

CCLEB SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY JULY 19, 2026

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TRUTH AND GRACE: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

You can learn more about Calvary Chapel, our beliefs and practices and various ministries, by visiting our website, or talking to anyone on our welcome team. And of course, we would love for you to come check us out on a Sunday morning.

**JOINS US
SUNDAY MORNINGS**
AT 8, 9:30 & 11 AM
IN PERSON AND ONLINE

So let me share with you how the evening will flow. We are going to do a walk through the Bible on the topic of same-sex relationships. We are going to start with **Genesis 1:1** and progress forward.

We will do this in two parts, Old Testament and then take a quick break with chocolate and ice cream, and then finish the New Testament.

If you are here tonight and are dealing with SSA or are in or have been in a SSR, then I applaud your courage to come and listen tonight to a teaching from God's word. If you are a parent or grandparent feeling confused, or maybe feeling like you lost your child or grandchild, I applaud your courage to be here tonight.

I feel it is important and fair that you as attendees of this church know my beliefs re: this topic, as your pastor. So, to be clear from the beginning of our time together I hold to the historical perspective of SSR, not the progressive view. And that matches our Calvary Chapel church belief statement that says:

**WE BELIEVE MARRIAGE IS A SACRED
COVENANTAL UNION BETWEEN ONE
BIOLOGICALLY BORN MALE AND ONE
BIOLOGICALLY BORN FEMALE THAT LIMITS
SEXUAL RELATIONS TO MONOGAMOUS,
HETEROSEXUAL MARRIAGE.**

(GENESIS 2:24)

There are several other reasons why we are having this study this evening.

WHY ARE WE HAVING THIS STUDY?

- 1. WE RECENTLY FINISHED ROMANS 1 WHERE SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS ARE MENTIONED.**
- 2. THIS IS A RELEVANT ISSUE IN OUR COMMUNITY TODAY.**
- 3. THE BIBLE, GOD'S WORD HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT IT.**
- 4. THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST NEEDS TO BE CHALLENGED IN HOW WE RANK SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS AS A SIN, WHICH INFLUENCES OUR RESPONSES.**

Tonight I'll be sharing my interpretation of what the Bible says – my current understanding of the text. If you are new here, I teach the Bible from a narrative perspective, meaning that I believe that the Bible is one cohesive narrative that points to Jesus who leads us into a relationship with God the Father now and eternally. That is the framework by which I teach the Bible.

This teaching tonight will reflect the works of Preston Sprinkle from the Center for Faith, Sexuality and Gender, who is both loved and hated, and from Pastor Jon Tyson – Church of the City, who handles this topic really well. I don't agree with them on all things, but I do agree with them on a lot. My thinking has also been influenced by the writing of Rosaria Butterfield who I don't find to have much grace, and Abigail Favale among others.

Now, since the Bible is a cohesive narrative, it uses phrases and words from other places in the Bible to inform us on the meaning of a text. That is important in this study, I'll point those incidents out as we study them. And it is for that reason that we are starting in **Genesis 1:1** – the first verse of the Bible, our anchor verse for this study.

But before we start looking at God's word, let me deal with one question you may have. If you disagree with me, are you welcome to continue attending this church? A resounding YES! This topic brings with it a lot of differing perspectives and intense emotions, so I would not expect everyone to agree with me. But it is my goal that you are clear on where I and the church stand.

Having said that, we will not be stopping to take questions or engage in discussion during the teaching tonight. Your questions are important, feel free to catch me afterward or submit your questions to info@cclieb.com. We as an Elder team will purpose to respond to your questions and perhaps pursue further studies related to biblical sexuality.

So let's pray- seek the Lord to be our teacher and guide and then get started.

When my now adult son Korin was very young, he painted me a picture. Isn't it awesome? As his dad of course I loved it, and as a painter myself I really love this painting. My wife had this picture framed for me for Father's Day that year. I wanted others to see it, so I proudly hung it in my office at work. My office at that time was across from the YMCA. And one day when Sheri brought the boys into my office to see me, Korin walked into my office, looked at the painting, and said, "Dad, it's upside down". I turned it right side up - how else could I respond? How could I argue?



Korin, as the creator of this painting, had the authority to tell his father that it was upside down. Fair? The creator has authority to say when his creation is upside down.

Carry that creator and authority concept into our first passage, **Genesis 1:1**. Again, this is our anchor passage for the topic of what does the Bible say about same-sex relationships. God is the creator- the artist who has the authority to say what is right side up and what is upside down. All the rest of the passages are anchored in this truth.

Genesis 1:2 paints a picture of the ancient understanding of disorganization/ what many say is "chaos". This is a pre-creation image. We in the west read this text and ask, "Since this was before creation and before creation nothing existed, how can nothing be disorganized and in chaos?" Exactly! We don't get it. But nonetheless chaos was how precreation was conceptualized in the ancient Hebrew thought.

But the narrative of the chapter traces God the creator, methodically ordering creation - from chaos to ordered creation. And God does it through an initial set of separations. And this ordering of creation by separation happens by God's spoken word, "And God said.."

Between **verses 2-4** God creates light separating light from darkness.

Then in **verses 6-8** God separates the waters above from the waters below and calls the space in between sky or in Hebrew "the vault".

In **verses 9-10** God separated the water, and land appeared surrounded by water. In the narrative of the Bible God separating water and land appearing happens in a few other stories, doesn't it? Crossing of the Reed Sea, Joshua crossing the Jordan... etc. The Bible is a narrative.

In **verses 11-23** God proceeded to very methodically order creation with one common design feature - life would produce after its own kind. **Verse 11**. And God repeated that same "reproduce after their own kind" design feature in all the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, livestock, and animals that scurry along the ground.

This emphasizes that God the creator filled the earth with life with all the unique plants and unique animals that produce after their own kind in a very orderly, categorized way.

Let me put it this way. Picture a warm house on a bitter cold night – light in the windows, a meal on the table. Out on the sidewalk, two people stand at the door. One is me – arms full of books, head full of podcasts, pockets stuffed with everything I was sure I'd learned. The other has nothing in his pockets at all. Been on the street a while. Nothing to show.

And here's what I finally understood that night in Thom's basement: at that door, my pockets are just as empty as his. All my reading can't buy the lock open nor pick it open. The two of us are standing on the exact same ground – outside, wanting in, and completely unable to get ourselves through that door.

Paul answers that question in **verse 9**: “No, not at all, for we...”

“All under the power of sin.” That's a strong statement – all of humanity, regardless of race, religion, wealth, or favorite mushrooms, is in bondage to the power of sin.

Now that phrase – “under sin” – is the first time in the whole letter Paul uses “sin” as a noun. Think about that. For two and a half chapters he described the problem every other way – ungodliness, unrighteousness, wickedness – but held the word itself back until right here, the verdict. And once he says it, it becomes one of the biggest words in the book.

And it's a fascinating word. The Greek word for sin is hamartia – from the world of archery. Think ancient Olympics: the target is set, the crowd goes quiet, the archer draws the bow, takes aim, lets the arrow fly – and it sails wide. Hamartia. He missed. It literally means “to miss the mark.”

And God didn't stop with aquatic life, birds, and animals – he also created humans. Humans are God's pinnacle of creation. Using Paul's language in **Ephesians 2:10** humans are his “masterpiece”.

Verse 26 And notice humans are created “like us” and thus separate from the other creation. They are separate from, different from the other creation by God's design because God set them to rule over creation in partnership with God.

And the humans in **verse 27** that were created “in God's image”, “like us” were “male and female”. Equally created in God's image.

So here are the truths established from **Genesis 1** that apply to our topic same-sex relationships.

TRUTHS THAT APPLY TO THIS TOPIC

1. There is a Creator, and as creator he has authority to say what is right side up and what is upside down.
2. Creation was ordered from chaos or “nothing”.
3. That ordering happened by a series of separations.
4. The creation ordering happened by God's spoken word “*And God said let...*” 10x.
5. Plant and animal life were created as seed bearing, producing “*after their own kind*”.
6. Humans were created in God's image, “*like us*”- “*male and female*”. Separate – but equally in God's image.
7. Humans too were “*seed bearing*”, “*to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*”.
8. Humans were the conclusion of the creation/ordering process.

That's **Genesis chapter one** – God's ordering of creation is clear – keep these in the back of your mind. Now let's look at **chapter two**. The verses pertaining to our topic are **Genesis 2:18-24**.

Genesis 2:18 God said “It is not good for...”. We need to understand this statement in context.

The Hebrew word for “good” is “tov” and it means something like “exceptionally functional, desirable”. The Hebrew word good has more to do with function and utility than it does anything else. This is the idea in **Chapter one** where “God saw that it was good...”

**The Hebrew word for
“good” is “tov” and
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desirable”.**

Now the context of **2:18** is in light of God telling the male and female humans in **Genesis 1:27** to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with image bearers and govern it. So, it makes sense then for the LORD God to say “it is not good (not functional) for the man to be alone”. Because, if the man is alone, how could the man be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with image bearers and govern it? That would be impossible.

And because man couldn’t achieve on his own what God intended for male and female to do together, God’s plan was, as it says in **2:18b**, to “... make a helper who is just right for him”.

Let’s define what a “just right for him helper” means. Across Bible translations this phrase looks like this:

What a “just right for him helper” means:

- NLT** - a helper who is just right for him.
- NIV** - a helper suitable for him
- NKJV** - a helper comparable to him
- KJV** - a help meet for him
- NET** - a companion for him who corresponds to him
- ESV** - a helper fit for him

And generally, when you see multiple translations with little agreement in wording, it typically indicates a Hebrew word or phrase that is challenging to express in our modern English.

The Hebrew phrase here is “ezer knegdo” – two words together. And only with the two words together can we begin to see God’s intent of providing for Adam because of what man couldn’t achieve on his own.

Ezer is often translated as “help” or “helper”. I think that the word “helper” negatively preloads the interpretation with the idea of a lesser role, as in “mommy’s little kitchen helper”.

But “helper” as a lesser role is not consistent with how the Old Testament uses the word ezer. Of the 21 times this word is used in the Old Testament, 16 times ezer is used to describe God – so clearly not a lesser role.

Two examples **Exodus 18:4**, **Psalms 70:5**. The word ezer is used to describe God meeting a need that cannot be met by man, God doing for man what man cannot do for himself, curiously most of the time in a “deliverance” role.

So the “helper” or “ezer” is the one who does for us what we cannot do by ourselves, the one who meets those needs. The NET Bible note says: in this context the word ezer seems to express the idea of an “indispensable companion.”

Ezer

is the one who does for us
what we cannot do by ourselves,
the one who meets those needs.

That’s the first word “ezer” – now let’s look at the second word “knegdo”.

The NET Bible notes defines knegdo this way:

The Hebrew expression
כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (knegdo) literally means
“according to the opposite of him.”

They are “alike, but opposite”.

The root words indicate
two people face to face,
opposite of each other.

The man’s form and nature are matched by the woman’s (form and nature) as she reflects him and complements him. Together they correspond.

So, let’s take that understanding back to **Genesis 1:27** and look at **verse 27** as the Bible serving as a commentary to what **Genesis 2:18** means. **Verse 27** says, “Male and female he created them.” Meaning the “ezer knegdo”, the one who does for man what man cannot do by himself, the one who meets that need, the one who is indispensable, the one who is alike and opposite of him, the one who reflects him and corresponds to him, is “female”.

God’s ordered separate design from **Genesis 1:1** – through **2:24** was male and female. And God called male and female in **1:31** “very good”, meaning “exceptionally functional and beautiful”.

Now let me give three things to think about:

1. From the perspective of God “ordering” creation in his Gen 1 and 2 design of male and female to complement each other, any other interpretation that supports same-sex relationships - a joining of two people “male – male” or “female-female”, would have to be seen as against God’s design.

2. And second, in the context of God creating and “ordering” creation from what the ancient world understood as chaos, a male-male or female-female relationship would have to be seen as a step back toward disorder/chaos.

3. And third, from the perspective of my son’s painting, I am convinced that God as creator having the authority to say what is upside down and what is right side up – has shown us in his word what is right side up! The intended relationship is male and female.

The progressive interpretation of this passage defines what Adam needed – his suitable helper – as just another human, not specifically female. I just do not see that supported in the narrative and language of the text.

Now before we move on to other passages outside of **Genesis 1** and **2**, let me share another of my beliefs.

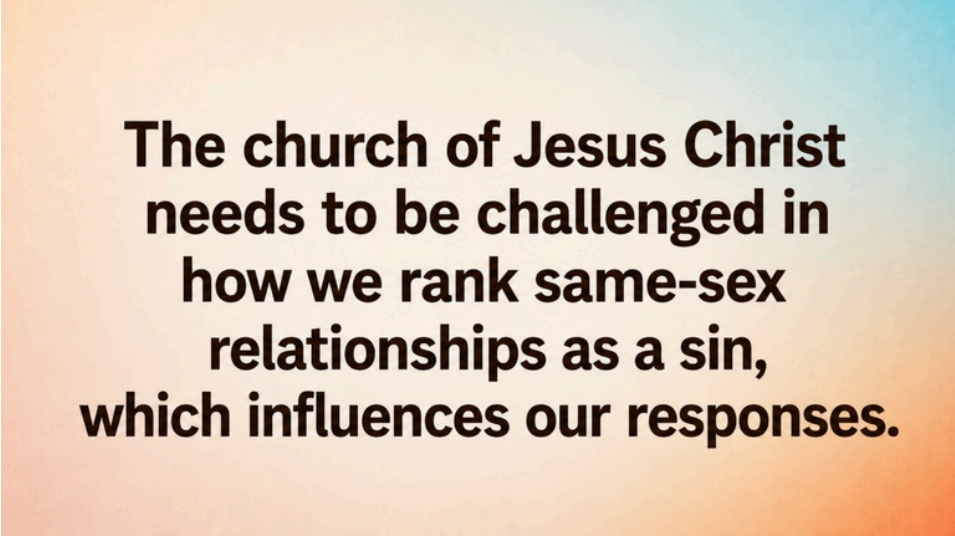
My belief about the Bible in general is summarized in **2 Timothy 3:16**. What that means is the rest of the passages are likewise given to us for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Meaning God as creator tells us what is right. The only way that my interpretations of these passages make sense is if that verse is true. And I believe it is.

Let’s look at the next passage – **Genesis 19** – Sodom and Gomorrah. Many teachers point to this passage as God’s wrath on the sexual sin of same-sex relationships. I don’t think that is an accurate or complete interpretation.

Here is why. The Bible is one narrative. And so other passages may at times help us understand what is happening. For example, **Ezra 16:49-50** informs us what was happening in **Genesis 19** in Sodom.

So, the emphasis was on their arrogance (pride) and not taking care of the poor and needy. Yes, there were “detestable sins”, clearly gang rape and violence are that, but the emphasis of the Ezekiel passage was pride and refusal to take care of the poor. That is clear.

So I don’t think **Genesis 19** should be used as a main passage for arguing God’s perspective on same-sex relationships. This brings us to one of my goals for tonight:



**The church of Jesus Christ
needs to be challenged in
how we rank same-sex
relationships as a sin,
which influences our responses.**

What that does is drives those with SSA or in SSR away to where they will find affirmation and acceptance. That is not a biblical position or response.

Let me tell you a true story of how this is true. There was a person attending church who came out of a SSR background. They were saved, growing. But because, once people of the church found out their background, they kept their distance. This person said, “I felt like a leper.” Then they would go home and there would be five messages on their phone from old friends who told them they had missed a great party, and everyone wanted to see them again. How hard do you think that was for them? The church—us—needs to stop ranking sins and start responding with the love of Jesus... amen?

Let's move on to Leviticus. The book of Leviticus is about the Israelites who came out of slavery heavily influenced by pagan nations, who are about to enter the promised land that is inhabited by pagan nations. And God is preparing his people to be set apart from the pagan nations and set apart for him. We know this because of the word "Holy". The word holy means "set apart". The word "holy" appears 87x in the book of Leviticus. For example, **Leviticus 19:2**

If God is going to have the Israelites, his people, be different – set apart for him – holy unto God, then they must act differently from the surrounding pagan nations. Which means there must be a prohibition on the behavior that aligns with pagan nations. In this regard, the book of Leviticus is in a way a "holiness code".

So, in the book of Leviticus as Jon Tyson puts it, "You have holy people, the priests with holy clothes in a holy land, at a holy place, using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days, living by holy law, so that there may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Leviticus is about holiness, a people set apart for God.

And that includes sexual behavior. **Leviticus 18** is a list of sexual prohibitions, and here is where the word "detestable" comes in related to same-sex relationships. **Leviticus 18:22 NIV**

The progressive perspective argues several things here. First, that we are no longer under the law but under grace in the new covenant. That is true, we are no longer under the parts of the law that Jesus fulfilled, such as sacrifices for sin, but it does not mean that we throw out the Old Testament.

Jesus quotes **Leviticus 19:18** "love your neighbor as yourself". The New Testament refers to **Leviticus** at least 15x. Peter and Paul both quote Leviticus in a continued appeal for holy living...

The parts of the law which existed before Israel was established as a nation ruled directly by God and given the law as a covenant are still applicable to us. This includes **Genesis 1** and **2** which Jesus quotes directly.

So, throwing out **Leviticus** prohibitions on sexual behavior because it is under law and not under the new covenant doesn't carry enough weight in my opinion.

The progressive perspective also introduces the argument here that this passage is referring to violent or coercive same-sex relationships as what was described in Sodom and Gomorrah. The problem is the text doesn't say that. The text uses very common broad language in its prohibition. **Leviticus 18:22**

We need to deal with one more thing here in Leviticus before we move on to the New Testament. Again, one of my goals for tonight is that the church of Jesus Christ needs to be challenged in how we rank same-sex relationships as a sin, which influences our responses.

When I say "rank" sin I mean we as people assign a value of how bad a sin is, and then assign it a rank or order from worst sin to least sin and then have reactions according to the rank.

In that regard, we need to deal with the word "detestable" or "abomination". As we saw both **Ezra 16:50** and **Leviticus 18:22** use the word "detestable" to describe how God sees same-sex relationships. That word "detestable" is strong and has a strong influence on thinking. Detestable in Hebrew means what one abhors and finds disgusting. It is in many cases accompanied by the internal or external response of "ewww".

Here is where the Bible as narrative informs our interpretation and application. Because the Bible is a narrative, one continuous story, we need to look at the word "detestable" from the perspective of the whole Old Testament. Look at these following slides. This is a list of what other behaviors God in the Bible calls detestable.

What the Old Testament calls “detestable” (Hebrew: to'evah, תועבה)

Behavior	Scripture
Worshipping idols	Deuteronomy 7:25-26
Sacrificing children	Deuteronomy 12:31
Witchcraft / fortune-telling / occult practices	Deuteronomy 18:9-12
Cheating in business (rigged scales)	Proverbs 11:1; 20:23
Lying	Proverbs 12:22
Pride (haughty eyes)	Proverbs 6:16-17; 16:5
Killing the innocent	Proverbs 6:17
Plotting evil against others	Proverbs 6:18
Stirring up conflict in the community	Proverbs 6:19
Empty, hypocritical worship	Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 1:13
Same-sex relationships	Leviticus 18:22
Adultery and sexual sin	Leviticus 18:20; Ezekiel 22:11

Many of those you would expect from the Old Testament but note here that God uses the word “detestable” or “abomination” to also describe cheating in **Proverbs 11**, lying **Proverbs 12**, pride **Proverbs 6** and **16**, plotting evil **Proverbs 6**, stirring up conflict also **Proverbs 6**, and empty hypocritical worship in **Proverbs 15**, and **Isaiah 1**.

The Old Testament doesn't apply a ranking system to the word detestable – all the things listed are equally detestable. And I would expect that most of us haven't done all of these, but most of us would have lied or cheated or have been proud or worshipped with our mouth when our heart was a hot mess.... God says those also are “detestable”. Which means my pride is detestable to God.

Let me deal with the sin of pride because I believe that applies to all of us 100%. **Genesis 1** and **2** says we were created first in God's image as male and female, and second, we were created from the dust of the ground. Dust being an Old Testament symbol of humility. God breathed into that dust and gave it life to make us in his image. The foundation for our existence is that humble beginning of dust, and we are to be mindful of that at all times. **Ecclesiastes 3:20**

In light of what we have learned from how the whole Old Testament uses the word detestable, we have no right to rank same-sex relationships above the sin of pride, because God does not. For us to do so would be making ourselves a more important judge, a more accurate judge than God and his Word. Which itself is the sin of pride, and according to God's word equally detestable to God. Let me repeat that. Our ranking of same-sex relationships as a sin above pride is an act of pride, and thus detestable to God.

Meaning we have no biblical ground by which to judge same-sex relationships differently than our own pride. Different natural consequences and outcomes, yes! But a higher rank, absolutely not! That alone should humble us and produce grace in our responses to SSA and SSR.

Those are our passages from the Old Testament, but before we break, if God has stirred your heart and brought conviction of anything at all, let's pause for silence where you can talk to God.

What does the New Testament say about same-sex relationships? The three texts that we will look at are **Romans 1:24-27**, **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** and **1 Timothy 1:9-10**.

Let's look at **Romans 1:24-27**. The context for this verse is that Paul is persuading the Christian church in Rome that everyone is saved by faith in Jesus alone. The Christian church in Rome had both Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, civilized and uncivilized and Paul was unifying all people groups under one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And to do that Paul argues from **Romans 1:18-3:20** that everyone is guilty and needs Jesus to pay for their sins. Everyone.

The first part is about the sins of the Gentiles, the second part is about the sins of the Jews, and the third is the conclusion that both Jews and Gentiles are damned without Jesus.

Now in the course of that argument, with the goal of unifying the church under the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul talks about the sin of the Gentiles in **Romans 1:24-27** of same-sex relationships.

Now from the historic perspective and narrative perspective this passage is very clear. Paul uses plain language - just like in **Leviticus 18**, not the language of sexual coercion, exploitation, violence, or victimization. For example, note in this verse how many times it says or alludes to the phrase "with each other" **Romans 1:24-27**. This implies mutual, consensual acts.

Now in this same passage Paul also uses deliberate words and word orders that are links, or references, or sometimes called "intertextual echoes", back to creation in **Genesis 1-3**. Note the words "God created" in **verse 25**. Does it remind you of **Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created...? From a narrative perspective these words, "God created" are an intentional link, a reference back to **Genesis 1** and **2** to remind us, the reader, how God created male and female and for what purpose. And that it is female, not just any human, that was created to be man's ezer knegdo.

And to support this strong Genesis creation reference further, if you jump back to **Romans 1:20** you will see the phrase "creation of the world". That's a pretty clear link back to **Genesis 1**.

And then jumping to **verse 23** you see the reference to the created animals from **Genesis 1**. Another clear reference or link back to God's ordered creation.

What is really interesting is that Paul echoes the list of created animals from **Genesis 1**, but in exact opposite order of how they are listed in **Genesis 1**. Why? Write your answer on the back of a... Many suspect this reversal is Paul revealing mankind's rejection of God's order, God's design.

But let's keep going in **Romans 1**, now look at **Romans 1:26-27 NASB**. The NASB is a more word-accurate translation. Here we see the words "natural" and "unnatural" in reference to God's creation from **Genesis 1-2**. This reference to **Genesis 1-2** informs us of the definition of "natural" in Romans. Using **Genesis 1** and **2** then, what is "natural" is how God designed things. What God created, ordered, and called good - that is natural.

The use of the word natural or nature in this passage is not a reference to someone feeling a natural attraction to someone of the same sex - or that it is just their "nature," or it is "natural" for them to feel or act that way. Rather, these words are connected to what and how "God created" in **Genesis 1** and **2**.

Now being consistent with a narrative approach look at the very next verses in **Romans 2:1-2**. These verses then go on to tell us that such behavior - the whole list - is worthy of God's judgment. That is not God affirming, that is God telling us what is upside down.

The progressive position has many arguments about this Romans text that mainly center around the belief that Paul is commenting on sexual exploitation that is worthy of God's judgement, and not consensual love or committed love.

The progressive position points out that there were in Paul's day as there is now, many SSR happening in the public's eye. It was not uncommon for some male government officials to have multiple partners. Sometimes that included young teens. And neither was it uncommon for there to be sexual coercion, exploitation, male to male. And that this was what Paul was addressing, not true committed love between two partners.

I have two reactions to the progressive argument.

First, Paul uses plain language- not language of exploitation or violence. The Greek language offers a very rich vocabulary of definitive words that can be used to describe sexual coercion or exploitation, but that is not what Paul uses. He uses plain language that would indicate all same-sex relationships.

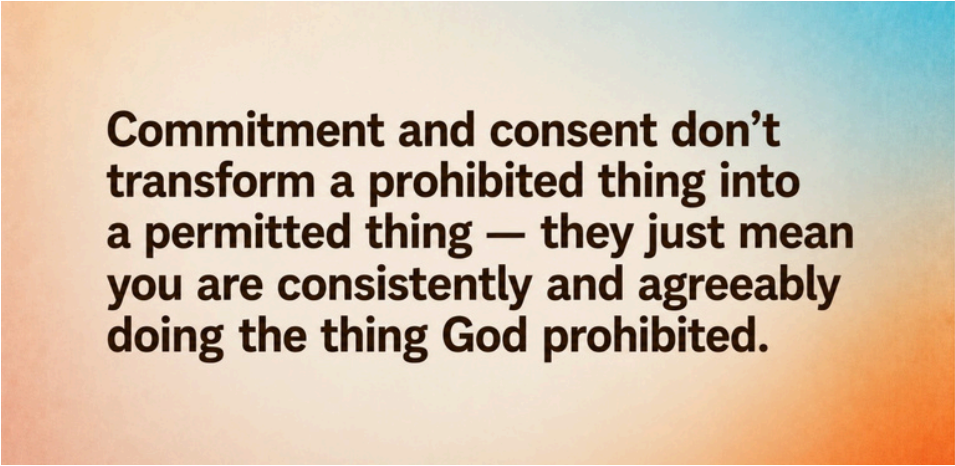
And second, Paul uses many, many strong links back to **Genesis 1 & 2**, that define God's intended relationships as male and female. Because of those two, I do not find the progressive voice to carry weight.

But allow me to challenge the progressive thinking a little further. If Paul was talking only about coercive or exploitative SSR, then it would imply that a commitment or consensual act then redeems what was previously prohibited. And know it was prohibited from **Leviticus 18**.

Apply that logic to the other things on God's prohibition list. Take the rigged scales of **Proverbs 11**. Imagine the butcher down the street who has been cheating his customers with a rigged scale – but he's done it faithfully, every single day, for thirty years. And his customers know it and keep coming back anyway. It's mutual. It's consensual. Nobody is more committed to that scale than he is.

So... does that make the dishonest scale honest?

Or try it with lying: "Yes, I lied on my taxes. But I want you to know I was fully committed to that lie. I've told it sincerely, every April, for a decade." Does the IRS stand and applaud the commitment? Of course not.



**Commitment and consent don't
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doing the thing God prohibited.**

Commitment and consent don't transform a prohibited thing into a permitted thing – they just mean you are consistently and agreeably doing the thing God prohibited.

Now again, let's pause and go back to our fourth goal for the evening. The church of Jesus Christ needs to be challenged in how we rank same-sex relationships as a sin, which influences our responses.

In **Romans 2:2** it says, READ. "... will judge such things..." I want you to look at the complete list of things that Paul says are equally worthy of God's judgement. Look at **verse 29-31**. In Greek writing this whole list from **27-31** is a "vice list" or "catalogue of vices". Vice lists in Greek writing and debate paint a picture of a life of moral collapse. And the point of a vice list was not for one thing to stand out above the other, but rather that everyone is indicted by it.

So, reading **Romans 1:29-31** as a ranked list from worst to least worst misreads the text in context. Gossip, arrogance, boasting, disobedience to parents, and envy sit in the same list as murder – equally characteristic of a humanity apart from God, equally worthy of God's judgment.

Which is exactly the challenge for us: if Paul's own writing refuses to rank these sins, we have no ground to pull same-sex relationships out of the list and rank it above the pride and gossip that sit right beside it.

Are we clear? The position and posture of CCLeb will be to not rank same-sex relationships above the sins of pride and gossip. Different in natural consequences, of course, but not in rank.

Now we have two passages left... let's look at **1 Corinthians 6:9 NIV**. And **1 Timothy 1:9-11**. The NIV makes this seem very clear, however there is much discussion about these verses.

The first comment is that these are also vice lists. So let me repeat what that is. Vice lists in Greek writing and debate paint a picture of a life of moral collapse. And the point of a vice list was not for one thing to stand out above the other, but rather that everyone is indicted by it.

So, if it is a vice list that includes same-sex relationships what does it mean "will not inherit the kingdom of God?"

David Guzik, in his Enduring Word commentary, points out something you can see in the grammar of the list itself. Paul does not list acts – he lists identities: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, revilers, extortioners. He is describing people whose lives are dominated and characterized by these sins.

So "will not inherit the kingdom of God" is not a verdict on a believer who has committed a single act of one of these sins. It describes the person whose ongoing, unrepentant lifestyle is defined by them – a life that shows no evidence of ever being made new.

But don't hear that as a loophole. Guzik is quick to add that an occasional act of any of these sins is still a big deal to God – it goes against everything we have been given in Jesus, and every lifestyle of sin begins with single acts of sin.

The hope comes in **verse 11**: "And that is what some of you WERE." Past tense. Some in the Corinthian church had lived every one of these identities – and they were washed, sanctified, justified. Past tense.

Think about what an expungement is. A person with a criminal record carries an identity – felon. It follows them into every job interview and every apartment application. But when a judge grants an expungement, the record is wiped.

Legally, that identity no longer exists. The person still remembers what they did – but the court no longer identifies them by it. That is **verse 11**. "And that is what some of you WERE." The record was real. The washing was more real. God no longer identifies you by it.

That past tense cuts two ways. First, we can never be unloving or uncaring toward the people on this list, because that is right where some of us used to be. That ties to our point about how we, the church, respond.

Second, these things should never mark the life of a Christian – and when they do, they are to be repented of and forsaken, not managed or renamed.

Now the place where the progressive perspective stakes their claim is in the Greek words used to describe same-sex relationships in **verse 9**.

Jon Tyson, pastor of Church of the City New York, preached through this passage, and his explanation resonates with me. I borrow heavily from him here.

Paul uses two Greek words in **verse 9**.

The first is *malakoi*, which literally means “soft” the same word the gospels use for soft clothing.

The second is *arsenokoitai*, which literally means “men who bed men,” men who lie with other men.

These words come with very little surrounding context, so there has been a ton of conjecture about what Paul meant by them. You can see it in our many Bible translations – the same pair of words gets translated as “effeminate,” “male prostitutes,” “boy prostitutes,” “sodomites,” “homosexuals,” “men who have sex with men,” “those who practice homosexuality,” and more, depending on which translation you pick up.

I must conclude then, that the majority of those word choices are interpretations, not translations.

I think the NIV gets it best – “men who have sex with men.” That is the most literal translation, and it puts the emphasis where Paul puts it: on behavior, not orientation.

Now here is the progressive claim about these two words. It comes in two steps. First, they say the language is unclear – there are no surviving examples of *arsenokoitai* in Greek literature before Paul, so we cannot establish its meaning from how other writers used it.

Second, they say the words describe exclusively exploitive relationships – the *malakoi* were “call boys” who sold themselves to other men, and the *arsenokoitai* were the men who hired them. If that is right, Paul is condemning prostitution and exploitation, not committed, consensual relationships.

But hang on. Did relationships like that exist in the Greco-Roman world? Absolutely. But that is not what Paul is doing here. *Arsenokoitai* is a compound word – *arsen* (man) and *koite* (bed) – literally “bedders of men.” And Paul did not pull it out of thin air. He took those two words straight out of **Leviticus 18:22** and **20:13** in the Septuagint – the Greek Old Testament that every first-century Jew used – where they sit side by side, and he welded them into one new term. Paul deliberately built a word out of the Leviticus prohibition and carried it into the New Testament to make the same case.

That is why many scholars call the progressive position of “we have no idea what these words mean” a weak argument. The plain reading fits at every level. It fits the consensus of our modern English translations. It fits the ethics of the Old Testament. It fits the training Paul received as a Jewish scholar.

And most importantly, it fits Paul's own argument: don't be deceived – the sexually immoral, and that is everybody, will not inherit the kingdom of God.

That includes sex as part of a pagan ritual. It includes sex with someone other than your spouse. It includes men who take the passive role in homosexual activity, and, in keeping with the Torah's general prohibition, any male who has sex with another male.

And what about the progressive claim that this is only about power and exploitation? Here is the answer that settles it for me. If Paul had wanted to condemn only exploitive relationships, again, ancient Greek language offered him a large and precise vocabulary to do exactly that.

There were words in wide use among Jews, Christians, and pagans for pederasty – for the love of boys, the corruptor of boys, the seducer of boys – and a standard pair of words for the older man and his boy lover. Jewish authors used exactly those terms when they condemned the practice.

Paul does not use a single one of them. He steps past the exploitation vocabulary entirely and coins his word from Leviticus – because his objection was never about power.

It is that these relationships fall outside God's creational intent. *Malakoi*: men who cross gender boundaries by receiving sex from other men. *Arsenokoitai*: men who have sex with other men. Full stop. No exploitation qualifier.

And before we close the loop – **1 Timothy 1:10**, our third text, uses that very same word, *arsenokoitai*. So everything we just walked through in **1 Corinthians 6** applies there as well. Paul is consistent.

And now since we are followers of Jesus, it makes sense then to ask the question, what does Jesus say?

When the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with a question about divorce, Jesus answered them with words that we should now recognize as a consistent pattern in the Bible. **Matthew 19:3-4**. Notice the link back to **Genesis 1**? Jesus took them back to **Genesis 1** as the foundation for relationships and he said “male and female.”

So, let's land the plane. We started with my son's painting: the creator has the authority to say what is right side up and what is upside down. And from **Genesis 1:1** forward, the Bible has spoken with one voice. God ordered creation. He designed male and female – alike but opposite – to correspond to each other. And every passage we examined tonight, Old Testament and New Testament, speaks about same-sex relationships from that same creational design. The historical position is not built on one or two isolated verses. It is anchored in **Genesis 1:1**, and it holds all the way through to Paul's writings.

But the Bible said something else the whole way through, didn't it? God calls my pride detestable. Lying, cheating, gossip, hypocritical worship – detestable. No ranking system. And the vice lists of the New Testament refuse to let one sin stand out above the rest, because everyone is indicted by the list. Tonight was never about one group of people. Tonight cuts every one of us.

So let me close with two words. The first word is conviction. God's word is clear, and we will not manage it, rename it, or apologize for it. The second word is compassion. Because “that is what some of you were” – because the ground at the foot of the cross is level – this church will be a place where anyone dealing with SSA can come, hear God's word, and be loved while they hear it.

If you are here tonight dealing with SSA or in an SSR – you showed courage just walking in, and I am glad you are here. Hear me: God is not against you. The same gospel offered to me is offered to you, and it is not a lesser version. Washed. Sanctified. Justified. That is on the table tonight, for you.

And church – if tonight exposed ranking in your thinking, self-righteousness in your heart, an “ewww” toward people God loves – that has a name, and it is on the detestable list too. The altar is open for us as well. Repent with me.

The creator has the authority to say what is upside down. But here is the good news we leave with: in Jesus, the creator became the redeemer – and he is in the business of turning upside-down things right side up. Let's pray.

BONUS

CONTENT:

1. More on God ordering creation: From **Genesis 1:11-12** God started ordering dry land creation by creating seed-bearing plants and seed-bearing fruit. And God the creator's intent for the seed-bearing plants was that they would reproduce after "their own kind", meaning each kind being separate from other kinds. Notice how well organized and ordered all creation is.

In the next verses (**14-18**) God separated the night from day by putting lights in the sky. Notice the word "govern", or traditionally translated as "rule". In Hebrew that is not just about separating night from day, but about keeping time, tracking time including the passing of seasons and years. Keeping time and tracking time is about order and keeping order; God creating by ordering creation.

1:20-25 continue in this theme of God ordering creation, by creating all the unique aquatic animals, and birds. And note the phrase again in **verses 21-22** "producing offspring of the same kind." They could only reproduce after themselves. Followed by "be fruitful and multiply-fill the seas and the earth." So, the ordering of creation happened with natural laws that keep species separate. Species that could only reproduce after their own kind.

Let me give you an example of what that looks like. PA Wildlife management uses this truth – animals reproducing after their own kind – in its efforts to control overpopulations of fish. In PA waterways, wildlife management uses an apex predator hybrid fish called a Tiger Musky to control other overabundant fish populations.

The use of Tiger Musky is effective because Tiger Musky are sterile and so will not themselves become an overabundant fish population. They are sterile because they are a cross between a Musky and Northern Pike. The chromosomes from the two parent species don't pair properly during reproduction, much like many other animal hybrids. This was one of God's built-in control factors so that animal species reproduce only after their own kind and the species stay separate as they were created.

2. Ezer – when Abraham took 318 men from his tribe to go rescue kidnapped Lot, he defeated the army of the King of Babylon with those men. 318 in Hebrew is also the word "ezer". Hebrew does not have written numbers, only letters with numerical value. The helpers did for Abraham what he could not do by himself – that is God's design for ezer.

3. Leviticus Law: There are three ways one must read Old Testament law. Through a lens of the moral law, through a lens of the ceremonial law, through a lens of the civil law. The ceremonial law, which is much of the temple and sacrificial system, has been fulfilled in Jesus and is no longer relevant to us. The civil law is not relevant to us because we're not a theocracy. So the death penalty and those sorts of things don't apply. But the moral law of God is true for all people in all places and all times.

4. **Romans 1:24-31** Vice List. A vice list (what scholars call a "catalog of vices") was a standard rhetorical device in Greek and Roman moral philosophy and debate, especially among the Stoics. A speaker would rattle off a rapid-fire list of behaviors and character flaws – no explanations, no pauses – to paint a complete portrait of a life in moral collapse. Jewish writers of Paul's day used the same device (Philo, Wisdom of Solomon 14), and Paul uses vice lists repeatedly: **Romans 1:29-31**, **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**, **Galatians 5:19-21**, **2 Timothy 3:2-5**.

The purpose of a vice list was cumulative impact, not ranking. The items were deliberately NOT ordered from worst to least – the power was in the pile-up. In fact, items were often arranged by sound rather than seriousness. Paul does exactly that in **verse 29** where the Greek words for envy (phthonou) and murder (phonou) sit side by side because they rhyme. Envy next to murder – that placement is the point.

BONUS

CONTENT:

The hearer was meant to walk away indicted by the whole list, because no one escapes every item on it.

5. Aren't we under the new covenant, not the Levitical Law?

Depending on how you count, the New Testament directly quotes Leviticus roughly 15-20 times and alludes to it dozens more.

- "Love your neighbor as yourself" – **Leviticus 19:18**. Quoted by Jesus (**Matthew 22:39**), Paul (**Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14**), and James (**James 2:8**). By some counts this is the single most-quoted Old Testament verse in the entire New Testament.
- "Be holy, for I am holy" – **Leviticus 19:2**. Quoted in **1 Peter 1:16**.
- "The one who does these things will live by them" – **Leviticus 18:5**. Quoted in **Romans 10:5** and **Galatians 3:12**.
- "Eye for eye" – **Leviticus 24:20**. Quoted by Jesus in **Matthew 5:38**.
- Mary's offering of two doves at Jesus' dedication – **Leviticus 12:8**, carried out in **Luke 2:24**.
- "I will walk among them and be their God" – **Leviticus 26:12**. Quoted in **2 Corinthians 6:16**.
- And the book of Hebrews leans on Leviticus from start to finish – the sacrifices, the priesthood, the Day of Atonement (**Hebrews 9-10**).

So the New Testament's favorite verse to quote comes from the very same book as **Leviticus 18:22**. Jesus, Paul, Peter, and James did not treat Leviticus as a dead book – they kept quoting it. Which means Paul reaching back into Leviticus to build his word in **1 Corinthians 6:9** is not some strange move – it is exactly what the New Testament does with this book over and over.