

What Does the Bible REALLY Say About Homosexuality? with Dr. Robert Gagnon

(January 9, 2026)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, what if you picked up a book and the opening line to the book, the author states this about writing the book, I ought to have my head examined. What was I thinking writing this book? Because what we're going to talk about today is one of the most controversial issues in modern American history.

Moral history, that is. It is a book that goes into extreme detail on what the Bible says about homosexual practice. In fact, the title of the book is 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics.' It's been around for about 25 years.

It is the standard work on the topic because as you know, ladies and gentlemen, there have been some so-called Bible scholars who just in the past 50 or 60 years have tried to make the case that homosexual practice within a monogamous relationship is not condemned by the scriptures, that God is okay with it.

Is that really true? Well, Dr. Robert Gagnon, who went to Dartmouth, Harvard, and has his Ph.D. from Princeton, is the man that wrote the book, 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice', the standard work on the topic.

He is a very well respected scholar who crosses every T, dots every I. That's why this book is over 500 pages long. It goes into every possible argument that you could imagine on this topic. It's done very rigorously, easy for me to say. It's, it's done very—

It's done extremely well. I'm having trouble speaking today and he's with us today. I wanted him on the podcast for so long, I've just never gotten around to it. So here he is, ladies and gentlemen, the great [Applause] Robert Gagnon, who by the way— Okay, crowd, enough.

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By the way, has taught at several seminaries, including one in Pittsburgh. He's also taught at Houston Christian University. He is right now at another university in Mississippi. It's Wesley. What is it again, Robert?

ROBERT:

Wesley Biblical Seminary.

FRANK:

Wesley Biblical Seminary. He lives in Pittsburgh, but he's teaching remotely there. He's also one of the clearest thinkers out there on politics, which I follow him on Facebook all the time, and he pulls no punches there. Robert, it's great having you on the program.

ROBERT:

A pleasure to be on your program, Frank.

FRANK:

Robert. Okay. The opening line of the book is you ought to have your head examined for writing this. What? [Laughter] Why did you decide to write this book?

ROBERT:

Well, I thought I would acknowledge the obvious at the very beginning of the book, and for several reasons I should have had my head examined. The chief one of which is this was my presenting book for tenure at an institution where a lot of people were not very supportive.

I'd say the majority were not very supportive of that view. And so, got me into a lot of trouble. There are a lot of people nationally, in the PCUSA, that's the denomination to which the seminary is affiliated, who are writing in that I should be denied tenure, stated clerks, moderators, et cetera.

The big national. Yes. All the liberals, right, who are tolerant and diverse were trying to get me excluded, even though by that point in time I had about 20 wonderful endorsements of the book, blurbs for the book that were included from scholars on both sides of the fence and not only in the US but internationally.



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But that didn't matter because I was promoting the wrong view, the biblical view. So, that was an early introduction. I already sort of knew that's where things would be heading. Most of my, as you indicate, most of my background has been in liberal institutions.

That's how I got my education. So I got it from inside and I knew what it was like from the inside. And I took the best of what they had to offer, and then subsequently used it against them by making the best case I possibly can on the most controversial issue in our day, even within the church, even now within the evangelical church, sadly.

FRANK:

What was the result of you coming forth with this book for tenure? Did you get tenure after writing this?

ROBERT:

I did. It was the most hotly fought, successful tenure decision in the memory of the institution. So that did happen, thankfully. There are a number of key members, who were not necessarily evangelical, but just sane theologically, somewhat, you might call, I suppose, centrist or in the middle. And they saw what was happening to me, and some of them were able to get on the appropriate committee.

And it had a three level process. But the president, in the end, supported me in the process because he knew, yes, Pittsburgh is a relatively liberal place, but the whole of Western Pennsylvania, other than Pittsburgh is conservative. We see this in elections every year.

Right? Pennsylvania narrowly decided between, on the one hand, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, on the one side, liberal, and everything else, solidly conservative. So, in the end, it was successful, but it was extraordinarily stressful.

It should not have been stressful because I had all the credentials easily, to get tenure. But the fact that it was controversial was simply because of the nature of the issue.

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FRANK:

So you're saying that the folks who say they're fighting for inclusion, tolerance, and diversity did not want to include you, and did not want to tolerate you for holding a diverse view?

ROBERT:

Oh, did I say that? [Laughter]

FRANK:

Well, that's what I say, because I have the same problem.

ROBERT:

Probably that is the leading view. That was the trending view of where I was going. Yes, that's very true. Actually, my experience has been that the most tolerant, pluralistic, and diverse people at academic institutions are conservatives, not leftists.

FRANK:

Yes.

ROBERT:

I can't even call them liberal anymore. Right? Because there are a few liberals still left, classical liberals. But by and large, the idea of being generous, liberal, tolerant, isn't actually part of the matrix of the left anymore.

FRANK:

Well, let's, let's dive into the book, because obviously at 500 pages, we're just going to touch on it. But you cover the waterfront here. You start in the Old Testament, you go to all the passages that are there. You talk about the passages in the New Testament.

I know that people will come up with this common objection, Dr. Gagnon. They will say, hey, if you're going to say that homosexual practice is illegal, because if it's in Leviticus 18, do you eat shrimp? I mean, come on. What do you say to that?

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ROBERT:

That's very easily addressed. Those kinds of regulations that they are appealing to from Leviticus 19 are largely symbolic in value. We could go into that, why food laws are particularly symbolic in their nature. But the issue of sexual ethics is not symbolic. The prohibitions of incest, for example, in Leviticus 18 and 20, the main sex laws are in chapters 18 and 20 of Leviticus.

The prohibitions of incest are not just metaphorical or symbolic. You're really not supposed to have sex with your mother, or your child, or your sibling, and it is regarded as particularly severe sin. Take that as an analogy to the issue of homosexual practice.

For example, what's the problem with incest? It states right at the beginning in the heading for the incest laws, you shall not have sex with the flesh of your own flesh. In other words, you shall not have sex with somebody on the level of kinship is already too much you. Excessive uber identity sameness, if you will.

Excessive sameness in bodily structures. And this is even more true in the case of homosexual practice, obviously. Incest, incestuous unions still can procreate, indicating some significant degree of complementarity sexually.

Although obviously, there's a higher incidence of abnormalities for births resulting from an incestuous union. In the case of homosexual practice, obviously, it's a nonstarter from the beginning. Sex is primarily about the reproductive organization of the body.

And it's quite clear that when you have a male having sex with a male or a female with a female, the degree of sexual sameness is complete. It's total, it's excessive. If you don't mind, I might say a little something about science and sociology here, right?

The best laboratory for showing that same-sex unions don't really work that well, that other sex unions are to be preferred, let's put it that way, is to look at what we see in same-sex male and same-sex female relationships. There's a disproportionately high rate of measurable harm in those unions.



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FRANK:

Well, let's talk about them after the break Dr. Gagnon, this is a controversial show because people really think that it's unloving to oppose anybody that wants to love somebody else.

We're going to address all that on this program with Dr. Robert Gagnon. So don't go anywhere. We don't shy away from controversy here at I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio Network and other radio stations around the country. Happy New Year. We're back soon.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest today, Dr. Robert Gagnon, who is a scholar with a PhD from Princeton University. And we're talking about a very controversial topic in the culture today. It should not be controversial among Bible scholars because as Dr.

Gagnon points out in his book with great clarity, and great precision, and exhaustively, I might add, that the Bible does not allow for homosexual practice. And some people will say, well, what's wrong with loving people? We'll get there. But Dr. Gagnon, before the break, you were talking about the problem with pairing up identicals. What is the problem?

ROBERT:

Well, what we see is when you put two men together in a sexual union or two women together in a sexual union, you have a disproportionately high rate of measurable harm.

And that measurable harm differs between homosexual males and homosexual females in ways that correspond to expected differences in each sex. So among homosexual male relationships, we have a disproportionately high rate of both numbers of sex partners over the course of life and sexually transmitted disease.

This is exactly what we would expect to find among males. With females, we see a higher, disproportionately high rate of mental health complications in the relationship. And in addition to the mental health complications is actually lower longevity of the relationship, on average.



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Now, that may seem to be counterintuitive, but not if we realize that females invest more of their self-identity and worth in that kind of a relationship. And when you have two females placing inordinate stress on the relationship, you have a higher relational turnover, even though it's more monogamous.

So these are differences that you can't simply explain on the basis of so-called societal homophobia, which is essentially an idiot term, just like incest phobia would be an idiot term, because they differ from one another in degree of measurable harm based on specific elements of each sex.

FRANK:

Yeah, Gary Thomas wrote a book called 'Sacred Marriage' a number of years ago, and I'm paraphrasing the subtitle, but it went like this. It said something like, "What if God created marriage more for our holiness than our happiness?" And I think the point here is that when you're in an opposite sex relationship and you're a male, you have to adjust to more the emotional needs of the woman.

You have to sacrifice something and vice versa. The female has to sacrifice more to the physical desires of the male, which makes you more like Jesus when you have to sacrifice for an opposite. But it seems that when you put two identicals in a relationship, you fuel one side and you atrophy the other. And it makes you perhaps more selfish in many cases. Is that a fair assessment?

ROBERT:

It is. And we might also say that in another sex relationship, the extremes of each sex are moderated and the gaps in each sex are filled. So there's real wisdom in God having two genuine sexual counterparts, sexual other halves involved in a union. When you bring together a male and a female, you're bringing together the two halves of the sexual spectrum into an integrated sexual whole.



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FRANK:

Now this isn't to say there might not be exceptions, we're just talking about the general rule here. And it is also interesting that the only thing that a male can't do or a female can't do is procreate.

All their other organs are self-contained within them, but the sexual organs require the other person in order to procreate. That appears to be part of the design as well.

ROBERT:

Yeah. And another aspect of a problematic aspect of same-sex unions. When you think about what the logic is of another sex union, a heterosexual union, which is what heterosexual means, other sex, you are desiring that which you don't have intrinsically or essentially. But in a homosexual union you're desiring, what is essentially already you, but you're acting as if it's not you.

Right? So if another sex union involves recognizing your true sexual counterpart or complement in a person of another sex, a same-sex union views the sexual partner as, even though of the same sex, as a sexual counterpart or complement.

That is, individuals don't view themselves if male, wholly masculine, or if female, wholly feminine. And they attempt to fill in that gap by uniting sexually, merging with somebody of the same sex. But that's a lie.

That's a form of self-deception. In some cases, it can also be a form of sexual narcissism because what you're actually erotically aroused or attracted by is what you already essentially are. Males for essential masculinity, females for essential femininity.

And we have to expose that lie rather than reinforce it. Reinforcing it would be, yes, trying to cannibalize, if you will, the sexual sameness of somebody else, to fill in what you think is lacking in your own identity as a male or as a female.

Transgenderism, of course goes even further. It basically denies completely one's own sex, which is why it's even worse than homosexual practice or behavior. But what we want,



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Christians want to do, is to be able to affirm for people who experience homoerotic attractions their essential wholeness as a male or as a female.

FRANK:

It seems to me that there are two main, probably more than this, but there are two main errors that people have when they think about this issue. One error is that whatever I'm attracted to justifies the action, that if I have this desire, I ought to act on it.

And of course, if you universalize that, the world is in big trouble because you can't always follow your desires. And the second big problem, which you also have in the book, and again, the book is called 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice' by Dr. Robert Gagnon is the idea that love means approval.

That in order to love people, we have to approve what they do. Now, any parent should know that's not the case. If you approve everything your kid wants to do, you're not loving, you're enabling evil. So, let's deal with the first one, Dr. Gagnon. There's probably a corollary to that first one about the idea that if I have this attraction, I ought to act on it.

A lot of people, it used to be said, and I haven't heard it much anymore about being born this way. But a lot of people will say, well, look, God made me this way, I ought to act this way. What's your response to that?

ROBERT:

Well, I would first indicate, based on the scientific evidence that we don't really, can't really say scientifically that people are congenitally determined to be gay, so-called same sex attracted. What happens is that there are risk factors in congenital and early socialization background that could increase or lower the risk factor for homosexual attraction. But it's not a deterministic model. I would first throw that in.

But then I would simply note, what do people think sin is? If we look at Romans 7, for example, and Paul's understanding about what sin is, sin is an innate impulse passed on by an ancestor running through the members of the human body and never entirely within human control.



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So if we want to define that as being something we should live out, then effectively we'd live out every sinful impulse we have. Most people should be able, at the drop of a hat, to be able to think of a number of innate urges that they experience, which probably we shouldn't engage in simply because we don't ask to have these impulses. Right? We can think of an array of sexual desires as an example. Beyond the issue of homosexual practice, polyamory is a classic case in point, especially for males.

FRANK:

Most men. Yeah.

ROBERT:

Yeah. I'm probably going to get drummed out of the male society for disclosing this to our audience, but it's true that most men do not experience high psychic discomfort over being attracted to more than one gorgeous woman concurrently.

FRANK:

That's right. [Laughter]

ROBERT:

It's just, you know, you don't go to a beach, you see a scantily clad gorgeous woman, you're going to feel impulses you're not asking to experience, right? So if we simply did whatever our impulses led us to do, we would be engaging in what God calls sin.

And there are an array of other sexual, even pedophilia, you could put under that rubric, even incest. There are cases where people have been, in early childhood, siblings have been raised in other households, and then they meet at a later time when they're adults and they experience this enormous attraction to one another.

Should they live out that attraction? Obviously not. Right? And then there's a whole array of non-sexual impulses, right? Envy, anger, greed, jealousy. The whole nature of human beings is to be self-oriented, right?

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To please and gratify our own selves rather than the God who created us. Why would we then want to say that gratifying innate urges is an intrinsically moral thing? This is why, for example, when discipleship is talked about throughout the New Testament, Jesus, Paul, the entire apostolic witness, what's the primary image for discipleship?

It's death. Christ talks about, if you want to become my disciple, you have to lose your life, you have to deny yourself, you have to take up your cross, then follow me. Paul talks repeatedly about being crucified with Christ. I no longer live.

Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me so much that he handed himself over to death for me, Galatians 2:20. So if death is a metaphor for discipleship, obviously God isn't interested in sanctioning all the innate urges that we experience. It's the exact opposite.

FRANK:

I like to say we're all born with orientation toward bad behavior. And whether we have heterosexual or homosexual impulses, or pedophilia impulses, or whatever impulses we have, we're all born with that orientation.

The question is, what are we going to do about it? And just because you have an attraction doesn't mean that the action that flows from that attraction is something you ought to do. But let me just briefly go back to this idea that, some will say, well, I was born this way.

We are all born with this orientation toward bad behavior. But when it comes to say, homosexual feelings, what we now call sexual orientation, what does the data show with regard to a genetic component? Is there a genetic component? And if there was, how could it be passed on if same-sex people do not procreate?

ROBERT:

Well, in some cases, aspects of cells are turned on or off in one generation or another generation and may be activated in a next generation. So, you might have somebody who's heterosexual.



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Certain elements of their existence coming from genetics are turned off and then they are turned on in a later generation. So that's one possibility. But what we're talking about here are indirect factors. For example, scientists who have studied the issue of homosexual development will argue that one of the key indicators for homosexual development is gender nonconformity.

So let's say, for example, a male who isn't particularly good at sports, or is interested in music and theater and doesn't correspond to a particular understanding of masculinity, that may increase a risk for desiring affirmation from members of the same sex.

FRANK:

We'll have a lot more with Dr. Robert Gagnon right after the break. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. We're back right after the break. Don't go anywhere. We're also on other radio stations across the country as well, ladies and gentlemen. Happy New Year. See you in a couple.

AD:

Students across America are more open to the truth of Christianity than ever before. And Dr. Frank Turek is taking the powerful evidence for God to campuses like UC Berkeley, the University of Georgia, Ohio State, and Alabama, reaching thousands in person and millions more online.

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FRANK:

My mentor, Dr. Norman Geisler, always used to say the first thing you ought to teach your kids is not the Bible, it's actually logic. Then teach them the Bible, then they'll understand it better. And we've got a couple of courses in logic, one for adults, one for kids, coming up called 'Train Your Brain.' That's going to be late January.



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You need to go to crossexamined.org. Click on online courses. You'll see it there. I'll be a part of the teaching team. But Shanda Fulbright, who does a great job teaching logic in 'Train Your Brain', will be the primary instructor. One's for six to eighth graders, others for adults. Warning, if your kid takes this, they're going to be impossible to live with because as soon as you say something, they're going to say, genetic fallacy, dad.

Slippery slope, mom. They're going to know all these fallacies. You're not going to be able to get away with it anymore. But they're going to be armed to deal with all the ill logic in our culture. And also, in late January, we're going to be teaching 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.' I'll be your instructor if we do some premium versions.

Or if you take the premium version, that includes some live Q&A Zoom sessions with me. So check all that out. Get in before we fill it up, 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist', late this month in January, it starts Let me go back to my guest, Dr. Robert Gagnon, who has got his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth.

He got a graduate degree from Harvard, and then he got his PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary. And he is the expert on the Bible and homosexual practice. That's the name of the book, 500 page book you could get.

I have it on Kindle, so I could search it. It is the place to go if you really want to know the truth. Now, a lot of people don't want to know the truth. They want to suppress the truth on this. Which is ironic because it's the same passage that Paul talks about homosexual practice, when it comes to suppressing the truth.

Before we get to that, though, Dr. Gagnon, I want to do, complete our discussion. You were saying that a—

When it came to the argument born that way, the evidence doesn't bear that out. However, there are certain things to look for in someone's nurture maybe, or nature when they are brought up as to whether or not they'll feel homosexual oriented, homosexual or same-sex orientation. Continue what you were saying prior to the break, if you would.



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ROBERT:

I would say homosexual development is multifactorial. I mean, there may be indirect congenital influencing factors, early childhood socialization, especially relationship with same-sex parent and same-sex peer, or not even actually the relationship, just the perception of those relationships.

Incremental choices that an individual makes in life, degree of latitude that they have within their particular social political context that allows or doesn't allow for those kinds of choices. These are all things that key in at different rates for different individuals in terms of their development.

FRANK:

Let me talk a little bit about this objection that people have. Because earlier in the last segment, you were talking about, if we were to follow all of our attractions into actions, it would be a disaster. We wouldn't even have civilization. But some will counter that, Dr. Gagnon, and say, but this orientation, this desire is to love somebody of the same sex. How do you respond to that?

ROBERT:

Well, I love my children, but if I have sex with them, I go to prison, certainly while they're minors. So there are lots of kinds of sexual desires that we cannot practice.

Look at Judas's view about sex. He essentially limits sex for one venue, marriage, and that lifetime with a person of the other sex. That's, there's a whole logic, moral logic behind Judas's view of a male, female prerequisite for sexual relationships that we could get into if that's of interest.

But at the same token, we're supposed to love everyone with whom we come into contact. Now, I'll share this with you, a member of Society of Biblical Literature. One year, maybe about a decade or so ago, the gay men's issues in religion was doing a talk about poly fidelity.

And they were using the Trinity as a sort of model or example for a sexual threesome or more. I know. This is just absolutely stunning. I couldn't even come up with this with my imagination.



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But this is where they go into and segue into. And one of the talks said, you know, sex is just like a warm handshake. Well, I can assure you that if I shook people's hands in that way, my wife wouldn't quite agree with that point of view.

FRANK:

That's right. That's right.

ROBERT:

So it's kind of absurdities. If we said that, we'd have to be into incest, we'd have to be into polysexuality, we'd have to be into pedophilia, would have to be into every form of sexual immorality imaginable. So obviously that's an absurd concept.

FRANK:

But what is the real definition of love then? Because you can want to love somebody, but you can love them in the wrong way. So what is the biblical definition of love?

ROBERT:

Well, love is a very full orb'd concept. I want to make clear that includes not just simply affirmation of an individual, but sometimes also rebuke. The classic text here is Leviticus 19:17-18. Everyone remembers 19:18, second half, love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus lists that as one of the, as the second greatest commandment. But on the other hand, people don't recognize what the context for that is in the verse and a half preceding, which is, you shall not hate your neighbor. You shall not hold a grudge against your neighbor. You shall not take revenge against your neighbor.

And if your neighbor does wrong, you shall reprove your neighbor, lest you incur guilt for failing to warn them. That's why Jesus talks about if your brother or sister sins against you, what should you do? Luke 17. You should rebuke them.

This is in line with Leviticus 19:17-18. And if they repent, forgive them, even if they sin seven times a day. So I like to call this a sort of holy gullibility with respect to accepting the genuineness of a confession of repentance after some inordinate number of same violations.



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That's the generosity, the grace of Christian faith. But it wouldn't be grace, or generosity, or kindness on God's part to allow a person to continue in a form of immoral conduct that leads to their exclusion from the kingdom of God.

FRANK:

Yes. As Paul says—

And you have this in the book. Again, the book is called 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice' that love does not rejoice in wrongdoing. Love rejoices in the truth. Love always protects. Love always perseveres. We're not protecting people when we're encouraging them or affirming them in a sin that God defines as a sin.

And I guess that's part of the controversy in the modern age, Dr. Gagnon, because if you went back a hundred years ago, nobody would be—

The book that you wrote wouldn't need to be written, because a hundred years ago, nobody was suggesting that the Bible in any way could affirm monogamous same-sex relationships or any same, or any kind of relationship outside of the marriage of a man and a woman.

But now we have people saying that. So can we go to Romans chapter one, for a minute? Because I hear people saying that—

ROBERT:

Do you want me to just say a little something about, wrap up Leviticus, since we talked about that earlier?

FRANK:

Oh, sure. Yeah. You can if you want. Yeah.

ROBERT:

So just a few points for people to think about when people do cite shellfish, shrimp, things like that, as a way of rejecting the Levitical sex laws, is to remember that the prohibitions of incest,



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adultery, man male intercourse, and bestiality that you see in Leviticus 18 and 20 are all called iniquity or sin, not just ritual uncleanness in these chapters.

They don't permit absolution of these offenses merely through ritual acts. That indicates that they're not primarily ritual infractions. They can't be rectified by say, bathing or the passage of time. They don't, these prohibitions of these sexual offenses don't penalize persons without willful intent.

You can commit a lot of ritual offenses without willful intent. You could come across a corpse and you're automatically ritually impure, regardless of intent. But these prohibitions of sexual offenses only involve intentionality. They don't make participants contagious to touch, unlike some ritual impurities, genital, discharges, childbirth, scale disease, corpses coming into contact with them.

They include an implicit rationale for each prohibition. They apply not just to Jews, but according to Leviticus 18:17, even to resident aliens or Gentiles as well. And all these offenses are either directly or implicitly picked up in the New Testament.

So very clearly then we are talking about here not ritual impurities, not merely symbolic or metaphorical matters, but we're talking about moral impurities in Leviticus 18 and 20.

FRANK:

In fact, I've heard it said, I don't-- There's either 17 or 19 prohibitions in Leviticus 18 that are sexual in nature. And as a society, we still agree with, if it's 17, we still agree with 15 of them. Right? There's just a couple that now our society said, well, homosexuality is okay and maybe one other one, maybe have sex with—

ROBERT:

Menstrual sex during menstrual uncleanness. Although some people are just like, why would you want to do that? Give the woman a break. But yeah, we don't have a problem. Well, I guess we are now having a problem with adultery and someday it will be with incest. And but still bestiality is ruled out.



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I thank God for that. And also now, remember later on in time, there was an additional loophole closed off that we don't have closed off in Leviticus 18 and 20. And that's number of sex partners. Jesus will eventually close it off so that you're allowed only one other sex partner in the course of life.

That is as long as that sex partner is still alive. And that's a restriction that comes later. But that's going to be another element that's going to go in our society eventually. Now why did we skip over that, and we go to accepting homosexual practice instead?

Shouldn't have been in that direction because homosexual practice is considered far more severe in the biblical text. It's more of an irreducible minimum. You know, the earlier a loophole is closed off in the biblical text, the greater the severity of the offense.

And Levitical loopholes are closed off relatively early in the Mosaic period. Some of the loopholes existed in the patriarchal period, closed off later in the Mosaic period under Moses. The issue of homosexual practice, when was that loophole closed off? Trick question. There never was a loophole, from Genesis 1:2 on.

FRANK:

Are you talking about divorce and, say, polygamy?

ROBERT:

Yeah. Polygamy first and then remarriage after divorce. Those are the things that Jesus closes off later. How does he close it off? On what basis? Well, we know that in Mark 10:2-12, parallel of Matthew 19:3-7, we know that Jesus is arguing against remarriage after divorce, at least invalid divorce, any matter divorce.

On what basis does he do it? He cites two texts, 1/3 of Genesis 1:27, male and female He made them. Then he cites Genesis 2:24. For this reason a man may leave his father and mother become joined to his woman or wife, and the two become one flesh.



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That for that reason, in 2:24, Jesus says, is predicated on that 1/3 of Genesis 1:27. Why may a man become joined to his woman and the two become one flesh? Because God intentionally designed them as a complementary sexual pair, male and female.

Two and only two sexual counterparts are part of God's intentional design. That means the number of parts partners in a sexual union, no more than two, male and female.

FRANK:

From which we all came, ladies and gentlemen. No matter how we are oriented, we all came from the union of a man and a woman. We're talking to Dr. Robert Gagnon. His book, 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice' is the standard work on the topic. Back after the break.

Blessings. This new year, we're starting off with controversy because people need to know the truth. And so few people talk about this issue anymore. But we talk about it because we love people, and we want them to know the truth, and we want them to follow the truth. And the truth is, is that God wants us to be in a relationship, if we are going to be in a relationship with somebody of the opposite sex, to procreate, and bring forth the next generation.

And too many people have made sex the focus of their life and their sexual identity is what they stake their claim to. And that sometimes causes them to ignore or fight against what Jesus and other writers in the Bible have said.

And Dr. Robert Gagnon's book, 'The Bible and Homosexual Practice' gets into every possible argument or counter argument in this topic or on this topic. So that's the book you want to get. Now, Dr. Gagnon, before the break, we were talking about closing loopholes.

Let me ask you one thing before you go further in that. Seems to me that in Deuteronomy 17:17, God tells the kings, don't multiply wives. That would appear to me to be, anyway, to be a prohibition to the king on polygamy. And if the king can't have multiple wives, why should a subject to the king have multiple wives? What's your point on that?



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ROBERT:

Well, that's true. That shows some concern for that. But still, you do have laws in the Pentateuch which do allow for men to have more than one wife concurrently.

So there's a difference between the way the sexual commands apply to males, and the way they're applied to females. Females are not allowed polyandry, multiple husbands concurrently. Men, however, are allowed polygyny, multiple wives concurrently.

Men have a right to near unilateral divorce of their wife. Women do not have the same right. It's more indirect mechanism with the Sanhedrin or council, to which the wife may appeal if her husband is not carrying out his responsibilities as a husband.

So there's a greater latitude and a greater loophole that exists for men than it does for women. When Jesus comes around, he could have gone in either direction. He could have allowed women the same latitude that men already had in terms of concurrent sex partners and in terms of unilateral right of divorce. He didn't do that.

He actually made the demand on men as stringent as it had already been for women. So that shows the direction where Jesus is going on this. So, earlier we had talked about a citation of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. A lot of people say, okay, well, he cited that, but maybe, you know, really didn't think much about why he did that.

We could understand why Jesus cited Genesis 2:24 in talking about the issue of remarriage after divorce. Because Jesus is talking about what God has joined together, let no human being separate. But why would he actually have cited that 1/3 of Genesis 1:27, male and female He made them?

What possible bearing does that text have on the number of partners allowable to persons before God? Only one thing. The number of partners that God allows in a sexual union is ultimately predicated on the number of sexes that God designs intentionally. And according to Scripture, only two intentionally, male and female.



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The whole logic of that is, once you bring together the two halves of the sexual spectrum, you create an integrated sexual whole. A third party or more is no longer necessary or required. And so consequently, it's the twoness of the sexes that is the foundation for limiting the number of partners in a sexual union too.

FRANK:

Are you saying that in the Old Testament, polygamy was allowed but not commanded?

ROBERT:

Yeah, exactly. And that is a very important hermeneutical point, because what Jesus is saying here is not everything given in the old covenant is of eternal value. So here's an example of such a case.

God allowed men the right of unilateral divorce and even any number of female wives. Any wives, number of wives you have. What I'm saying is, I'm closing that loophole for you. God allowed that because of human, here, chiefly male, hardness of heart.

That doesn't represent God's original will. Where do we find God's original will? We find it in creation. God's intentional design of two and only two sexual counterparts or complements. So that's the moral logic behind it.

It isn't just that Jesus randomly cites texts, but rather he sees a moral logic between God's intentional design of only two sexual counterparts. This is at every level, right? Anatomically, physiologically, the ability to procreate, and even psychologically.

It's clear that the sexual counterpart to a male is a female, and to a female a male. So then, what logic arises from that in terms of determining the number of sex partners over the course of life? The logic is then, well, you start with one person.

How many persons can that person be in a sexual relationship? Only two. Why two? Because of the male female prerequisite. And once you arrive at another, you're a male-- You arrive at having marriage with a woman, you've completed the sexual spectrum.

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There is no longer any need for another party to be involved there, because there is no third, fourth, or fifth sex. There's only two complementary sexes. That's Jesus' moral logic. So this argument that he makes about divorce and remarriage, which, by the way, automatically includes a rejection of polygamy.

And how do we know that? Because we know that it's easier to outlaw polygamy than it is to outlaw remarriage after divorce, we see that in our own society. We still currently reject polygamy in the law, although that's losing ground because of the issue of homosexual practice.

But we allow remarriage after divorce. Why is that? Because we recognize that concurrent polygamy is worse than serial polygamy. And so, to allow remarriage after divorce is not necessarily to allow concurrent polygamy, multiple partners at the same time.

That's a further step beyond. And a further step beyond that would be rejecting a male/female requirement, because the male, the twoness of the sexes is the predicate for limiting the number of partners in a sexual union to two. And polygamy didn't get closed off among the people of God until the Essenes and the Therapeutae in Egypt, which is, you know, late 1st century BC and beyond, and Jesus for his followers.

They close off that loophole. So which is worse, polygamy or incest? Incest, because the loopholes for incest are closed off earlier in the Mosaic period. Never a loophole, however, for homosexual practice, indicating that it's worse even than incest.

In fact, the rejection of incest itself is predicated on the degree of sexual otherness required at creation for male and female. A certain degree of otherness or difference within sameness that is violated both by incest and same-sex intercourse, but, more severely by same sex intercourse.

FRANK:

We're not going to get to all the questions I have for Dr. Gagnon, obviously. We're running out of time here, so we're going to do a follow on podcast, but I-- You've kind of taken us, you've got me intrigued on this topic of polygamy right now that I want to explore a little bit further. You know better than me, but are there any laws in the Old Testament that allow for



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polygamy? There's none that command it. Are there any that allow for it? Because there's only three things we can do with any sort of behavior. We can prohibit a behavior, permit a behavior, or promote a behavior. Prohibit, permit, or promote. It seems when in Deuteronomy, I think it's 17:17.

Don't multiply wives. That's a command to kings. It would seem then to be a command to non-kings. And every instance that polygamy occurs, it's sort of just talked about. It's not like this is a good thing. And every instance it occurs, certainly with Solomon and others, it turns out to be a disaster in their lives. So where is the, I guess, permissiveness of polygamy in the Old Testament?

ROBERT:

Permission is allowed, for example, in the Covenant Code or Book of the Covenant, one of the earliest pieces of legislation that we have within the Book of Exodus. I can't give you chapter and verse right now, but yes, it's allowed there.

But you're right, it's not enjoined. It's not an encouragement for people to do this, but it's exactly as Jesus presents it. It's an allowance made to human hardness of heart, here chiefly male hardness of heart. And Jesus—

FRANK:

Matthew 19:8, ladies and gentlemen, has to do with divorce there. But yeah, because of your hardness of heart. Yeah. It was not this way from the beginning. But Moses gave you a certificate of divorce, right?

ROBERT:

That's right. Jesus is talking—it's a specific issue that's been addressed to him by the Pharisees, because there's controversy among the two major Pharisaic houses on what grounds divorce is permissible.

And you have a more restrictive view of that in the house or school of Shammai, and a more tolerant, accepting view of what men can divorce a wife for in the house of school of Hillel. Even if she burns your toast, for example, you can divorce her.



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In other words, it's any matter divorce. Whereas it's the text they're both looking back to is from Deuteronomy 24:1-4. And it's a question about what the nakedness of a thing refers to as a grounds for divorce in that text.

And the house of Shammai refers that much more restrictively, basically sexual immorality. Possibly also failure to provide for one's spouse, not fulfilling one's conjugal duties. Let's put it that way.

FRANK:

Is there any possibility that polygamy was sort of winked at in the Old Testament due to the fact that so many men died in battle?

ROBERT:

Yes.

FRANK:

That there weren't enough men to keep a village going.

ROBERT:

Yeah, I think that's a good point in. Right. And the need for women in order to survive in a patriarchal society, to be able to be married. So, yes. These all factors that fit into it.

Same thing with the allowances for incest early on. Right? Limited number of people. You're within a tribal group, and a group of, where there's direct degree of blood relatedness to one another, there's a certain allowance, and the more the expansion of the population is created, those loopholes get closed off.

But again, homosexual practice, never a loophole because it's right at the very foundation. So when I talk about the issue of the Bible and homosexuality, I always start first with Jesus, then I move to the Genesis text 1 and 2, and then I move to Paul, and Leviticus, and on.



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FRANK:

Let's do that in the next podcast because we're out of time. You know, you can follow Dr. Gagnon the best on Facebook. Look him up on Facebook, Dr. Robert Gagnon. We'll put his link in Facebook in the show notes. Also get his book, the Bible and homosexual practice. And we're gonna pick up the conversation.

Get into all the verses in the next podcast. If you're on the American Family Radio Network, you're not gonna see it there. You gotta go to the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist podcast. All right, see you there next time. God bless.

