

THE GENESIS OF SEX

AND THE WAY OF JESUS

WEEK 1 NOTES **APRIL 24**

KEY THOUGHTS

- Conversations about sexuality and gender, in our cultural climate, are like walking mine fields. We tread carefully. We strongly believe we can have these conversations, and you can too, if we communicate with grace, with truth, and with a large sense of humility.
- Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He didn’t fluctuate between the two. He was FULL, all the time, of both. The most grace-filled thing we can do in these conversations is to speak the truth. And the most truth-filled thing we can do is to be laden with grace.
- In talking about gender and sexuality, we will get to guidelines God has set forward. But guidelines and rules are always put in place to guard what is valuable. And what is valuable is what we find all the way back to Creation – what God put in place in the Garden.
- Much of the debate on current gender issues has at its dividing line the concept of worldview. Our worldview (and everyone functions with one) can be boiled down to the answer to 3 questions (Andrew Walker, God and the Transgender Debate):
 - Who has the right to tell me what to do?
 - Who knows what is best for me to do?
 - Who loves me and wants what is best for me?
- In answer to those 3 questions, we stand solidly on the answer that nobody fulfills those questions like God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are doing what we know best in living by a Biblical worldview. As such, we turn to Scripture for answers.
- In Genesis 1 we find the pattern in God’s creative work of God “separating” or putting things into their own kinds. See Genesis 1:3-4,6,9-10,12,14, 20-25. Even in the creation of humankind God set them apart from the others in 1:26. Then to cap it off, God made a uniquely-mentioned distinction in us, He made us “male and female” (Gen. 1:27). One again, God separated and made us distinct in our makeups. Gender is immensely important.
- The Fall, our rebellion against God’s way, has brought brokenness in every area of our lives: relationships, health, economy, government, racism, insecurity, and in this area as well, our living in light of gender and our differences.

- Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*: There is a proper kind of self-love that comes from accepting God's love. A biblical worldview grants value and dignity to our identity as male or female. Gender theology is rooted in creation theology. What God has created has intrinsic value and dignity.
- To those who assert that our gender theology based on Old Testament writings need to evolve and change, we lean on the words of Jesus, who ushered in the very New Covenant we live by. And He looked back to this very Creation account (Mt. 19:4). He reaffirmed that gender is immensely important and is part of God's plan for us.
- Large parts of our culture stands in opposition to the position of gender differences.
 - Disney disposing of labels such as "men and women, boys and girls" in their greetings and interactions with guests, all in order to interact in a more meaningful and inclusive way.
 - Lia Thomas was the first transgender athlete to win a national championship in the 2022 swimming championships. The victory was met loudly by both proponents and adversaries.
 - In April 2022 iPhone's automatic update included a pregnant man emoji.
- Some definitions. In our current climate and in the current debate, the following are words and definitions with which the conversation is happening. These are pulled from a recording by Claire Smith and Rob Smith from a conference talk.
- Biological (birth) sex – chromosomes, gonads, genitals – what is male/female
- Sex – biological male/female
- Sexual/romantic orientation – who we find attractive Who you go to bed with.
- Gender – who/what a person identifies as – What you go to bed as.
- Gender expression – how sex is presented in cultural norms: dress, etc. What is masculine and what is feminine.
- Gender identity – how you feel or experience yourself. Who am I?
- Cisgender – gender matches biological sex
- Transgender – gender does not match biological sex
- Gender bending – crossing or bending cultural norms by adopting roles of other gender
- Gender dysphoria – having psychological gender identity that doesn't match biological – now the mismatch is not the disorder, it's the stress associated with it causing significant impairment of functioning
- Heteronormativity – biological sex is binary and only sexual orientation/relations with opposite sex is only normal and natural
- LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (can be homo- or hetero- sexual)
- I – intersex – rare physical conditions w/ biological sexual ambiguities
- Q – queer or questioning – rejects binary notions of gender
- Agender – without gender or Allies
- Assigned Sex – used to be used with intersex conditions at birth – now it is used to label assigned to everyone without considering what gender they would like to be identified
- Sex Reassignment Surgery – to alter person's otherwise healthy body to align up with chosen or felt gender – now often called Gender Confirmation Surgery

- How did we get to where we are? 2 predominant ideologies:
- 1. An extreme focus on the individual.
 - Jean-Paul Sartre's statement – "There is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it... Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself." In other words, I am what I say I am.
 - In this thinking, the answer to the 3 worldview questions is a loud, "Nobody but I can tell me what to do. Nobody but I knows what is best for me. And nobody but I loves me and wants what is best for me."
 - There is a laser-focus on those feelings we have about our gender, because it is those feelings which makes us who we are.
- 2. Gender has become a mental trait – not a physical one.
 - Today, the cultural leaning in cases of dysphoria is to change the body to match the inner sense, rather than other way around – body is seen as irrelevant. What we think has become more important than the science of what our body says we are.
 - There is a striking move to downplay facts/science/biology in preference to subjective feeling – scientific facts don't matter.
- How do we respond? 3 possible frameworks (Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, Understanding Gender Identities) – We all likely adhere to one of these frameworks:
 - Alignment Framework – We are designed to be aligning, not conflicting. Gender is determined by biological sex. Scripture prohibits behavior that goes against this identity.
 - Disability Framework – We live in a fallen world and mismatches of gender identity and biological sex are just one result. Like other disabilities, living in this light does not involve moral issues. The position is therefore to be tolerant of transgender identities, including homosexual behavior.
 - Diversity Framework - Various understandings of gender identity are to be embraced and celebrated.
- Which is the right Biblically-guided response? (A few of the following points are pulled from, modified, and added to a review of Understanding Gender Identities – see above – written by James Beilby and Paul Eddy - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/review/understanding-transgender-identities-four-views/>)
- 1. Sex (biological) is the way we are beautifully constructed to carry out our roles, including reproduction.
- 2. Humans are BOTH bodies and souls, they're both important, and the body determines sexual identity.
- 3. Intersex conditions are a result of disorders of human sexual development, but point to us knowing, "This isn't normal." Gender is significant!
- 4. People with gender dysphoria are both the victims and agents of sin. They are victims of sin in that they have sinful desires which they did not choose, but they are agents of sin if and when these desires lead them to reject their God-given sexual identity.

- 5. Celebration! Compassion! Conviction?
 - We value God-given sex/gender and place focus on the beauty of what He designed, and the distinctions between the two.
 - We need to celebrate diversity of roles/types that are God-permitted within each gender.
 - We demonstrate enormous compassion for those who struggle.
 - Our convictions of what is Biblically correct or not can and should be solid, but perhaps in the manner in which we encourage those who struggle with dysphoria we would be best received if our position were closed with a question mark much more than an exclamation point.
- Which all leads us back yet again to our deep need of Jesus, who is “full of grace and truth”!

SCRIPTURES

- John 1:14
- Genesis 1
- Genesis 2:24-25
- Matthew 19:4

RESOURCES *Find these links at ccsumter.com/genesis*

- Very helpful audio of “Is This the End of Gender?” by Claire Smith and Rob Smith, found at https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/is-this-the-end-of-gender/
- Nancy Pearcey, Love Thy Body – an insightful look at various cultural issues through the lens of properly viewing our bodies with the honor and beauty which they were designed
- Rebecca McLaughlin, The Secular Creed – an engagement of 5 contemporary ideologies and a Biblical response
- Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly – Dane’s insightful look at the gentleness of Jesus is a powerful reminder to us of the truth-filled grace of our Savior. Regardless of where you are right now, it’s a refreshing look into the heart of Jesus.
- Of course there are countless articles you could look at. www.thegospelcoalition.org has been a very trustworthy resource on many issues. Search and be encouraged.