



THINK THEOLOGY

DISCUSSION ON FAITH & CULTURE

Think Theology is a welcoming, judgment-free space where we can talk openly about faith and culture from a variety of Christian perspectives—measuring those ideas against both what we’ve been taught and what we discover together in the Bible.

Here, you can bring your honest questions, your doubts, and even your disagreements. We don’t shy away from hard topics; instead, we listen deeply to one another and lean into the tension of seeking God’s heart side by side.

Our goal isn’t to defend the status quo, but to follow Jesus into deeper compassion, radical love, and justice for a world that has too often been hurt or left out by church rhetoric.

For some, these conversations may stretch long-held beliefs. For others, they might feel like a fresh wind of the Spirit. Either way, you’ll find friendship, safety, and a place at the table to explore, wrestle, and grow together in becoming more like Christ.

Topic 1: Theology & the Veracity of the Bible

Definition – Veracity:

Veracity means *truthfulness, accuracy, and reliability*. When applied to Scripture, it refers to whether the Bible is completely true, trustworthy, and without error in what it teaches about God, faith, and life.

Top Three Theological Views on the Bible's Veracity

1. Biblical Inerrancy

- Belief that the Bible is without error in its original manuscripts in all it affirms, including history, science, and doctrine.
- Scripture is the final authority for faith and practice.
- *Common among:* Conservative evangelical, fundamentalist, and some Reformed traditions.

2. Biblical Infallibility

- Belief that the Bible is completely trustworthy and without error in matters of faith and salvation, but may reflect human perspectives or limitations in historical/scientific details.
- *Common among:* Mainline Protestant, moderate evangelical, and some Anglican traditions.

3. Biblical Inspiration (Dynamic or Partial)

- Belief that the Bible is inspired by God but written by humans in specific historical and cultural contexts. Truth is found in its spiritual and moral message rather than in every literal detail.
 - *Common among:* Progressive Christian, some mainline Protestant, and emerging church traditions.
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Perspectives on the Bible

Conservative Evangelical Perspective:

- The Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.
- Scripture is authoritative over all aspects of life, and apparent contradictions are resolved through deeper study and harmonization.
- God's truth does not change and the Bible must be interpreted literally where intended and contextually where the text calls for it.
- *Key Verse Examples:* 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Psalm 19:7–9, Matthew 5:18, John 17:17.

Progressive Christian Perspective:

- The Bible is divinely inspired but not infallible in all matters; it reflects both God's revelation and the cultural limitations of its authors.
- Scripture is a living conversation between God and humanity, interpreted through the lens of Jesus' life and teachings.
- The Spirit continues to guide believers in applying Scripture to new cultural and ethical challenges.

- *Key Verse Examples:* Hebrews 4:12, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Luke 24:27, Micah 6:8.
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Scriptures for Discussion

Supporting Conservative View:

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – “All Scripture is God-breathed...”
- Matthew 5:18 – “...not the smallest letter... will disappear from the Law...”
- John 17:17 – “Your word is truth.”

Supporting Progressive View:

- 2 Corinthians 3:6 – “...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”
 - Hebrews 4:12 – “The word of God is alive and active...”
 - Micah 6:8 – “...to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”
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Hot Topic Discussion Questions (Group)

1. When you hear “The Bible is true,” what do you think that means?
 2. Can the Bible still be authoritative if it contains historical or scientific inaccuracies? Why or why not?
 3. How do you handle passages that seem morally troubling or culturally outdated?
 4. Should Christians read all parts of the Bible literally? How do we decide what is literal and what is symbolic?
 5. How might differing views of the Bible’s truthfulness affect how Christians engage culture?
 6. What role should tradition, reason, and personal experience play alongside Scripture?
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Think About This (Personal Reflection)

- When did you first start forming your view of the Bible’s reliability? Who influenced you?
- Do you trust the Bible more as a divine document or as a divine-human partnership? Why?
- What part of Scripture most challenges your current understanding?
- How would your faith change if your view of the Bible’s veracity changed?

Further Reading

Conservative Perspective

1. **Defending Inerrancy**— Normal Geisler & William Roach
2. **Taking God at His Word**- Kevin DeYoung
3. **God's Word Alone**— Matthew Barrett
4. **Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy** —Al Mohler, John Franke, Kevin Vanhoozer, Michael Bird & Peter Enns (NOTE: This work is a collection of arguments from 5 different perspectives, some will align more with the conservative Christian viewpoint and some will fall into more progressive Christian categories).

Progressive Perspective

1. **Inspired** —Rachel Held Evans
2. **The Bible Tells Me So** — Peter Enns
3. **A More Christlike Word** — Bradley Jersak
4. **Reading the Bible Again For The First Time** — Marcus Borg
5. **Asking Better Questions of the Bible** — Marty Solomon (Note: This work doesn't fit neatly into either the progressive or conservative viewpoint, but it is probably closer to conservative thought patterns than progressive).

Topic 2: Theology & LGBTQIA+ Issues

Definition – LGBTQIA+:

An acronym that stands for *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual* (plus other identities). In theology, this topic involves understanding how followers of Jesus should interpret Scripture's teaching on sexuality, gender, and relationships, and how the church can faithfully live out the gospel toward LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Top Three Theological Approaches

1. Traditionalist View

- Holds that sexual intimacy is designed by God for marriage between one man and one woman, and that all same-sex sexual activity is sinful.
- Gender is understood as given by God and rooted in biological sex.
- *Common among:* Conservative evangelical, Roman Catholic, Orthodox traditions.

2. Affirming View

- Believes same-sex relationships and diverse gender identities can be holy and blessed by God when lived in love, faithfulness, and mutual commitment.
- Interprets Scripture through the life and ministry of Jesus, prioritizing love, justice, and inclusion.
- *Common among:* Progressive Protestant, some mainline denominations, affirming congregations.

3. Middle/Third-Way Approach

- Acknowledges traditional teaching but prioritizes pastoral care, humility, and ongoing discernment.
 - Creates space for LGBTQIA+ people to participate fully in the life of the church while continuing theological conversation.
 - *Common among:* Some evangelical churches, "big tent" denominations, and dialog-focused ministries.
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Perspectives on LGBTQIA+ Issues

Conservative Evangelical Perspective:

- Scripture consistently teaches that sexual intimacy is reserved for a covenant marriage between one man and one woman.
- Gender is a God-given identity tied to biological sex.
- Believers are called to speak truth in love, showing compassion without compromising biblical standards.
- *Key Verses:* Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4–6, Romans 1:26–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–11.

Progressive Christian Perspective:

- Many biblical texts historically used to condemn LGBTQIA+ relationships must be understood in their cultural context and do not address loving, consensual same-sex relationships as we know them today.
 - The overarching biblical ethic of love, justice, and inclusion supports full affirmation of LGBTQIA+ people.
 - Gender diversity is seen as part of God's good creation.
 - *Key Verses:* Galatians 3:28, Matthew 7:12, Acts 10:34–35, 1 John 4:7–8.
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Scriptures for Discussion

Supporting Conservative View:

- Genesis 2:24 – "...a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife..."
- Matthew 19:4–6 – "From the beginning the Creator made them male and female..."
- Romans 1:26–27 – "...women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones..."

Supporting Progressive View:

- Galatians 3:28 – "...there is neither Jew nor Gentile... male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
 - Matthew 7:12 – "Do to others what you would have them do to you..."
 - Acts 10:34–35 – "...God does not show favoritism..."
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Hot Topic Discussion Questions (Group)

1. How has your understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues changed over time?
 2. What role does the example of Jesus' relationships with marginalized people play in shaping your view?
 3. Should differences in belief about this topic divide Christian fellowship? Why or why not?
 4. How do we apply ancient texts to modern questions about gender and sexuality?
 5. How do you balance conviction and compassion in conversations about sexuality?
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Think About This (Personal Reflection)

- What is your earliest memory of hearing about LGBTQIA+ people in a faith context?
- Have your personal relationships influenced your theological view on this subject?
- Which Bible passages most strongly influence your perspective?
- In what ways might God be calling you to listen more deeply to those with different experiences?
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Historical Language Note – “Homosexual” in the Bible

The English word *homosexual* did not appear in any Bible translation until **1946**, when it was used in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) to translate the Greek term *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9.

- **Before 1946:** Earlier translations used words like *sodomite*, *sexual pervert*, or *abuser of themselves with mankind*, which often had different meanings from today’s understanding of sexual orientation.
- **Why This Matters:**
 - The term *arsenokoitai* is rare in ancient literature and its exact meaning is debated. Many scholars believe it refers to specific exploitative sexual practices (such as pederasty, temple prostitution, or economic exploitation through sex) rather than consensual same-sex relationships as we define them today.
 - The 1946 inclusion of “homosexual” was partly influenced by cultural understandings of sexuality at the time, which were shaped by mid-20th century medical and moral language.
 - Later translations (e.g., NIV, ESV) retained or expanded the use of *homosexual* in certain passages, which has influenced modern church teaching and public perception.
- **Key Point for Discussion:** Language changes over time, and understanding the historical and linguistic context can shape how Christians interpret these verses today.
- **Recommended Book:** *1946: The Mistranslation That Shifted a Culture* by Ed Oxford and Kathy Baldock
- **Recommended Film:** *1946: The Movie* (documentary on translation history)

Further Reading:

Conservative Perspective

1. **God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines**— Al Mohler
2. **The Bible and Homosexual Practice** – Robert Gagnon
3. **Is God Anti-Gay?** –Sam Allberry
4. **Compassion without Compromise** – Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau
5. **Does The Bible Support Same-Sex marriage?** – Preston Sprinkle

Progressive Perspective

1. **God and the Gay Christian** – Matthew Vines
2. **Bible, Gender, Sexuality** – James V. Brownson
3. **Unclobber** – Colby Martin
4. **Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians** – Austen Hartke
5. **Heavy Burdens**— Bridget Eileen Rivera
6. **Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays v. Christians Debate** – Justin Lee

Topic 3: Theology & Immigration

Definition – Immigration:

The movement of people from one country or region to another with the intent to settle permanently or temporarily. In Christian theology, immigration raises questions about justice, compassion, hospitality, law, and how the church should treat those who are foreigners or strangers among us.

Top Three Theological Approaches

1. Law-and-Order Priority

- Emphasizes respect for national sovereignty, legal immigration processes, and the role of government in maintaining order.
- Welcomes immigrants but prioritizes adherence to laws and border security.
- *Common among:* Conservative evangelical, some mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic social teaching (with nuance).

2. Hospitality and Justice Priority

- Sees Scripture's repeated commands to welcome the stranger as central to Christian witness.
- Advocates for compassionate, inclusive immigration policies, even if it challenges current political or legal systems.
- *Common among:* Progressive Christian, liberation theology, social justice-focused ministries.

3. Pragmatic/Integrative Approach

- Holds both to the importance of legal processes and to the moral imperative to care for immigrants and refugees.
 - Seeks balanced policy solutions and local church engagement with immigrant communities.
 - *Common among:* Evangelical advocacy groups (e.g., Evangelical Immigration Table), "big tent" denominations.
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Perspectives on Immigration

Conservative Evangelical Perspective:

- Government has a God-given role to maintain borders and uphold justice (Romans 13:1–7).
- Christians are called to obey laws but also to treat immigrants with dignity and compassion.
- The church's mission is to share the gospel and provide aid within the framework of the law.
- *Key Verses:* Romans 13:1–2, Acts 17:26, Leviticus 19:33–34.

Progressive Christian Perspective:

- The Bible repeatedly calls God's people to welcome and protect the foreigner, refugee, and marginalized.

- Borders and laws should not override the higher call to love neighbor and care for the vulnerable.
 - Sees immigration as an opportunity to live out radical hospitality and justice.
 - *Key Verses:* Deuteronomy 10:18–19, Matthew 25:35, Hebrews 13:2.
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Scriptures for Discussion

Supporting Conservative View:

- Romans 13:1–2 – “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities...”
- Acts 17:26 – “...he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.”
- Leviticus 19:33–34 – “...the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born.”

Supporting Progressive View:

- Deuteronomy 10:18–19 – “...you are to love those who are foreigners...”
 - Matthew 25:35 – “I was a stranger and you invited me in.”
 - Hebrews 13:2 – “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers...”
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Hot Topic Discussion Questions (Group)

1. How do you reconcile biblical commands to obey laws with commands to welcome the stranger?
 2. Should the church’s response to immigration differ from the government’s? Why or why not?
 3. How might your interpretation of Scripture shift if you personally knew immigrants or refugees facing hardship?
 4. What role should compassion play in shaping immigration policies?
 5. How do political ideologies influence Christian views on immigration?
 6. How do you think Jesus would respond to modern immigration challenges?
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Think About This (Personal Reflection)

- How does your own family history shape your view on immigration?
- Which Scripture passages most influence your thinking on this topic?
- What fears or concerns come to mind when you think about immigration?
- Who in your life has been a “foreigner” to you, and how have you related to them?
- How might God be inviting you to practice hospitality in a tangible way?

Further Reading

Conservative Perspective

1. **Just Immigration: American Policy in Christian Perspective** – Mark Amstutz
2. **Welcoming the Stranger** – Matthew Soerens and Jenny Yang (Note: This book fits into both conservative and progressive categories. Included on both lists.)
3. **God and the Illegal Alien** – Robert W. Heimbürger
4. **Christians at the Border** – M. Daniel Carroll

Progressive Perspective

1. **Welcoming the Stranger**– Matthew Soerens and Jenny Yang (also included on the Conservative list)
2. **The God Who Sees** – Karen Gonzalez
3. **You Welcomed Me** –Ann Voskamp and Matthew Soerens
4. **Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys** – Richard Twiss