" About Homosexuality? with Dr. Robert Gagnon

(January 13, 2026)

### **FRANK:**

Welcome to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. My guest today is Dr. Robert Gagnon. We had him on the show last week. We had such a great discussion that I didn't even cover half of what I wanted to cover with him. So here we are again. He wrote the book that is the tour de force on this subject.

It's called 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.' He's also working on a new book, more for the average person. This, 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice' is an academic work that goes into every possible argument and counter argument.

It's a masterpiece. So if you really want to get into this, if you really want to know the truth, that's the book to get. Dr. Gagnon, in the last podcast that we had together. And by the way, Dr. Gagnon has his doctorate from Princeton Theological Seminary, which would, you would think would make him, look at the biblical text in a different way and try and come up with loopholes for same-sex behavior. But you don't, Dr. Gagnon. Why is that? How did you come out of a liberal seminary and yet you're a conservative? How did that happen?

### **ROBERT:**

Well, that's a good question, but I think it's just because, well, I'm convinced that Jesus is Lord, and the biblical witness is entirely clear on the matter, including affirmed by Jesus himself. So for me to say that what Jesus identified is the very foundation of sexual relationships, male and female, he made them.

And for this reason, a man may become joined to a woman and two become one flesh. We talked about last time, the moral logic of that requires a male/female prerequisite as a basis for all other standards of sexual ethics.

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So if I'm going to say that what Jesus thought was foundational for sexual ethics is flatly wrong, pull the rug out completely from that foundation. I don't know in what sense I could possibly continue to call Jesus Lord of my life.

And any denomination that veers from that foundational understanding of sexual ethics has, whether or not they know it, rejected the lordship of Christ so that that denomination ceases to be in any sense a meaningful representation of Christ to the world.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, we think we're more compassionate and more loving than Jesus. Which, of course, is ridiculous.

**ROBERT:**

Unfortunately, many people don't catch the irony of that.

**FRANK:**

Right. Right. We think we know better than he did. Look, ladies and gentlemen, it all comes down to this. Who is your authority? Is it you, the culture? Or is it really Jesus and the scriptures? Who is your authority in life? Where do you--?

How do you make decisions? Do you make decisions based on whatever you want, whatever the culture wants, whatever Facebook is telling you, or Tik Tok is telling you?

Or are you really trying to follow the Lord who bought you, the Lord who went to the cross to save you, the Lord who is infinite justice and infinite grace? And that's why, by the way, he came to this universe to save us from ourselves, because we've done evil, and a being of infinite justice is going to judge us at some point.

And there's only two things you can get in the afterlife. You can either get justice or grace. Do you really want justice from an infinitely just being? I don't. I want grace. And so, a work like Dr. Gagnon's, although it would be widely criticized because people want what they want, is actually a work of love, trying to show people the logic behind God's reasons for saying that you should only be in a relationship with another person of the opposite sex.

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A sexual relationship, not any other relationship, is condoned by the Lord. ROBERT: Indeed. If I could interject that—

**[FRANK]:**

Please.

**ROBERT:**

The primary understanding of love that Jesus exhibits constantly in his ministry is to reach out to the lost, to call them to repentance and to reclaim them for the kingdom of God.

The difference between Jesus with regard to sexual sinners, and economic exploiters like the tax collectors, is not that the Pharisees rejected these behaviors as wrong while Jesus didn't. That's absurd.

Jesus agreed with the Pharisees on the moral assessment of these behaviors. Where they differed is over what to do with the lost. And Jesus approach is to aggressively reach out in love to reclaim the biggest violators of God's demand.

Because unless he does that, they are excluded permanently from the kingdom of God. And the Pharisees were okay with consigning them to hell, but Jesus reached out to reclaim them. And we know that the essence of Jesus's message, as Mark, the Gospel of Mark reports in chapter one, is repent because the kingdom of God is at hand.

Turn away from your sin. You know what? We understand that totally with the tax collectors. Tax collectors, we may not love tax collectors today, right? But look, in ancient Israel, we have fellow Jews who are, accomplices with the oppressive power of Rome, collecting taxes for Rome, but even more collecting several times over what they were supposed to collect and pocketing the excess for themselves.

We can see that. Oh, that's egregious. I mean, we recognize clearly economic exploitation of being a grave wrong. Nobody denies that. So do we conclude that because Jesus reached out to the exploitative tax collectors that he was somehow soft on economic exploitation?

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Nobody ever concludes that. Even the Jesus Seminar, they're coloring red, or black, or whatever color they want to color. Jesus is saying to determine whether they think he actually said them. Even they believe that Jesus reached out to the tax collectors not to affirm their exploitation economically of fellow Jews, but rather to reclaim them for the kingdom.

Why would we think then that when Jesus reached out to sexual sinners, that Jesus was affirming their sexual sin or saying it doesn't really matter in terms of their inheritance of the kingdom of God? It's the exact opposite of the other element we just talked about, the outreach to tax collectors.

In both cases, the purpose is to call them out of their sin so that they can be reclaimed eternally for God's kingdom. That is love. And those who want to give assurances to people engaged in transgender or homosexual-- Transgenderism or homosexual practice, assurances that God in Christ themselves have not given, they're not helping them.

They're not helping persons engaged in that behavior. They're leading them down a path that leads to destruction. So the only persons who can truly love because they wed the effect of love with truth, are those who actually call people out of this behavior into a life that honors the God who created them.

**FRANK:**

I seem to remember you speaking, quoting Augustine.

**ROBERT:**

Yes, Augustine is a great.

**FRANK:**

Can you remember, that quote? Because I thought it was quite a profound quote about pulling people out of error. You don't affirm-- You affirm the person, but not the error that they have. Do you remember that?

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**ROBERT:**

Yeah. I have to actually thank Walter Wink. He's since passed away, a New Testament scholar. He did a horrific review of my book for Christian Century. I thankfully was surprised they let me respond to—

**FRANK:**

A horrific review?

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, horrific.

**FRANK:**

Not a terrific? A horrific view?

**ROBERT:**

Yeah. Can you believe that? By Christian Century. Go figure. I'd probably get the same kind of review in Christianity Today.

**FRANK:**

Of course. Yeah.

**ROBERT:**

Magazine. But, yeah, he said, too bad Gagnon doesn't listen to St. Augustine. If you love, you can do what you want.

**FRANK:**

What?!

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, I know. Even though—

**FRANK:**

Augustine didn't say that.

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**ROBERT:**

Even though I'm not primarily a patristic scholar, and a New Testament scholar, even I knew that that couldn't possibly mean if he's quoting Augustine accurately. It couldn't possibly mean the way he's interpreting.

**FRANK:**

No, no, what Augustine meant was, if you love God, you can do as you please, because what you please to do is to follow Jesus. That was his point. He wasn't saying you could do-- You can sin. He's saying that if you love God-- I think the quote went like this. Love God and do as you please. If you love God, the thing that will please you would be to follow him.

**ROBERT:**

That's right.

**FRANK:**

That was his point.

**ROBERT:**

And actually, the context is even more of that, more better than that because it appears in Augustine's homilies of St. John, 1 John. And the example he uses is take an example. You see a man hugging a child. And then on the other hand, you see a man striking a child. Which one loves? Well, your initial, idea is that the one hugging the child loves. Well, now Augustine says, let me give you more context.

The one that is hugging the child is a pederast. He's sexually attracted to the child. And the one who struck the child, but in an appropriate way, is a parent who's disciplining his child. Now, I'm going to ask you again, which one was loving? And Augustine goes on to say, love not in the person his error, but the person.

For the person God made, the error the person made. If you love, you can do what you want. Namely, you can discipline the person who's engaged in behavior that's injurious to himself and to others.

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**FRANK:**

Isn't it interesting, though? The gentleman that gave you the horrific review said, if you love, you can do as you please. Why is he criticizing you? Because—

**ROBERT:**

I know. [Laughter]

**FRANK:**

You know, by his logic, you're just, you're loving by doing what you want, which is to write this book.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, that's right. Yeah. And he also charged me with not following the love Commandment, the second greatest commandment, Leviticus 19:18. But of course, I had to point out to him that he did not see a difference between that love commandment, and special commandments having to do with sex, sexual ethics.

So all I had to simply do is point out, Jesus seems to have a universal approach to loving your neighbor as yourself, anyone whom you come into contact with. We talked about last time. But when it comes to sex, Jesus actually restricts sexual ethics to one other person, lifetime of the other sex.

So, one is very all encompassing. The other is highly restrictive. Why? Because one involves sexual ethics and the sexual ethics has special commands that attend to it.

**FRANK:**

Okay, before we get to Romans 1, I want to make sure I heard you right when I was watching one of your videos because I thought it was a profound insight. But I went by it quickly. You were talking about the difference, and we talked about this in the last podcast too. We just didn't make this point, the difference between the dietary laws and the moral laws. So eating shellfish versus, you know, incest, or bestiality, or homosexuality, or adultery, or you know, any of these things.

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And you said that the dietary laws were in place to keep people separate from the other cultures around them. And then you added this, I think. I want to get your clarification because I think it's a brilliant point. If you're not eating what the surrounding cultures are eating, you're probably not going to fellowship with them over a table, and then maybe engage in their idolatry. Is that the point you were making?

**ROBERT:**

Exactly, that's exactly the point that I'm making. Food laws existed at symbolic value. They existed primarily to create borders or boundaries. The kinds of animals were between borders or boundaries that were forbidden.

So the symbolic value was, is God wants to create borders among his people where they are not influenced by the idolatry and sexual immorality of other cultures. And food laws was a way of achieving that, just as you pointed out, because you can't have table fellowship with them under those circumstances.

So it's not at all surprising, in Acts 10, when Peter has a vision about animals in a blanket coming down from heaven and God says, eat them all, and Peter says, I can't-- That's a perfect illustration of the fact that God is now preparing for an outreach to the Gentiles.

So some of that insularity that had been created for ancient Israel to develop in a faithful way is now-- Not that God is changing the sexual ethics. In fact, it's actually becoming more intense and more demanding in that aspect.

Same thing with, not that God is compromising in idolatry, even more focused on the one way only that God offers through Jesus Christ. But there is still going to be an outreach to Gentile. And when they do repent, and they do forsake adultery, and they do forsake immorality, there is going to be table fellowship among you. We have to have that. So what has to go? The food laws.

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**FRANK:**

That's interesting. I'd never thought of that. That's a great point, Robert. Also, I wonder then if Paul's two examples in Romans 14 about drinking wine and meat sacrificed to idols are in some way related to that as well. Okay?

**ROBERT:**

Very much so.

**FRANK:**

Go ahead, unpack that for us.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah. So, the primary concern in Romans 14 is that the weak, i.e. those who have scruples about things that they need not scruple, are abstaining from all meat. And the strong, who exercise their freedom in Christ, are eating meat. Now, this is a hyper intense—

I don't actually think there's a split between the weak who are Jews and the strong who are Gentiles. I think the whole of the church primarily is Gentile. But some of the Gentiles are trying to out Judaize Judaism on the level of food laws, even rejecting meat, which goes beyond the demands of the food law.

Only some meat is rejected in ancient Israel. And what Paul is saying is the primary attack he's going to make is on the strong. But he also makes a point about the weak not judging the strong on what he regards as a matter of indifference.

Matters that don't matter, that aren't essential to being a believer in Christ. And he goes on to say that food and drink will not get you into the kingdom of God one way or the other, whether you eat or don't eat. But righteousness, that will affect your inheritance of the kingdom of God.

So, I always get a kick out of when people cite Romans 14, about-- Then God gives us license about whether or not we accept homosexual practice. It's a degree to disagree issue.

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**FRANK:**

What?

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, that's—

**FRANK:**

Where is that? That's not in Romans 14.

**ROBERT:**

Well, Frank, you are laboring under the problem of reading the text in context. That's your problem. We could get, just get you to do a quick raid on the text, and forget the context, then we'll get you in good shape here.

**FRANK:**

Okay. [Laughter]

**ROBERT:**

But yeah, they actually use a text like that. And it's quite clear that Paul is making a distinction between food laws, which don't matter ultimately, in terms of inheritance, and other aspects of righteousness that do.

He actually has a vice or offender list at the end of chapter 13, in which sexual immorality factors prominently as the thing that gets you excluded from the kingdom of God. And it's clear also from Romans 1. It's clear from Romans 6 that Paul does not put sexual, immorality under an agree to disagree issue.

**FRANK:**

No.

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**ROBERT:**

Far less the issue of homosexual practice, which he actually lifts up, as you know, in Romans 1:24 to 1:27, as the key sexual offense that he wants to highlight.

**FRANK:**

In fact, let's go there and let's talk about that passage, because that is the passage regarding this issue. So, I know that some will try and say that this was about idolatry, that this is not a monogamous homosexual relationship. What do you say about this, Dr. Gagnon? What is the true interpretation here of the text according to just good reason, good logic, and history?

**ROBERT:**

Well, people who say that only idolatrous forms of homosexual practice are being attacked there, really misunderstand the nature of Romans 1:18-32. This is what we call a vice or offender list. Only in this case, it's an extended one, because Paul gives significant attention to what are usually the first two elements of a vice or offender list, namely one, idolatry and two, sexual immorality.

And those are indeed one two in this list. And then after 1:27, he expands the vice or offender list to include all other offenses. And what Paul is simply doing is spending a little more time on the first two.

And nobody thinks that sexual immorality, say incest, bestiality, involves, only idolatrous practices. I mean, that's absolutely absurd. The reason the connection that's being made between homosexual practice in 1:26 to 1:27 and idolatry in 1:18 to 23 is this.

Paul is making an argument that all are unto sin. It should ultimately be summarized as such in Romans 3:23. All are under sin and fall short of the glory of God. So they're without excuse, an apokalptetai, as Paul says in the Romans 1:18-23 text.

And what the argument he's making is not, however, here just that all are under sin, but all are culpable for the sin that they commit because they deliberately suppress the truth about God and the way that God made us. That's accessible to us, people with rational minds, accessible to us in the material structures of creation.

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So we should be able to know with idolatry, for example, that worshiping a statue in the image of human beings or even worse, animals, is not worshiping the exalted God who created all these things. That should be obvious.

And so, an idolater, even in the absence of scripture, direct revelation, through the indirect revelation of the things that God made, that's what Paul says in that text, should know that idolatry is wrong. And if they engage in it, they're culpable for committing it, because they have sufficient knowledge in indirect revelation.

We would expect the next element of the vice or offender list then to be sexual immorality. And indeed it is. In 1:24, Paul uses the term akatharsia, sexual impurity or sexual uncleanness, which is a parallel term for pornea, sexual immorality, or asogeia, sexual licentiousness.

These terms are actually often used in Paul in triplicate to basically reinforce the same point about sexual immorality. And Paul then singles out, in 1:26 to 1:27, a particular form of sexual impurity, and that is same-sex intercourse, both lesbian intercourse in 1:26 and male homosexual practice in 1:27. Question is, why does he single out that as opposed to incest, as opposed to bestiality, as opposed to adultery? There's a reason, because—

And it's understood, Jews understand it, even Gentiles understand it in the classical period, Plato and others, that there is something obvious about the structure of the human bodies that makes it clear that males are designed for sexual intercourse with females and females with males.

Now I'm not going to take the time here to explain the obvious here because of limited time, but I think our hearers will understand that there's something anatomically and physiologically obvious.

**FRANK:**

I'm still waiting for my mom to have that conversation with me.

**ROBERT:**

You have to have a lot of years of education, Frank, in order to override the obvious for people.

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That's so-called education. But it's not intended to be if we can be anachronistic here, brain science, brain surgery. It's tended to be obvious to everybody. So that when you disregard those obvious indicators of male/female complementarity, and anatomy, physiology, and even psychology, then you clearly have done this exact same thing that the Idolaters have done.

You've suppressed the truth about God and the way that God designs things that's accessible in the material structures of creation. So Paul is effectively saying you don't need Leviticus in front of you. You don't need Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, direct revelation in front of you to know that male/male intercourse and female/female intercourse is wrong.

It's obvious. Because God designed two primary sexual counterparts. And it's obvious. It's transparent, he says, to persons with a mind, with reason, that are not mere brute animals. And it's even transparent to most animals. It's transparent that the sexual counterpart to a male is a female and to a female a male.

And for you to engage in same-sex intercourse indicates that you've overridden the obvious. That's the reason why Paul indicates that same-sex intercourse is wrong. You have to reject the indirect revelation coming out of nature, that indicates to us what God's will is for human sexual behavior. So therefore you're culpable and without excuse.

**FRANK:**

Let me just read the relevant passage here. We'll start in 26. For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions, for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural. And in the same way—

I'm reading from the New American Standard, by the way. And in the same way also, the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another.

Men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. Indecent acts. So the acts themselves, according to Paul here are indecent. It doesn't appear to be, there's no qualifier on here it appears, unless it's in a monogamous relationship.

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There's no qualifier for I have to have-- It's only indecent if I don't have the desire to do this. But then why would anyone do it? Because some people will say this is just for heterosexuals who engage in homosexual activity. What is the main argument that so-called Bible scholars try and make Dr. Gagnon, who want to conclude that monogamous same-sex relationships are okay according to Romans 1? What do they say?

**ROBERT:**

Well, actually even the Bible scholars who have written most about sexuality, and early Judaism, and early Christianity, on the other side, that is scholars, New Testament scholars, that actually approve of homosexual relationships, transgenderism.

People like William Loder, or Bernadette Bruton acknowledge in their major tomes. They each wrote 500 page tomes on the subject as I have. Actually, William Loder wrote it on sexuality in general. He only has about, just about 80 pages on the subject in which I'm his main dialogue partner.

And he acknowledges that every form of homosexual practice is being rejected in Romans 1:26 to 1:27, including lifelong committed relationships. Same thing with Bernadette Bruton, wrote a 500 page book, 'Love Between Women', focused primarily in Romans 1:26 about lesbianism in the context of the views of lesbianism in antiquity. And she comes to the same conclusion.

**FRANK:**

Same conclusion you do.

**ROBERT:**

Right, exactly. And they're on the other side--

**FRANK:**

Then I'm totally mystified now.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, well, that's—

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**FRANK:**

What's the point of the book? What are they--? How are they trying to approve of something that they say the Bible is clear on and it's opposite their view?

**ROBERT:**

You know, actually, I engaged William Loder, in discussion at a gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer hermeneutic session of The Society of Biblical Literature that was on his book on the New Testament and sexuality. And there were four other people who identified as gay or lesbian.

And then there was me. And we were on the panel that were looking at his book, and then he would respond. And I was the only one that actually, you know, I first noted all the things we agreed with, and then a couple things that we have some difference on and made the case for that. And Loder effectively said, I'm not—

I'm just going to focus my comments on Dr. Gagnon, because the other four of you are not really looking at Scripture in its historical and literary context. And I actually agree with most of what Dr. Gagnon has said. And I think Jesus would have rejected every homosexual union imaginable, and that includes committed unions. I just disagree with Jesus because I think he had insufficient knowledge to make that determination.

**FRANK:**

Oh, well.

**ROBERT:**

And I thought, thank you for letting me win the debate. I appreciate that.

**FRANK:**

Why not just throw the whole Bible out then? Well, because if we've progressed past Jesus, what are we doing?

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**ROBERT:**

Yeah, if you say that something that Jesus regarded as foundational for human sexual ethics, he not only got it wrong a little bit, he is diametrically opposed to the right answer. Then you're saying, well, again, Jesus really isn't my Lord. That's a level of picking and choosing that is unbelievable for somebody who confesses Christ as Lord.

**FRANK:**

The scholars that you've studied, and again, your book on this is the standard work on the topic. Now, do any of them try and say that Romans 1 does not prohibit same-sex relations? Where they all say no, it does prohibit. We just disagree.

**ROBERT:**

Oh, there are still some scholars. It's the scholars who haven't written much at all. Let's say that they'll write a commentary on Romans for example, and they'll spend about three or four pages looking at the issue of homosexuality.

They're not really doing a deep dive discussion of the issue, but they're on the left, and they use the usual platitudes. They're really basically three arguments, what they call new knowledge arguments that should change our understanding of these texts.

One is that they, Paul and other writers of Scripture, knew nothing about committed relationships, same-sex relationships in antiquity. Another is they knew nothing about an orientation argument, nothing about some sort of congenital basis for sexual orientation in antiquity.

And a third is what I call the misogyny argument, which is namely that they say, well this is just a way of keeping women down literally and figuratively, in a hierarchical relationship with males. So those are the three basic so-called new knowledge arguments that people use.

If people appeal to the they didn't know about committed relationships, same-sex relationships in antiquity, all I nearly need to do is truck out about a dozen examples of where they knew precisely those things. Even some Greco Roman moralists, and physicians, and philosophers were willing to acknowledge that same-sex relationships were against nature.

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And that's within a broader cultural matrix where there's considerable approval of such relationships. But they simply look at the design, obvious design of male and female anatomically and physiologically and say, well it's clear, you know, that this is not something that people should be engaged in.

How much moreso Paul operating out of a matrix of ancient Israel and early Judaism, which is the most consistently and severely opposed culture to homosexual practice that exists anywhere in the ancient near east or the Greco Roman Mediterranean basin.

It's absurd to argue that if two men in a committed relationship had come up to Paul and say, hey, we'd like to be in a sexual relationship and a long-term sexual union with each other, that Paul would say oh great, I didn't think about that. I mean it's absolutely ridiculous.

We can look at other texts in early Judaism of the time as well as Greco Roman texts, as well as texts by later rabbis and church fathers, that reject even forms of gay marriage that existed in the Greco Roman world in Alexandria, in Rome, and elsewhere.

We have them say no. Even the marriages of the same sex, whether women or men, are contra naturum, against nature. So what is the likelihood that there would have been a different opinion that exists here?

**FRANK:**

Yeah, well, monogamy is only one element of a relationship anyway. That's only one. You would also need the complementarianism. You would need a male and a female.

**ROBERT:**

Exactly.

**FRANK:**

So just to have one element doesn't make it the same, even if you had monogamy.

**ROBERT:**

It would be like arguing with regard to the incestuous man at Corinth, 1 Corinthians 5.

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Paul deals with a case of a self-confessed brother, a fellow believer at Corinth, who is having sex with his stepmother. And Paul just flies, you know, you can't believe that this kind of irreducible minimum of sexual ethics would be rejected by any believer.

And he's quite, he doesn't say, you know, well, okay. Tell me, is it going to be a committed relationship? Is it going to be lifelong? Is it going to be monogamous?

**FRANK:**

Yeah. He's sleeping with his father's wife.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, that's right. If we're going to be life long, that would make it worse because they're committing themselves to an abhorrent form of sexual immorality, which Paul wanted to stop yesterday.

So making a homosexual union by the same context, and by the way, as we noted in the last session, the best analogy for homosexual practice is incest, because it's sex between persons who are too much alike, too much the same in their embodied structures.

One on the level of kinship, the other even worse on the level of sex or gender. Right? And making it lifelong and committed doesn't materially improve it. It just means that you're more determined to continue committing it.

**FRANK:**

That's right.

**ROBERT:**

Which makes it even worse.

**FRANK:**

Which is why I've sent your podcast that you did with Beckett Cook from a few years ago about "Should a Christian attend a same-sex wedding?" I've sent it to several people because it was an excellent overview.

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You got into some detail, too, on why Christians can't go to a same-sex wedding. Essentially, what you're doing by going to a same-sex wedding is saying you're going to try and keep these two people in sin as long as you can.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, the whole point for attending a wedding is to be there as witnesses, and to encourage these people to remain faithful to one another for the rest of their lives. That is the whole point. It's an entirely celebratory ritual exercise, affirming the union taking place at every level from the moment that the applause or oohs and awws when the—

Who walks? I don't know who gets walked down the aisle and who doesn't in the same-sex wedding, but from the greeting line afterwards to the reception afterwards, the dancing, the celebration, it's just, the toasting-- Everything about it is affirming your commitment.

You're part of the community of this new couple so-called, and your commitment is to try to keep them in that union lifelong. That's what you're going to work for as fellow members of their wider circle of family and friends. So going is, you know, the only thing you can really compare it to, so people get the message.

Either going to an incestuous wedding, a man marrying his mother, or let's say you have a family member who's being celebrated by the Ku Klux Klan as a white supremacist, and you don't really agree with white supremacy, but just to encourage him, and show that you care about him, and to keep that relationship open, you're going to attend the ceremony in which he's honored as a white supremacist. I don't know a single person who would argue you should do that.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, and the second one you just gave is a biblical one because it comes from 1 Corinthians 5, where a man is literally sleeping with his father's wife.

And Paul, as you say, basically goes ballistic and says, what are you doing? You need to kick him out of the church for his own good. A little leaven leavens the whole loaf. Maybe he'll come to

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his senses, and he'll come back into the-- He'll repent. He'll come back into the fellowship, and he won't wind up in hell.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. What is love again? What we talked about earlier, reclaiming people for the kingdom of God. And if you get involved and participate in any way in a form of sexually immoral union that would consign the participants to destruction, there is no way that that can be interpreted as loving.

There's no way anyone can read 1 Corinthians 5 and come to the conclusion that Paul would have said, yeah, I think you should attend that, and says, if they were to get married. Now, it doesn't say that they did, but if they were to have, if that had been part of the text, they could conclude from Paul's words that, oh, yeah, that would be a good idea, just to show your support for them as persons.

Not for the incest, but go to that wedding to celebrate with them, you know, in that ritualized endeavor. If anyone would draw that from 1 Corinthians 5, I would just throw up my hands and say, I give up. There's no way that I can communicate to you from the biblical text anymore.

**FRANK:**

We're going to put that podcast in the show notes, the one you had with Becket Cook. I think it comes from April of 2023. Because it's a whole hour, we don't have time to get into all the details.

**ROBERT:**

But you know what's particularly alarming there? Even Focus on the Family said it should be an agree to disagree issue as to whether or not you go to a gay wedding.

**FRANK:**

No, no. They haven't read 1 Corinthians 5.

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**ROBERT:**

I know. It's unbelievable that anybody could arrive at that interpretation, but that's where they're at.

**FRANK:**

But before we go to 1 Corinthians 6 for this other passage, I do want to ask you, and there's a lot more detail in that podcast you did with Beckett, but just for the sake of our audience here, Dr. Gagnon, what do you say to somebody who invites you to this wedding?

How do you put it in such a way that you're going to stand firm with Jesus, but you're not going to shut the door off to a future relationship? How do you do that?

**ROBERT:**

I would say, I love you. And because I love you, I cannot attend this union. Because as I understand the truth of God presented from Genesis to Revelation, including the figure of Jesus, what you're doing is you're harming yourself. Now, I know you don't agree with me that you are harming yourself, but that is what I think.

That is what I believe based on my reading of the biblical text. And so, if I were to do that, it would be a hateful action on my part to do that. I can't do that precisely because I do love you. And this, I believe, is exactly the thing that Jesus would say to you as well.

Now, I'd be happy to invite you over to our home, or to come to your home, but a ritualized celebration and commitment to a lifelong behavior that would exclude you from the kingdom of God is not something I could participate in.

Moreover, if I were there, I would be weeping from the start to the end, from the start of the wedding service to the end of the reception. And you don't want me there to do that. So, no, I can't do that.

**FRANK:**

And when the officiant says, does anyone have any objections? As a matter of fact. [Laughter]

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**ROBERT:**

Exactly. If I was retained in the wedding ceremony, they wouldn't want me to be there for that purpose. And I think people, I think that they can understand that. If they can't understand that, then here's the problem, manipulation. They're attempting to manipulate you to see how far they can go in getting you to sacrifice your core values. And if this is going to be a relationship, it can't be one based on you manipulating me and me rejecting what I know my God and Savior wants me to do.

**FRANK:**

Good.

**ROBERT:**

You have to respect me if we're going to be in a relationship with you, and that I'm going to act towards you in a way that I believe is loving, based on the Word of God, based on Jesus.

**FRANK:**

Well said. And there's more in that podcast we'll put in the show notes. Unfortunately, so many people think that the world needs to change to affirm them. They don't need to change at all to affirm what reality shows us, that men were made for women, women were made for men.

And my mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler always used to say this. Dr. Gagnon. Unfortunately, fraternity will almost always overcome theology. And what he meant by that was, we're apt to throw Jesus and the Bible under the bus if a loved one of ours disagrees with Jesus or the Bible.

You know, we're going to say, oh, since I love you, my son, my daughter, my friend, whatever, I'm going to ignore what Jesus in the Bible said in order to affirm what you want to do. And that's a disaster.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, it's really amazing. What are people thinking when they do that? Do they think that they've actually changed God's view?

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**FRANK:**

Yeah, no.

**ROBERT:**

That's the thing I can never, I'm totally puzzled by. Do you think because it's a member of your family or a beloved friend that you're approving of this behavior is going to change the view of Jesus and the united witness of Scripture?

It's not. So what are you really doing? You either have to deny everything you once believed, or you have to say, I'm perfectly willing to see you be excluded from the kingdom of God just so long as my relationship with you is good.

We have to go back to the meaning of love in Leviticus 19:17-18. That is that if they're doing something that can injure themselves and or others, you have to reprove their behavior lest you incur guilt for failing to warn them.

**FRANK:**

That's an important point that a lot of people overlook. That's in Leviticus 19. You're actually guilty for not warning people that they're in known sin.

**ROBERT:**

Exactly.

**FRANK:**

You're actually guilty. Whoa. Let me-- Let's go to the final passage we need to talk about here, Dr. Gagnon. Well, we could-- Obviously, your book's 500 pages. We could talk about so many—

**ROBERT:**

Can I just-- Would you mind me just giving two minutes to Romans 1?

**FRANK:**

Yeah. Oh, sure.

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**ROBERT:**

Wrap up the summary. Basically, if I'm responding to a person about what they claim, we already talked some on some basis why idolatry doesn't quite fit. But there's so many more arguments that one could make. One is that there's a very clear echo to Genesis 1:26 to 1:27 in Romans 1:23 to 1:27, eight points of correspondence between those two small segments of verses each.

That's what we call an intertextual echo. Paul is not only looking at how well or badly homosexual practice is done in the ancient world. He's also looking at what God's standard is from creation on. Then there's the argument from nature, which we talked about has to do with the anatomy, physiology, and even psychology of the participants indicating what true sexual counterparts or complements are.

**FRANK:**

It's a natural law argument.

**ROBERT:**

That's right. Even persons who don't have access to the direct revelation of Scripture should be able to discern, based on the material structures of creation, that are still intact after the introduction of sin in the world, in nature. That's a second argument that-- And then there's the appeal to lesbianism.

Now, yes, male homosexual practice is often typified in the ancient world by pederasty, and by sex with slaves, and sex with call boys. Yes, there's a lot of exploitative and promiscuous forms of male homosexual practice. It's not, however, limited to that.

But another element is to look at the rejection of lesbianism in 1:26, which is not noted primarily for being sex with underage, sex with slaves, sex with call girls, actually much more likely to be committed relationships. And yet, Paul even rejects that.

And that's consistent with what we find throughout even the Greco Roman world in terms of that text. There are other arguments that one has to make, but that's just a basic outline of

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that. And then there's the look at the number of texts that exist in the Greco Roman milieu that indicate some degree of acceptance of committed same-sex relationships.

And yet, still we see some moralist physicians, philosophers saying, but we're still going to reject it because based on design, it's against nature. So there's no possibility when we read this, as well as reading it in the wider context of early Judaism, that this means anything other.

And as you noted, for example. It's very clear. It's sex, males with males. That indicates a degree of reciprocity. It's not just one person enjoying the relationship and the other person being exploited. It's the form of mutuality is being expressed and still rejected by Paul in that context. That's just a few of the other arguments that I would put forward in that text.

**FRANK:**

By the way, Paul also says flee sexual immorality. He doesn't say cuddle with sexual immorality. There are some people in the side B theology that say, oh, if you're same sex attracted, you could even go as far as cuddling with somebody of the same sex. No, ladies and gentlemen. That's like going up to the edge of the cliff. See how close you can get.

**ROBERT:**

Exactly.

**FRANK:**

Paul is saying stay away from this. It's a very strong temptation that you don't want to put yourself in more danger of.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah, and noting that, the significance of that. There are actually two flee statements. Of course we're not talking about a flea, we're talking about flee. There are two flee statements in 1 Corinthians, and one is flee idolatry and the other is flee porneus, sexual immorality. And this is another indication you see throughout the letter at Corinth, first letter to the so-called first letter to Corinthians. It's actually a second letter because Paul said he wrote a previous letter, but we'll go with the first one now.

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It's very clear for Paul. Also, when you look at his vice or offender list, you see throughout his letters, top two-tier issues for Paul when he's dealing with future life, Christian life of his gentile converts. Don't go back to idolatry.

Don't go back to sexual immorality. Those are the two key concerns is the issue of sexual immorality. Does it have that level still in evangelical churches today? Sadly it doesn't. And so, the primary message that Christians are getting isn't coming from the church, it's coming from the broader secular culture.

But for Paul, the entire apostolic witness and for Jesus himself, the sexual ethics are absolutely central. Why? Because they're supremely pleasurable. Right? They tend to be private, and they tend to be given to a great deal of self-justification in ways that other things like for example, economic exploitation, we don't see.

So the level of self-deception around sexual immorality is greater than almost any other moral offense. And for that reason, and because people get wrapped up doing it so easily because of its pleasurable character, Paul gave inordinate attention to the issue of sexual purity as the apostle to the Gentiles. That's a clear witness for the church today.

**FRANK:**

Yeah. And by the way, it wasn't just Paul, because at the first church council in Acts 15, it was Peter and James as well, who basically said, when the Pharisees said, do we have to obey all the Old Testament laws? And they basically said, no. Just stay away from meat sacrificed to idols, and sexual immorality, and you'll do fine. Farewell. That was it. Those were the two things. Idolatry and sexual immorality.

**ROBERT:**

Whom does Jesus among sinners at highest risk of being excluded from God's kingdom did Jesus reach out to? Sexual sinners and exploitative tax collectors.

**FRANK:**

This is why Paul says-- Sorry, go ahead and complete the thought.

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**ROBERT:**

I was going to say, look at the six antithesis in the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning. The programmatic statement of Jesus' message according to Matthew, two of the six antithesis-- By antithesis, Jesus is saying, you've heard that it's been said, but now I'm telling you, you can't even get away with that.

I'm closing that loophole. Two of the six elements have to do with sex. It's the remaining loopholes that exist in early Judaism. One has to do with adultery of the heart, so interiorizing God's ethical demand. You can't even get away now, not just with what you do overtly externally, but what's going on internally in your mind, in your heart.

And the other one is the issue of divorce and remarriage, which threatens the twoness, the essential twoness of the sexes, which is the predicate for limiting the number of partners to two in a sexual union. So when you think about Jesus closing loopholes in the six antithesis in Matthew 5:21-48, two of them have to do with sex. What does that tell us about the significance of sexual ethics for Jesus?

**FRANK:**

Interesting. Yeah. Jesus made the sexual ethic more stringent.

**ROBERT:**

Exactly.

**FRANK:**

Right. He ratcheted the whole thing up. If you just think about adultery, you're guilty. Well, thanks a lot, Jesus. That makes life easy. Gee, I can't do that. Exactly. I'll have to do it for you. Trust in me.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah. And in fact, not just sexual ethics generally. I'll even sharpen it a little further to say in the entire known world at the time, there is no more rigorous applier of the moral logic of a male female prerequisite to sexual unions than Jesus.

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In the entire known world, we have nobody who more rigorously applies the moral logic behind that male female requirement than Jesus. That is extraordinary. To then appeal to Jesus as somebody who is going to give license to same-sex intercourse when he's a more consistent applier of the moral logic of God created us, male and female, two sexual counterparts or complements.

Here's the, here's what I extrapolate from that foundation. To say that Jesus is going to get rid of that foundation, absolutely absurd. He'd have to get rid of all his sexual ethics along with it, including our prohibitions of polyamory and incest.

**FRANK:**

I want to go back to what you said earlier, just briefly, about, you know, how you get older, you start to lose your train of-- [Snaps Fingers]

**ROBERT:**

Oh, I know I'm 67.

**FRANK:**

I had something else I wanted to say. Oh, the group you were with who said, you know, sex is like a warm handshake. And I'd love to say to people that, you know, people who think sex is just physical, I'd say, I asked them, if sex is just physical, why is it worse if somebody rapes you than if somebody just physically assaults you?

Because sex is not just physical. Jesus has prohibitions on it. The Bible has prohibitions on it. Not for our detriment, but for our benefit. Because it's so powerful. Sex is so powerful. I mean, you have sex with somebody, you change the relationship forever. Right?

**ROBERT:**

Yeah. That's, why Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 6, every other sin you commit-- It's a little bit of hyperbole that Paul uses, but it makes the point effectively, which is every other thing, every other sin that you commit is external to the body. It's outside the body.

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But when you sin, you sin holistically in your body. So that he can take an example of even having sex with a prostitute and say, even in that union, which you think would be the one with the least amount of personal investment in, because there's an exchange of funds.

And yet he can say even there, the two become one flesh. That is a holistic union taking place, that it affects the body holistically in a way that no other sin does. So we should pay attention to that and see why Paul makes the argument that he does there.

God bought you with a price, he said. Therefore glorify God in your body. This is in the midst of a whole discussion about sexual ethics from chapters five to seven, which an argument he makes in chapter six. When you sin, you sin sexually.

**FRANK:**

In fact, let's go to chapter 6, verse 9 and 10, because this is an argument brought up by people who try and say that the Bible does not condemn or prohibit same-sex relationships. Paul is talking about unrighteousness here. And he's essentially saying that you do a lot of evil yourself.

And in verse nine, he says, or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, people who have sex, premarital sex, that kind of thing, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Then he goes on to say this very important sentence here. Such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God. That's what some of you were. By the way, I submit to you, ladies and gentlemen, I know we're talking about same-sex relations here.

Every one of us have been convicted by this passage because we've all sinned in some way by the list that Paul just gave. So don't get all up on your high and mighty horse and say, well, this doesn't apply to me. No, it does. You've coveted, right? I mean, that gets all of us right there.

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I don't care if you've been sexually pure. You've coveted. So, the rejoinder for some who try and say that this passage does not prohibit same-sex relationships, Dr. Gagnon, is they try and say the word homosexual was invented in 1946. Okay. What is your response to that?

**ROBERT:**

Well, I wouldn't render the term, the Greek term that we're alluding to here as arsenokoitai. I would not render that homosexuals. I think that's a mistake. It's both. The actual rendering is both broader and more narrow at the same time. Because the term is arsenokoitai. It's formulated from Levitical prohibitions of man, male intercourse. It's a Greek term, arsenokoitai.

So it's formulated in this instance from the Greek translation or Septuagint, of those Levitical prohibitions in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. And it's from the term koi, as a related term, koite, which can mean either bed or abstract lying.

And the koi, which is from the noun koimaomai, which can mean to sleep with, or to lie within the sexual sense. So that's one element. The koi of arsenokoitai, the arson at the prefix at the beginning means male.

And we have a number of terms, both that have a koi ending and have a prefix to it. And the prefix is presented as the object of the verbal idea of the koi, that is lying with whoever is the prefix there, which would be male.

And we also have terms, compound words that begin with arsen, male that are followed with a verbal element. And again, the arson functions as the direct object of the verbal idea of the next element of the compound. So there's no question about what this means.

And the tie at the end is a masculine suffix that supplies the subject. So that tie at the end supplies the men. The verbal idea is lying from the koi. And the direct object of the verbal idea is the arson or male.

**FRANK:**

So men lying with men?

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**ROBERT:**

Literally men lying with a male. And there's a related Hebrew term, for example, that's used by the rabbis for the abstract use of it. And that also means lying with a male, which they immediately recognize as drawn from the Levitical prohibitions.

And they say, well, what is, who is the man? Well, the man is an adult male. Who is the male? The male can either be an adult, can either be a minor, or an adult. So this includes both pederastic relationships and adult consensual same-sex relationships.

That's what the rabbis understood it to mean as well. So, men lying with a male focuses on the act of men lying with a male, obviously. And there's no other way to read it. Although, the new so-called updated edition of the New Revised Standard Version has now changed it to men engaged in illicit sex.

And they've completely ignored the specific reference. This literally can't be translated faithfully any other way than men lying with, or having sex, with or sleeping with a male. That is the only way it can be translated.

That literally is no other way to legitimately translate it. And in fact, when you look at the Vulgate, the Latin translation of this term, it's the same thing. It means men lying with a male. When you look at the Coptic translation of, 1 Corinthians 6:9, again is formed of a compound that means men lying with a male.

So that's how it was understood in the ancient world and by the earliest interpreters. And when you look at that term elsewhere, it's actually not used in the Gentile world until the 6th century and after CE. It's only found in Jewish and Christian works because it is directly formulated from the absolute prohibition of man male intercourse in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

That's absolutely clear. All its early usages are used as after 1 Corinthians 6:9. And when you look at the view of the Levitical prohibitions, that's the other thing you have to do, held by Jews in the first century.

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Take for example the philosopher Philo of Alexandria, a Jew, or Josephus, the historian Palestinian Jew. They're quite clear when they talk about homosexual practice that it applies to every form of man male intercourse, no exceptions.

**FRANK:**

Yeah. The NIV, which we call the nearly inspired version, says men who have sex with men.

**ROBERT:**

Yep. That's a-- I would only change men to male because that's the actual term. It's an inclusive term for both adolescents and for adults. But otherwise that's a good translation.

**FRANK:**

So it's really an irrelevant objection to say the word was created in 1946. That doesn't make any difference because what's being communicated in here is same-sex relationships as being sinful.

**ROBERT:**

Yes.

**FRANK:**

And keeping people out of the kingdom.

**ROBERT:**

Same-sex relationships between males.

**FRANK:**

Yes, between males.

**ROBERT:**

Yeah. The translation of the term makes this unequivocal. Its usage makes it unequivocal. The wider context of 1 Corinthians 6, in which Paul also cites later in 1 Corinthians 6, a portion of Genesis 1:27.

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Excuse me, portion of Genesis 2:24. So he's clearly thinking, when he's thinking about homosexual practice, he's not jettisoning the creation text. It's the same thing with Romans 1:26 to 1:27 in the background having Genesis 1:26-27. Male and female He created them. There it's an intertextual—

We call an intertextual echo. Whenever Paul is dealing with human sexual ethics, he's thinking of the exact same two texts from Genesis that Jesus cited when he dealt with an issue of sexual immorality. This is standard for Jesus' followers because it comes from Jesus himself.

And so, given those two texts, which Jesus used to posit a male female requirement on the basis of which you can limit the number of partners in a sexual union to two, whether at any one time or serially. Right? That's the way Paul is understanding these texts.

He's clearly concerned about preserving a male female requirement. There isn't any form of same-sex intercourse that would have passed muster for Paul.

**FRANK:**

Well, it's too bad you don't know enough about this topic, Dr. Gagnon, because-- [Laughter]

**ROBERT:**

I'm trying.

**FRANK:**

The book is 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.' It is the standard work on the topic. We're hardly covering a fraction of it here. But if you really want to get into this, friends, and know every possible argument and counter argument, that's the book to get. Dr. Gagnon, when is the next book coming out, the lay edition of this? When do you think you're going to have that done?

**ROBERT:**

I have a sabbatical next term to finish this book. A projected book of about 150 to 200 pages tended to be user friendly, to be able to give to any person in the pew as questions either about the biblical text or about the application of that text for our contemporary context.

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And provide good, straightforward arguments for what they can say. And so, I'll be working on that. And when it gets published will be determined by the publisher, I would hope no later than a year from now.

**FRANK:**

All right, well, when that comes out, let us know. We'll do another program on it. Ladies and gentlemen, if you've disagreed with what we've said here, keep in mind you're assuming a standard, probably a moral standard. The question is, where are you getting that moral standard from?

Because if God doesn't exist, there are no moral standards other than your own preferences. So either your moral standard is something beyond you that we're all obligated to obey, and that could only be God's nature, or it's just your preference.

So which is it? And since God is the standard of righteousness and wants what's best for us, it's best that we agree with him on how to live our lives, not in our desires or impulses. In fact, I think the most important, one of the most important scriptures now actually comes from the Old Testament for people.

It's Proverbs 4:23. And it says, above all else, guard your heart, because everything you do flows from it. It doesn't say follow your heart. It says guard your heart. And Dr. Gagnon has given us some great insights, and his book goes into a lot more detail on this very touchy issue for people.

If you truly love people, you'll tell them what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. So do it in a way that you can as I say. Also in the show notes, you will see a podcast Dr. Gagnon did with Beckett Cook. Beckett Cook was in the gay lifestyle for many years.

No longer is. And that podcast has to do with same-sex weddings. You'll definitely want to listen to that. You also want to follow Dr. Gagnon on Facebook. He has some great stuff on Facebook. We couldn't even get into any of the political things that he writes on Facebook because we spent so much time on these fascinating, this fascinating issue.

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But check him out there. And don't forget about our two logic courses, one for kids, one for adults. 'Train Your Brain' coming up at the end of the month. Also, I'll be teaching 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' Go to [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org). Click on online courses. Join now before those courses fill up. Dr. Gagnon, thank you so much for spending two podcasts with us on this very important issue.

**ROBERT:**

Thank you, Frank. Thank you for the good work that you do as well, and apologetics, and it's been a delight to be on the show.

**FRANK:**

The great Robert Gagnon, ladies and gentlemen. Again, Facebook, probably the best place to follow him. He's very active on Facebook, so check all that out. Thanks for being with us and Happy New Year. We'll see you next time. God bless.

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