

Engaging Scripture with Grace: A Faithful Approach to the “Clobber Passages”

A ReconcilingWorks Conversation Resource: Adapted from Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans (ReconcilingWorks, 2019).

Why This Matters

For many LGBTQIA+ people and their loved ones, certain biblical passages have been used in ways that cause deep pain, exclusion, and spiritual harm. These texts are often called the “clobber passages” because of the harm they have sometimes caused when used without context, compassion, or theological care. At ReconcilingWorks, we believe faithful engagement with scripture invites us not into fear, but into deeper understanding, grace, and relationship.

This resource offers a warm and faithful starting point for conversations about seven commonly referenced passages. Drawing from *Reconciling Scripture for Lutherans*, we invite communities to approach these texts with humility, curiosity, and Christ-centered love.

A Lutheran Approach to Scripture

- Scripture interprets scripture. No single verse stands alone apart from the wider witness of God’s love, justice, mercy, and liberation.
- Jesus is our center. As Christians, we read scripture through the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ.
- Context matters. Historical setting, language, culture, and audience shape meaning.
- Law and Gospel matter. We ask whether a passage convicts toward justice or proclaims grace and freedom in Christ.

Before the Conversation Begins

- Lead with relationship, not debate.
- Assume sincerity, even when perspectives differ.
- Make room for learning and holy curiosity.
- Center the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ people harmed by exclusionary interpretations.

***Faithful conversation is not about winning an argument.
It is about seeking truth together, honoring human dignity,
and trusting that God’s expansive love is still at work among us.***

Seven Grace-Filled Reframes

<p>Genesis 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah)</p> <p>Often framed as condemning homosexuality. In context, the story centers on violence, coercion, inhospitality, and abuse—not loving, mutual relationships. Scripture itself repeatedly names Sodom’s sins as injustice, pride, and failure to care for the vulnerable.</p>	<p>Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13</p> <p>These holiness code passages reflect ancient covenantal purity laws for Israel. Christians already understand many Levitical laws through the life and teaching of Jesus, who consistently moved toward mercy, healing, and liberation.</p>
<p>Romans 1:26–27</p> <p>Paul describes idolatry, exploitation, and excess within pagan contexts. His rhetorical goal is to turn judgment back on the reader: “Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others.”</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 6:9</p> <p>Translation challenges matter. Key Greek words have been interpreted in many ways and do not clearly map onto modern understandings of sexual orientation, covenantal same-gender relationships, or LGBTQIA+ identity.</p>
<p>1 Timothy 1:10</p> <p>This passage contains another disputed translation and a vice list addressing exploitative behaviors. It should not be simplistically applied to loving, mutual relationships unknown to the author’s cultural context.</p>	<p>Genesis 1–2</p> <p>Creation stories celebrate God’s creativity and human relationship, not rigid binaries that erase the fullness of human diversity. Creation itself includes beautiful complexity beyond simple categories.</p>
<p>Deuteronomy references</p> <p>Ancient regulations about clothing, bodies, and communal belonging emerged in specific cultural contexts. The wider biblical witness shows God repeatedly expanding welcome, especially for those once excluded.</p>	<p>Conversation Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· What does this passage say in its original context?· How does this interpretation align with Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor?· Who has been harmed by exclusionary readings of this text?· Where do we see the Holy Spirit expanding welcome in scripture?