

# Thus Saith the Lord: A Biblical Defense of God’s Design for Human Sexuality

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A Comprehensive Biblical and Theological Response to the Progressive Christian Reinterpretation of Scripture on Human Sexuality

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## The Pattern Is Not New — And Neither Is the Answer

The questions in this document are not fresh. They follow a pattern as old as Eden — the same attack, the same sequence, the same destination, wearing a new face in every generation. The wolf changes his name. The questions never change.

“Did God really say...?” (**Genesis 3:1**). That was the first one. Every false teaching about Scripture since then has been a variation on that question. Does the Bible really mean what it says? Is that really what Jesus taught? Surely love leads somewhere other than where that verse points?

Pastor, when you hear these arguments from your congregants — and you will hear them — recognize them for what they are. Not new scholarship. Not recovered truth. Not a kinder Christianity. The same ancient strategy that has always targeted the authority of God’s Word, now delivered by credentialed, winsome, media-savvy voices who have mastered the language of grace while emptying it of its content.

The answer has not changed either. “It is written” (**Matthew 4:4**). Scripture. Scripture. Scripture. That is what Jesus said when the enemy came with his questions in the wilderness. It is still the only answer that holds.

## In His Own Words — [James Talarico](#)

Seminary-trained politician. Texas State Representative and U.S. Senate candidate. National voice of progressive Christianity. The following are his verified statements, cited from primary sources with timestamps. No words have been altered from transcripts cited in the sources noted.

“We have four gospels with tons of teachings from Jesus and none of them are about this.”	<a href="#">Joe Rogan Experience #2352</a> , 19:54–20:08
“Two issues that aren’t mentioned in the Bible. Two issues that Jesus never talked about.” (referring to homosexuality and abortion)	<a href="#">Late Show with Colbert</a> , 5:02–5:13
“Abortion is never mentioned. Consensual same-sex relationships are never mentioned.”	<a href="#">Ezra Klein Show</a> , 18:26–18:53
“The Bible is all over the place when it comes to marriage. Paul tells us not to get married.”	<a href="#">Ezra Klein Show</a> , 20:00–20:08
“Paul says that in Christ there is neither male nor female — pretty woke for the first century.”	<a href="#">Ezra Klein Show</a> , 20:08–20:29
“The word homosexuality wasn’t even invented until the 19th century. So if you see the word homosexuality in your Bible, that’s an interpretation.”	<a href="#">Joe Rogan Experience #2352</a> , 18:34–18:52
“God is non-binary. Trans children are God’s children, made in God’s own image. There’s nothing wrong with them. Nothing at all.”	<a href="#">Texas House, HB 25 Floor Speech</a> , 3:19–3:54
“In the Gospel of Thomas, which was later omitted from the Bible by church officials, the Gospel of Thomas quotes Jesus as saying, ‘When you make the male and female one and the same; when the male is not male, and the female is not female, then you will enter the Kingdom of God.’”	Sermon, home church — reported by <a href="#">Breakpoint/Colson Center</a> and multiple sources
“The whole idea of Jesus’s movement was that he was simplifying the law, right? He simplified it into two commandments. Love God and love neighbor. Those are the only two commandments that we Christians should keep our focus on.”	<a href="#">Joe Rogan Experience #2352</a> , 17:37–17:55
“This idea that to be a Christian means you have to be anti-gay and anti-abortion, there really is no historical, theological, biblical basis for that opinion.”	<a href="#">Joe Rogan Experience #2352</a> , 20:42–20:57

All quotes verified from primary video sources. Timestamps indicate position in the original recording.

## Pastor's Quick Index — Jump to the Question You're Being Asked

Each question above has a biblical answer. Click below to go directly to the relevant section. Read that section carefully, then walk through the argument with an open Bible. Always close by pointing them to the hope of the Gospel.

1. ["Jesus never talked about homosexuality. Isn't this just Paul?"](#)
  2. ["Paul was a man of his time. His views don't apply today."](#)
  3. ["The Bible is all over the place on marriage. What about polygamy?"](#)
  4. ["Isn't God non-binary? Hebrew uses masculine and feminine words for God."](#)
  5. ["Isn't love the only thing that matters? Didn't Jesus put love over rules?"](#)
  6. ["Haven't Christians changed their minds on this before?"](#)
  7. ["What about the Gospel of Thomas? Didn't the church suppress it?"](#)
  8. ["Isn't progressive Christianity just a kinder, more loving version of faith?"](#)
  9. ["Why are affirming denominations shrinking? Does that matter?"](#)
  10. ["Is there any real hope for someone who has embraced this lifestyle?"](#)
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## A Word to the Pastor

Pastor, the wolf does not announce himself.

He does not arrive wearing fangs. He arrives wearing a theological degree, a warm smile, and fluency in the language of grace. He quotes Jesus. He invokes love. He speaks of the poor and the marginalized. He sounds, in almost every respect, like a man who belongs in the pulpit.

And then, quietly, surgically, he begins to dismantle the authority of the Word of God — not by denying Scripture, but by reinterpreting it. Not by rejecting Jesus, but by reconstructing Him. Not by attacking the church, but by redefining what the church has always believed.

Jesus warned us this would happen. He said it plainly in [\*\*Matthew 7:15\*\*](#): *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."* He did not say they might come. He said they *will* come. The question He leaves with every shepherd is not whether the wolf will appear — but whether the shepherd will recognize him and act.

This document exists because one such wolf has emerged with unusual sophistication, unusual reach, and unusual danger. His name is James Talarico — a seminary-trained politician running for United States Senate in Texas, who has become the national face

of what is called “progressive Christianity.” He speaks with confidence about Jesus. He quotes Scripture skillfully. He is winsome, credentialed, and wildly popular on social media, where millions of young believers — many already wrestling with doubt — are hearing his version of Christianity and concluding that the church has been wrong for two thousand years.

He is not a minor figure. He is not a fringe voice. He is the articulate, media-savvy representative of a theological program that has been running inside mainline denominations for sixty years — and the fruit of that program is institutional collapse. The data is in. The tree is known by its fruit.

This document is not written in anger. It is written in the spirit of Jude, who intended to write about salvation but found himself compelled instead to urge believers to “*contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people*” (**Jude 3**). It is written with grief for the millions of young people who deserve the full counsel of God’s Word and are instead receiving a carefully edited version designed to affirm whatever the culture already believes.

Pastor, you will be asked about this. If you have not been asked yet, you will be. A congregant will come to you — perhaps a young adult, perhaps a parent whose college student came home from a semester away — and they will say:

*“I saw this video online. This pastor says Jesus never talked about homosexuality. Is that true?”*

This document is your answer. Not a political answer. Not a cultural answer. A biblical answer — grounded in the original languages, confirmed by two thousand years of orthodox scholarship, and closed with the only hope that actually matters: the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who saves sinners and transforms lives.

**What follows is the full case. Read it. Keep it. Use it.**

*“God said it. He meant it. His Word stands.”*

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## **Section One: The Nature of Scripture — Establishing the Only Authority That Matters**

Before any argument about human sexuality can be evaluated, one prior question must be settled: *What kind of book is the Bible?*

This is not a secondary question. It is the only question that matters, because every argument James Talarico makes — and every argument the progressive Christian movement makes — depends entirely on a prior answer to this question that differs from the one the Bible gives about itself.

The Apostle Paul answered it without ambiguity: *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”* ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). The word translated “God-breathed” is the Greek *theopneustos* — a compound of *theos* (God) and *pneō* (to breathe). Paul is not saying Scripture is inspired the way a great poem is inspired — by human creativity and passion. He is saying Scripture is breathed out by God Himself. Every word. Not some words. Not the red letters only. Not the passages we find culturally convenient. **All** of it.

Peter confirms it: *“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”* ([2 Peter 1:20-21](#)). The image is of a sailing vessel — the Holy Spirit as the wind, the human author as the ship. The ship has a distinct shape and character. But the wind determines the course. The result is a document that is simultaneously fully human and fully divine — and therefore fully authoritative.

Jesus Himself sealed the question in [John 17:17](#) when He prayed to the Father: *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”* Not your word is *true*. Your word is truth — truth in its very essence, the standard by which everything else is measured.

## The Method That Must Be Rejected

Talarico’s entire theological project rests on a hermeneutical method that would be **rejected** in any courtroom, any contract dispute, or any serious academic context: **selective reading**. He accepts the passages that support his conclusions — [Galatians 3:28](#), Matthew 25, the Sermon on the Mount — and dismisses the passages that contradict them as culturally conditioned, mistranslated, or simply not the words of Jesus.

On the [Ezra Klein Show](#), he stated it plainly: for issues not addressed directly in the text, Christians must *“take scripture and piece together what we think is what love demands of us on a particular policy question”* (Klein, 18:02-18:18). In other words: Scripture is a starting point for our own moral reasoning, not a final authority. We decide what love demands. We piece together the answer.

This method has a name in theology. It is called finding *a canon within the canon* — selecting the portions of Scripture you will honor as authoritative while effectively setting aside the rest. **D.A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School**, identified it precisely: this approach is “*merely one more futile exercise in trying to find a canon within the canon to bless my preferred brand of theology.*” The problem is not that one reads Scripture carefully. The problem is that one reads it *selectively* — and then presents the selection as the whole.

No judge permits a witness to read a contract selectively — accepting the sections that support his position while dismissing the rest as outdated. A contract means what it says in full. A constitution is interpreted as a whole. The Word of God is no different. You do not get to choose your own canon.

This is the foundational issue. Everything else that follows — every argument about Jesus and sexuality, about Paul’s authority, about the meaning of specific Greek words — is downstream of this one question. If Scripture is what it claims to be, then its teaching on human sexuality is not a cultural artifact to be revised. It is the Word of the living God, binding on every generation, speaking with equal authority to first-century Rome and twenty-first-century America.

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## Section Two: The Biblical Pattern of False Teaching — This Is Not New

The pastor who opens his Bible to address this moment will find that Scripture has already addressed it — not as a future possibility, but as a recurring pattern that the apostles predicted with striking precision.

Paul wrote to Timothy: “*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths*” (**2 Timothy 4:3-4**). Read those words carefully. The false teacher in this passage does not arise in spite of popular demand — he arises *because* of it. **The congregation wants a theology that validates their desires.** The teacher provides it. The arrangement is mutually satisfying and spiritually catastrophic.

Peter was equally direct: “*But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them... Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute*” (**2 Peter 2:1-2**). Three details deserve the pastor’s attention. First: they arise *among you* — inside the church, not outside it.

Second: they *secretly introduce* their heresies — not by open assault, but by gradual reinterpretation. Third: *many* will follow — this is not a fringe movement. It has popular appeal precisely because it tells people what they want to hear.

Jude, writing with unusual urgency, described them as men who “*have secretly slipped in among you... godless people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord*” (**Jude 4**). The phrase “*pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality*” is the most precise description of progressive Christianity’s theological program that Scripture provides. Grace — the most beautiful word in the Christian vocabulary — is redefined. It no longer means God’s unmerited favor toward repentant sinners. It means God’s unconditional affirmation of whatever we are and whatever we choose. The cross is no longer the means of our transformation. It is the guarantee of our approval.

## The Oldest Question

And behind all of it — behind every sophisticated theological argument, every carefully selected Bible verse, every appeal to love and inclusion — is the oldest question in the world. It was first asked in a garden, not with a weapon, not with an open challenge to God’s existence, but with a smooth, reasonable, devastating question:

“Did God really say...?” (**Genesis 3:1**)

The strategy has not changed in six thousand years. You do not deny that God exists. You do not attack Him openly. You simply plant doubt about whether His words mean what they say. Did God *really* say that? Are you sure that is what He meant? Could it be that the cultural context was different? Could it be that the translators got it wrong? Could it be that love — real love, the kind Jesus taught — would lead us somewhere other than where that verse seems to point?

The pastor who understands this pattern is not surprised by what he hears from James Talarico. He has read his Bible. He knows this is coming. What he needs is not alarm — he needs ammunition. The remainder of this document provides it.

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## Section Three: The Creation Foundation — Settled Before the Law, Before Moses, Before Culture

The most important thing to understand about God’s design for human sexuality is that it was not invented by Moses. It was not a Levitical regulation. It was not a first-century Jewish cultural norm. It was built into the architecture of what human beings are — before sin entered the world, before the Law was given, before there was a nation of Israel, before there was a culture to be conditioned by.

**Genesis 1:27** states it in twenty words: *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* This is not incidental. The text does not say God created human beings in a spectrum of sexual configurations. It says He created them *male and female* — a binary distinction that is not a cultural imposition but a creation reality. The image of God in humanity is reflected precisely *as* male and female. The two sexes together, in their complementary difference, image the God who made them.

**Genesis 2:24** provides the design for how those two image-bearers are to be joined: *“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”* One man. One woman. One flesh. This is not presented as a cultural custom or a pragmatic arrangement. The text roots it in creation itself — *“that is why”* — because God made them male and female, this is the design for their union.

### Talarico’s Claim: “The Bible Is All Over the Place on Marriage”

On the **Ezra Klein Show**, Talarico stated: *“The Bible is all over the place when it comes to marriage. Paul tells us not to get married”* (Klein, 20:00-20:08). This claim conflates two categories that every first-year seminary student learns to distinguish: **descriptive** and **prescriptive** passages.

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The Bible *describes* polygamy. It *describes* concubinage. It *describes* arranged marriage. It describes every deviation from God’s design that fallen human beings have practiced throughout history. Description is not endorsement. The presence of polygamy in the patriarchal narratives is not God’s approval of polygamy — the text consistently shows the catastrophic consequences that follow. When God *prescribes* — when He states His

design — He speaks in [Genesis 2:24](#) and in [Matthew 19:4-5](#). One man. One woman. One flesh. Jesus Himself quotes both [Genesis 1:27](#) and [Genesis 2:24](#) when asked about marriage, and He does so as the definitive statement of God’s design, not as one option among many.

As for Paul’s counsel on celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7 — Talarico has misread the passage. Paul is addressing a community under persecution, noting that celibacy is a gift that frees a person for undivided devotion to God. He is not saying marriage is bad. He is saying celibacy is a legitimate calling. The passage does not undermine God’s design for marriage — it affirms that both marriage and celibacy are honorable before God, each for its own purpose.

### “God Is Non-Binary” — Addressing the Texas House Floor Speech

In a [floor speech opposing HB 25 in the Texas Legislature](#), Talarico stated: *“The first two lines of the Bible, the first two lines in Genesis, use two different Hebrew words to describe God. One is the masculine Hebrew noun for divinity. The second is the feminine Hebrew noun for spirit. God is both masculine and feminine and everything in between. God is non-binary”* (Texas House, HB 25, 3:01-3:19).

This argument rests on a category error that any Hebrew grammarian — including critical scholars who hold no orthodox commitments — would immediately identify. Hebrew grammatical gender does not map onto biological or personal gender. The Hebrew word *Elohim* (God) is grammatically masculine plural — used with masculine singular verbs when referring to the God of Israel, indicating majesty and fullness, not gender multiplicity. The word *ruach* (Spirit) in [Genesis 1:2](#) is grammatically feminine in Hebrew — but this is a feature of Hebrew grammar, not a statement about the nature of God.

In the same way, the word for *war* is feminine in Hebrew, and the word for *peace* is feminine. This does not mean war and peace are female. Hebrew nouns have grammatical gender. Grammatical gender is not biological or personal gender. Talarico is not making a careful linguistic argument — he is exploiting the ignorance of his audience.

The definitive biblical statement on human sexual differentiation appears in the very passage Talarico cites — one verse after the one he quoted. [Genesis 1:27](#): *“male and female he created them.”* He stopped one verse too soon. God transcends gender as Spirit ([John 4:24](#)) — but humanity reflects the image of God *specifically as male and female*. These are not contradictory truths. They are complementary. And the one truth that Talarico’s argument requires him to obscure is the one the text states most plainly: God

created human beings as male and female. Not as a spectrum. Not as a continuum. As two complementary image-bearers whose union in one flesh reflects the creative design of God Himself.

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## Section Four: What Jesus Actually Said — The Argument from Silence Dismantled

This is the centerpiece of Talarico’s public argument, the claim he makes most frequently and most confidently, and therefore the claim that requires the most thorough response. On the [Joe Rogan Experience \(#2352, July 18, 2025\)](#), he stated:

“If this was something that really was central to Jesus’s ministry, I would think he would have said something about it, right? We have four gospels with tons of teachings from Jesus and none of them are about this.” (JRE, 19:54-20:08)

And on the [Late Show with Stephen Colbert](#):

“For 50 years, the religious right... convinced a lot of our fellow Christians that the most important issues were abortion and gay marriage. Two issues that aren’t mentioned in the Bible. Two issues that Jesus never talked about.” (Colbert, 5:02-5:13)

This argument sounds plausible to people who do not know their Greek New Testament. It collapses entirely for those who do.

### The Porneia Argument: What Jesus Actually Said

The word Talarico is looking for — and cannot find, because he is looking for a modern English term in an ancient Greek text — is *porneia*. It is the Greek word that Jesus uses in [Matthew 5:32](#), [15:19](#), and [19:9](#), translated in our English Bibles as “sexual immorality” or “fornication.”

**Porneia is not a narrow term.** It is not limited to heterosexual promiscuity. It is the broad umbrella term in first-century Jewish usage for *all* sexual activity outside the covenant of heterosexual marriage — encompassing every form of sexual behavior that the Levitical law prohibited. **Thomas Schreiner, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**, confirms that *porneia* is “*a general word for sexual sin*” that covers the full range of prohibited sexual activity. The standard Greek lexicon (BDAG) defines it in its broad sense as “*every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.*”

In the first-century Jewish context in which Jesus taught, *porneia* mapped directly and unmistakably onto the Levitical sexual prohibitions of Leviticus 18-20 — which explicitly and repeatedly include homosexual practice. When Jesus condemned *porneia*, His Jewish audience knew exactly what behaviors were included. There was no ambiguity. No first-century rabbi hearing Jesus denounce *porneia* would have thought: “*He probably means something other than what Leviticus 18 prohibits.*” The word carried the full weight of the Levitical sexual code.

## The Anchor in Genesis

But Jesus does not merely condemn *porneia* and leave the definition to be inferred. In [Matthew 19:4-5](#), when asked directly about the definition of marriage, He reaches past the Law, past Moses, past every cultural context, all the way back to the foundation of creation:

“Haven’t you read that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’” ([Matthew 19:4-5](#))

Jesus is quoting [Genesis 1:27](#) and [Genesis 2:24](#) simultaneously. He is not offering one interpretation among many. He is stating God’s design as a creation reality — male and female, one man, one woman, one flesh. He is rooting sexual ethics not in Mosaic law but in the architecture of what human beings *are*. And He is doing so in the context of a direct question about marriage, which means this is not an incidental reference. This is the authoritative statement.

Furthermore, in [Matthew 5:17-18](#), Jesus Himself settled the question of whether the moral law still stands: “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law.*” Jesus did not abolish the moral law of God. He fulfilled it, confirmed it, and seated it in His own character and authority.

## The Argument from Silence Proves Nothing

The claim that Jesus’ silence on a specific modern English category equals approval is, as a matter of logic, indefensible. Jesus never named pedophilia by a specific term. Jesus never named bestiality by a specific term. Jesus never addressed incest by that word. No serious reader of Scripture concludes that Jesus therefore approved of these things. The argument from silence does not prove approval — it proves only that the specific modern term does not appear in the text.

What appears in the text is far more devastating to Talarico's position: a word — *porneia* — that in its first-century context included every sexual behavior prohibited in Leviticus 18-20. Jesus used that word in three separate Gospel passages. He anchored all sexual ethics in the creation design of Genesis 1-2. And He confirmed the full authority of the moral law in [Matthew 5:17-18](#).

**Jesus was not silent. He was precise. The argument is not that Jesus said too little — it is that Talarico is looking in the wrong language.**

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## Section Five: The Witness of Paul — By Christ's Own Authority

Having failed to find support for the progressive position in the Gospels, Talarico's method requires him to marginalize the Apostle Paul. He does this implicitly — by selectively using Paul when Paul supports his conclusions ([Galatians 3:28, which he called "pretty woke for the first century."](#) Klein, 20:08-20:29) while treating Paul's direct teaching on sexuality as culturally conditioned and therefore non-binding.

This procedure is theologically impossible — and three lines of evidence establish why.

### First: Paul Did Not Write on His Own Authority

Paul's apostolic authority did not originate with Paul. Jesus Christ personally commissioned him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). The risen Christ appeared to him, struck him blind, and called him as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul himself describes the source of his gospel in terms that leave no room for dismissal: *"I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ"* ([Galatians 1:11-12](#)).

To dismiss Paul's teaching is not to dismiss Paul. It is to dismiss the risen Christ who commissioned him and revealed the gospel to him. Talarico cannot accept Paul's statement in [Galatians 3:28](#) as authoritative while treating Paul's statement in [Romans 1:26-27](#) as culturally conditioned. He is using Paul against Paul. This is not careful exegesis. It is selection.

### Second: Peter Classed Paul's Letters as Scripture

The Apostle Peter, writing near the end of his life, made an extraordinary statement: *"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother*

*Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:15-16).*

Peter calls Paul’s letters “*the other Scriptures.*” He places them on the same level as the Hebrew Scriptures. He identifies the people who distort them — “*ignorant and unstable people*” — and warns that they do so “*to their own destruction.*” Peter wrote this in the first century. It reads as if he anticipated this conversation.

### Third: The Red-Letter Hermeneutic Is a Modern Innovation

The practice of treating only the words of Jesus as fully authoritative — the *red-letter-only* hermeneutic that underlies Talarico’s approach — has no precedent in two thousand years of orthodox Christian theology. It was not practiced by the early church fathers. It was not taught by Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, or Calvin. It was not affirmed by any major Protestant confession. It is a modern innovation, developed in the twentieth century, that has been thoroughly rejected by every major conservative evangelical scholar who has examined it.

**D.A. Carson’s assessment is precise:** treating the red letters as uniquely authoritative is “*merely one more futile exercise in trying to find a canon within the canon to bless my preferred brand of theology.*” **John Stott, in his study of biblical authority,** wrote that what Paul spoke “*was Christ’s message on Christ’s authority.*” The two cannot be separated without doing violence to both.

### What Paul Actually Said

**Romans 1:26-27** is explicit, unambiguous, and written to Rome — a city where same-sex relations were widely practiced and socially accepted. Paul knew precisely what he was addressing. So did the Holy Spirit who inspired every word:

“**Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”**  
**(Romans 1:26-27)**

The word translated “natural” is the Greek *physikos* — rooted in *physis*, meaning nature or the created order. Paul is not making a cultural observation. He is making a creation-order argument — the same argument rooted in Genesis 1-2 that Jesus makes in Matthew 19. Same-sex sexual activity is described as an exchange of what is natural

(according to creation design) for what is unnatural (contrary to creation design). This is not a condemnation of exploitation. It is a condemnation of the behavior itself, regardless of consent or commitment.

**Robert Gagnon, Professor of New Testament Theology at Houston Christian University**, holds degrees from Dartmouth, Harvard Divinity School, and Princeton Theological Seminary. His definitive work, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon Press, 2001), remains the most comprehensive scholarly treatment of this question in print. Gagnon concludes that the biblical prohibition is absolute — that Romans 1 condemns all same-sex sexual activity grounded in the creation order, not merely exploitative or non-consensual forms.

In **1 Corinthians 6:9**, Paul uses the word *arsenokoitai* — a word he constructed directly from the Greek Septuagint translation of **Leviticus 18:22** and **20:13**. The words *arseno* (male) and *koitai* (bed) appear side by side in those Levitical verses. Paul coined the compound term *arsenokoitai* specifically to apply the Levitical prohibition to Gentile sexual practice. This is not a word whose meaning is obscure or disputed in context. Paul built it from Leviticus. He meant what Leviticus meant. And he applied it without qualification to the church at Corinth.

But Paul does not stop at verse 9. The pastor must read — and preach — verse 11. It is the Gospel:

“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (**1 Corinthians 6:11**)

*That is what some of you were.* Past tense. The power of God transforms lives. This is the promise that progressive Christianity cannot make — because it refuses to call sin what God calls sin, it cannot point people to the only One who forgives it and changes them.

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## Section Six: Two Thousand Years of One Voice — The Historic Consensus

The progressive Christian argument on sexuality is presented as a recovery of ancient truth — a rediscovery of what the earliest Christians really believed before institutional power suppressed it. This claim requires an historical record that does not exist.

The historical record speaks with one voice. From the earliest church fathers through the Reformers, across Catholic and Protestant traditions, spanning East and West, twenty centuries of orthodox Christian scholarship produces not a single credentialed theologian who affirmed same-sex sexual activity as consistent with Christian faithfulness. Not one. The position Talarico advocates is not a recovered ancient truth. It is a modern novelty without precedent in the entire history of the church.

### John Chrysostom (349–407 AD)

**Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople and the most celebrated preacher of the early church**, addressed **Romans 1:26-27** in his Fourth Homily. He described same-sex acts as “vile,” as “against nature,” and offered no exceptions for consent, commitment, or cultural context. Writing in the fourth century, in a Roman world where same-sex relations were commonplace and socially accepted, Chrysostom did not hedge. He applied the text.

### Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD)

Augustine identified homosexual acts as among the primary sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, describing them as “males burning toward males with hideous lust.” This assessment is significant for one additional reason: **even scholars affiliated with the Reformation Project** — an organization that advocates for the affirming position — acknowledge that Augustine held this view. The progressive attempt to find patristic support for an affirming position has produced nothing because there is nothing to find.

### Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

**Aquinas classified homosexual acts in his *Summa Theologiae* (II-II, q.154)** as an “unnatural vice” — an injury to God as the Author of nature. His natural law framework, which remains foundational to Catholic moral theology, grounds the prohibition precisely where Paul grounds it: in the created order.

### Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Luther described homosexual practice as an “unparalleled enormity,” contrary to natural passion and arising, in his view, from demonic influence. The Reformation did not soften the church’s historic position on this question. Luther’s break with Rome on the doctrine of salvation did not produce a revision of the church’s sexual ethics.

John Calvin (1509–1564)

**Calvin treated homosexual practice as severe sexual sin**, accepted civil penalties for it in Geneva, and described it as tearing the covenant with God. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is explicit in the threefold division of the Mosaic law — moral, ceremonial, and civil — and equally explicit that the moral law, including the Levitical sexual prohibitions, binds all people in all times.

**The progressive claim that affirming same-sex relationships represents a recovered ancient truth finds zero support in two thousand years of orthodox Christian teaching — Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, or Reformed. It is a modern innovation, developed in the second half of the twentieth century, with no precedent in either Catholic or Protestant tradition.**

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## Section Seven: The Marks of False Teaching — A Biblical Diagnostic

Jesus gave us a diagnostic tool. He did not merely warn that false prophets would come — He told us how to identify them: “*by their fruit you will recognize them*” (**Matthew 7:16**). The following marks are drawn directly from Scripture — from the pattern of false teaching described in Matthew 7, 2 Timothy 4, 2 Peter 2, and Jude. The pastor who lays these marks alongside what he observes in the public record will recognize every one of them.

### Mark One: Selective Use of Scripture

False teaching does not typically deny Scripture. It selects from Scripture. It honors the passages that support the desired conclusion and treats the passages that contradict it as culturally conditioned, mistranslated, or applicable only to a different era. The red-letter-only hermeneutic is the most common contemporary form of this error — accepting **Galatians 3:28** while dismissing **Romans 1:26-27**, as if Paul wrote one passage by the Spirit of God and the other by his own cultural prejudice.

### Mark Two: Silence Treated as Approval

The argument that Jesus’ failure to name a specific sin by a specific modern English word equals His approval of that behavior is not biblical interpretation. It is a logical fallacy. Jesus named the categories — *porneia*, which in its first-century context covered the full range of Levitical sexual prohibitions — and He anchored sexual ethics in the

creation design of Genesis 1-2. Silence on a specific modern term is not silence on the behavior.

### Mark Three: Love Redefined as Affirmation

Biblical love — *agape* — is not unconditional affirmation. It is the commitment to seek the genuine good of another person, which sometimes requires speaking difficult truth. Jesus loved the rich young ruler ([Mark 10:21](#)) — and then told him something that caused the man to walk away sorrowful. The most loving thing a physician can do for a patient with a serious diagnosis is tell the truth. The most loving thing the church can do for a person in sexual sin is tell the truth — and then point them to the One who washes, sanctifies, and justifies ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#)).

### Mark Four: Non-Canonical Sources Treated as Scripture

In a sermon preached at his home church — confirmed and reported by [Breakpoint and the Colson Center](#), among multiple credentialed sources — Talarico stated:

“In the Gospel of Thomas, which was later omitted from the Bible by church officials, the Gospel of Thomas quotes Jesus as saying, ‘When you make the male and female one and the same; when the male is not male, and the female is not female, then you will enter the Kingdom of God.’”

This requires a direct and unambiguous response. The Gospel of Thomas was *never in the Bible*. It was not *omitted* — it was never included, because it was never considered for inclusion by any orthodox Christian community. It is a second-century Gnostic document, discovered in its complete form only in 1945 among the Coptic Nag Hammadi library in Egypt — a collection of texts the early church had rejected as heretical.

[John Stonestreet of the Colson Center’s Breakpoint](#) notes that the Gospel of Thomas is “neither a Gospel, nor of Thomas, nor Scripture.” [New Testament scholar Brant Pitre](#) observes that even skeptical scholars recognize these documents are too late to be authentic. The church historian Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, catalogued the Gospel of Thomas among texts the church had rejected as “absurd, impious, and heretical fictions.”

Presenting this document from a church pulpit as words of Jesus is not misinterpretation of the Bible. It is not a hermeneutical disagreement. It is an addition to Scripture — which is explicitly forbidden: “*Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it*” ([Deuteronomy 4:2](#)); “*I warn everyone who hears the words of the*

*prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll” ([Revelation 22:18](#)).*

There is one additional irony worth noting. The Gospel of Thomas, Line 114 — the very document Talarico invokes for progressive purposes — contains a passage in which Peter asks Jesus to send Mary away because “women are not worthy of life,” with the Gnostic Jesus responding that he will make her male so that she may enter the kingdom. The document Talarico invokes as progressive and affirming is, in its actual content, flatly misogynist. The people who use it most enthusiastically have apparently not read it to the end.

### **Mark Five: Cultural Acceptance Used to Validate Behavior**

The appeal to cultural acceptance — to the shifting consensus of the age — as validation for behavior is precisely what Paul warns against in [Romans 12:2](#): “*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” The pattern of this world is not a standard. It is a warning. C.S. Lewis identified the error in *Mere Christianity*: every strong feeling comes back with the claim that surely mere moral rules should not stand in the way of something this real. The Moral Law stands above every culture, judges every culture, and is answerable to no culture.

### **Mark Six: Accusation of Hatred Against Those Who Speak Truth**

The final mark, predictable as sunrise: when the biblical case is made clearly and the progressive argument collapses under scrutiny, the response is not counter-argument. It is accusation. Those who hold the church’s historic position are labeled hateful, bigoted, or phobic. This rhetorical move does not engage the argument. It attempts to end the conversation by making the cost of holding the position too high. The pastor should name this move when he sees it — and refuse to be silenced by it. Truth spoken in love is not hate. The church has never offered condemnation without redemption.

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## **Section Eight: The Fruit Test — Jesus’ Own Diagnostic Applied**

Jesus did not leave us without a practical tool for evaluating competing truth claims. He provided one — and it is empirical, not merely theological: “*By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit*” ([Matthew 7:16-17](#)). Apply it.

James Talarico belongs to the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) — the denomination that has been running his precise theological program since the 1960s. The data that follows comes from [the PCUSA's own published statistics](#). This is not an outside critique. This is the denomination's own accounting of itself.

At its peak in 1965, the PCUSA (combining its predecessor denominations) had 4,254,597 members. It had just begun the theological journey toward the progressive position Talarico now advocates. Today, that journey is sixty years old. The results:

Total membership at the end of 2024: 1,045,848. The denomination lost approximately 94,817 members in 2024 alone. Approximately 69 percent of PCUSA congregations have fewer than 100 members. Approximately 48.8 percent of members are over age 55. Approximately 28 percent are over age 70. [The denomination planted four new churches in all of the United States in 2024](#). It is projected to fall below one million members in 2026.

From 4.25 million to under one million. From the largest Presbyterian denomination in America to institutional hospice. In sixty years. While running the precise theological program that James Talarico now promotes on Joe Rogan, on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert, and on the Ezra Klein Show.

The pastor does not need to make the causal argument. Jesus already made it. *“By their fruit you will recognize them.”* The fruit is on the tree for all to see.

This is not cause for triumph. It is cause for grief. Four million people — many of them genuine believers who simply sat in the pews while the wolf worked from the pulpit — scattered. The fruit test is not a victory lap. It is a warning. This is what happens when a church abandons the authority of Scripture in favor of the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age moves on. The church is left behind, emptied.

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## Section Nine: Washed, Sanctified, Justified — The Only Hope That Actually Helps

The case is made. The arguments have been examined and answered. The historical record has been presented. The fruit test has been applied. But a document that ends here — with the verdict rendered and the wolf identified — has failed in its most important task.

Because this is not, finally, about James Talarico. It is about the men and women sitting in the congregations where his arguments circulate. It is about the young person who watched a video on social media and concluded that the Bible does not say what their parents told them it says. It is about the person who has been told, perhaps for years, that God made them exactly as they are and that any struggle they feel is the church's problem, not theirs. It is about the believer who genuinely wants to follow Jesus and has been handed a version of Jesus that costs nothing and changes nothing.

These are the souls at stake. And for them, the church has something that progressive Christianity cannot offer — because progressive Christianity refuses to make it available.

Read [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#) again. Read all three verses. Verse 9 lists the behaviors. Verse 10 confirms the stakes. And then verse 11 delivers the most important three words in the passage:

**“And that is what some of you *were*. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#))**

***“And that is what some of you were.”***

*Were*. Past tense. In the church at Corinth — in the first century, in the most sexually permissive culture the ancient world produced — people came out of every form of sexual sin listed in verses 9 and 10 and were transformed by the power of God. Not by affirmation. Not by redefining their sin as a gift. By being washed. By being sanctified. By being justified in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is the promise the progressive church cannot make. It cannot make it because it will not name the problem. You cannot point someone to a Savior from sin while insisting that what they are doing is not sin. You cannot offer washing to someone you have told does not need to be washed. The compassion that refuses to name sin is not compassion at all — it is the cruelest kind of abandonment, dressed in the language of grace.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* that chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues, and that the old Christian rule is either marriage as God ordained it or total abstinence. The sexual instinct, like all our other instincts, has been spoiled by the Fall and must be governed. Lewis wrote this in 1952. Cultural attitudes toward sexuality have shifted dramatically since then. The Moral Law has not. What the culture calls liberation, Lewis would have recognized as the exchange of a high calling for a lesser one — and the misery that follows.

The pastor who holds the biblical position on sexuality is not holding it because he hates anyone. He is holding it because he believes that God’s design is good — good for the person, good for the family, good for the community — and that the transformation promised in [1 Corinthians 6:11](#) is real. He holds it because he has read the fruit test, and he refuses to give his congregation the fruit of the thornbush when he has been entrusted with the fruit of the vine.

No one reading this document is beyond repentance. No one is beyond grace. The door is not closed to James Talarico. It is not closed to anyone who has been drawn in by his arguments. The same Christ who washed the Corinthian believers — who came out of the precise sins listed in [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) — is still washing, still sanctifying, still justifying. The Gospel has not lost its power. It has only been obscured by those who replaced it with something that costs less and changes nothing.

But grace begins with truth. And truth begins with the Word of God — not the spirit of the age. The spirit of the age is always passing. The Word of God stands forever.

God said it. He meant it. His Word stands.

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## Key Resources for Further Study

### Primary Scholarly Work:

Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Abingdon Press, 2001) — the most comprehensive scholarly treatment in print.

### On the Authority of Scripture:

[D.A. Carson on Red-Letter Christians \(The Gospel Coalition\)](#) | [John Stott, \*The Authority of the Bible\*](#)

### On Porneia and Greek Exegesis:

[Apologetics Press — Porneia Defined in New Testament Greek Lexicons](#)

### On the Historic Consensus:

[Chrysostom, Homily 4 on Romans \(New Advent\)](#) | [Early Church Teachings on Homosexuality \(Catholic.com\)](#)

### On the PCUSA Decline:

[PCUSA 2024 Comparative Summaries \(Official Data\)](#) | [Juicy Ecumenism Analysis](#)

**On the Gospel of Thomas:**

**[Breakpoint/Colson Center — “Talarico and the Zombie Gospel of Thomas”](#)**

**VCA Biblical Sexuality Position Paper:**

**[Promoting Biblical Sexuality Through Abstinence Education — Virginia Christian Alliance](#)**

**Denny Burk on Talarico:**

**[World Magazine — “A Gifted Manipulator”](#)**

**First Things on PCUSA Decline:**

**[First Things — “James Talarico’s Backward Christianity”](#)**

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