

The background of the entire page is an aerial view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The title 'Current ISSUES' is centered in the middle of the page. 'Current' is written in a white, elegant cursive font, while 'ISSUES' is in a bold, white, sans-serif font inside a light blue rectangular box.

Current ISSUES

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Speaker - Josh Young

Introduction

As most of you know, today is the start of our series on Current Issues, and this is something that we have been excited about for a long time. Now some of you might be wondering why we decided to do this series in the first place. Why touch on so many topics that are really “hot button issues”? The reason is simple. There is an abundance of cultural trends, opinions, and issues that cut right to the heart of the Christian faith.

Calls for social justice abound in our society. You only need to turn on your tv, check Instagram, or go to the store to have messaging about social justice shoved in your face. But what people do not often think about is that every call for justice, whether from the right or left, comes with a worldview behind it. Often that worldview is completely unbiblical and goes against the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sadly, many Christians do not have the proper discernment that Christ calls us to and buy into many views that are contradictory to our faith. (Williams 7)

This also comes at a moment when most Christians are arguably unequipped to even have biblical discernment. According to the Pew Research Center in 2018, only about 29% of Americans actually have a Biblical worldview. One study by Arizona Christian University’s American Worldview Inventory, which was done in 2020, discovered that only 6% of adults in America have a Biblical Worldview, and out of people going to evangelical Protestant churches, only 21% had a Biblical worldview. Barna found that only 17% of Christians who routinely went to church and whose faith is important to them had a Biblical worldview. Having a biblical worldview is a minority position in America, even among Christians. (Crain 25-27)

We need to know what the Bible says about current issues and why we believe it. We are called as Christians to be “salt and light” in this earth, to “abound in all knowledge and judgment” (discernment), and to cast “...down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”. (Williams 3)

“We can’t separate the Bible’s commands to do justice from its commands to be discerning. The oppressed deserve more than our good intentions. We must love them not merely with our hearts and hands but with our heads too.” (Williams 3) Sadly many Christians have

bought into social justice positions without discernment, and have thereby adopted a worldview that is unbiblical. (Williams 7)

Now you might be thinking, Josh, are you saying there are no such things as people being oppressed? Hardly! (Williams 3)

God deeply loves the poor, the oppressed, and the downtrodden, which brings us to our first cultural issue, Caring for the Poor. Now, caring for the poor is an interesting topic to start on, because normally when you think about a Current Issues series you are going to automatically think of abortion, gender issues, racism, etc. But as you study God's Word and look at the world around us, poverty is one of the number one issues that God is concerned about and that we should care about as well.

As I was studying the statistics about poverty and extreme poverty in the world, there is some good news and there is some bad news. According to Our World in Data, "The history of extreme poverty...is one of humanity's greatest achievements and failures." (Roser) Most of the world no longer lives in extreme poverty, moving from 40% in 1980 to just 10% in the present day. (Gapminder and Bank) But when you take a look at the actual numbers behind the stats, and look at specific areas of the world when it comes to hunger and poverty, extreme poverty is still a massive problem.

In 2019, "...around 650 million people – roughly one in twelve – were living on less than \$2.15 a day." (Hasell et al.) "Preliminary estimates produced by researchers at the World Bank suggest that the number of people in extreme poverty rose by around 70 million in 2020 – the first substantial rise in a generation – and remains around 70-90 million higher than would have been expected in the pandemic's absence. On these preliminary estimates, the global extreme poverty rate rose to around 9% in 2020." (Hasell et al.)

In Africa itself, "Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region. Almost 40% of the population lives in extreme poverty." With the drought in Somalia, over 43,000 people died due to the drought in Somalia, and the livestock death count is at 3.5 million. (International Rescue Committee) It is estimated that 3 million children die from hunger every year. (World Food Program USA)

As you read Scripture, and enduring theme throughout is how much God is working on the behalf of the downtrodden.

Micah 6:8, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; And what doth the LORD require of thee, But to do justly, and to love mercy, And to walk humbly with thy God?"

Jer. 22:3, “3 Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.”

Isaiah 58:6-7, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, And to let the oppressed go free, And that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, And that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

Horizon, we are to obey these commands to seek justice, do mercy, and execute righteousness. But as I mentioned earlier, we need to do so with discernment, because many things branded as social justice are completely anti-Biblical. Not only are they anti-Biblical, but solutions that are offered today also often do way more harm than good! Because many people, even Christians, lack the discernment to practice right justice, the actions they take for the poor and the needy often result in more harm than good since they are not based on God’s truth.

Transition

As you turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter four, we are going to take a look at the life and teachings of Jesus, and see how they guide us in Christians with caring for the poor. And this all starts with Jesus' top priority, Teaching the Gospel.

1.) Jesus’ Top Priority: The Gospel

Luke 4:17-19, “17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The central theological theme in Luke can be found in Luke 19:10, “10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Jesus has come to be the Savior of the whole world, which capstones in this gospel with his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. (Carson and Moo 220) That this is universal in scope is seen in several passages throughout.

Luke 2:30-32, “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

Luke 3:5-6, “5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Luke 24:46-47, “46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Jesus' top priority when coming to this earth was to preach the good news of forgiveness of sins through his death, burial and resurrection, to all people regardless of race, status, or religious piety.

And as you go through Luke, this preaching works itself out in very interesting ways among different people, but for our purposes we are going to look at two groups, how the salvation message relates to the rich, and the poor.

Luke 4:17, “17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...;”

This is the announcement of Jesus' public ministry in the gospel of Luke, and is foundational to several themes that work all the way to the end of this gospel. It takes place in the synagogue in Jesus' hometown, Nazareth. And, as we will see, from their first response to his teaching, they were initially excited about his teaching in the synagogue. In fact, vs. 14-15 says, “14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.” (Garland 333)

So Jesus gets up, and he opens the scroll to Isaiah 61, and reads the passage. The first thing that the passage mentions is that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, which refers to the fact that he is the anointed Messiah who God is working through to bring about the Kingdom on Earth, the reign of God through his death, burial, and resurrection. (Garland 326) As the angel Gabriel says to Mary, Jesus has come as the son of David, the King of the Jews, who will establish his reign forever and ever. (Luke 1:30-33) Sadly this kingdom's reign is postponed because of the rejection from Israel, but God's kingdom will come at the last days. But in the meantime, as Luke explains in this Gospel and Acts, the church has been established to bring this same message of the gospel to the entire world.

And Jesus has a very specific audience in mind.

Vs. 18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

He has come to preach good news to the poor, to those who are economically downtrodden. He has come to heal the brokenhearted, to wipe away all tears from their eyes. He has come to preach deliverance to the captives, which means he has come to set people free from the bondage of Satan. This is often seen in the letter through the exorcisms of Jesus. Jesus also will recover the sight of the blind, revealing to people that they are sinners, and he is the true Messiah. And to finally set the captives free, which was the good news to the people of Israel. They were in exile under the bondage of the Roman Empire, and Jesus came to set them free from their Roman captors. This is obviously postponed through Israel's rejection of Jesus. (Garland 326-328)

This good news is the acceptable year of the Lord, the coming kingdom of God, of which entrance is only possible through forgiveness of sins by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Garland 329)

Transition

This brings us to the first audience God has in mind with the gospel, the poor. And God's priority and plan to bring them the good news should be ours as well.

A.) The Poor in their Brokenness

Many of the people Luke calls "sinners" in this gospel were impoverished because they were outcasts. Society wanted nothing to do with them. What Jesus does is so fascinating. He does not whitewash their sin and he does not call them virtuous because of their social class. He calls them sinners and tells them they need a Savior! The brokenness that comes through their poverty makes them acutely aware of their sin and need of a Savior.

Luke 5:30-32, "30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? 31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Luke 7:47-48, “47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.”

Their brokenness that came from poverty and social exclusion made them very open to the gospel, simply because they knew their condition. While society thought that they were under judgment from God because they were poor, Jesus came to show them that all people are welcome in the family of God regardless of what society thinks about them.

Luke 6:20-21, 24-26, “20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh...”

Jesus is rebuked by the Pharisees over and over again because he eats with Publicans and sinners! (Luke 5:27-32 and Luke 15) It was this very openness of Jesus which led the sinners to flock to him, because he had hope, in him was the forgiveness of sins.

Application

This is our top priority when it comes to caring for the poor, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ! Because we can give all the charity in the world, we could alleviate all poverty in the world, but if we don't preach Christ all of that is in vain, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Illustration - People who are poor are so much more open to the gospel than the rich. American churches vs. church and people in impoverished countries. Dad in Moldova seeing 227 teens saved.

When we see someone who is impoverished, we should not see them through their social status, we should see them as a person. Social class should not determine whether anyone is welcome in this church or your home, because they are people with eternal souls. This cuts right to the heart of many of our own idols as a society, especially when the poor and needy only pop into our heads to make political arguments.

This could be people leaving California because of the “homelessness problem”. Sometimes I fear we use these people as more of an excuse to leave them behind rather than go to them with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This can be seen in the arguments about immigrants in our society, who are often the ones who live in poverty. And while I think illegal immigration is not good because it harms because of the cartels who use it to their advantage, we are sometimes more concerned with getting them out of our country than we are bringing them the gospel!

Sometimes we can use our free-market system to excuse the needs of the poor, and look down on them. I remember as a kid, so many people would complain about the welfare system, how it created a culture of laziness and a cycle of poverty. And for the record, I agree with that. But as a kid what this caused in me was a heart pride, and I really looked down on people who were poor. And rather than seeing them as sinners in need of grace I saw them as bums who just needed to get a job. That is not God's heart for the poor.

God does not look at people or judge people according to their class, but according to their person, and as sinners in need of grace and love. We should as well.

Transition

One reason this was such good news for the poor was because it would lead to a great reversal in the kingdom of God! (Garland 326) The poor would be exalted, and the rich would be abased. This is seen clearly in Jesus' next audience, the rich in their covetousness.

B.) The Rich in their Covetousness

The good news of the Kingdom of God is that there will be what is often called "the great reversal". The poor will be exalted and the rich and mighty will be abased. (Garland 326) This theme starts all the way back with the song of praise Mary sings to the Lord.

Luke 1:51-53, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, And exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; And the rich he hath sent empty away."

Luke 6:20-21, 24-26, "20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh...24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Jesus pronounces the blessings of salvation from sin on the poor and needy and great woes on the rich. When the kingdom comes there will be a great reversal of the rich and poor because the rich have made money into their idol. Wealth is a great hindrance for the rich to enter the kingdom.

Luke 16 shows this grave reversal very clearly. Luke 16:13-14, “13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.”

So Jesus responds to their covetousness with a parable. Luke 16:19-, “19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments...”

What was the destiny of the rich if they did not turn from their exploitation and covetousness? The lake of fire. But remember, Jesus is concerned to bring the gospel to all people, regardless of status. This is exactly what we see him do.

In Luke 15, with the story of the prodigal son, the Pharisees who oppressed the poor were invited to believe the gospel. The story ends with the older son outside the house, because he is upset that the prodigal son had a party. The father comes out to him, and tells him “31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” And that is where the story ends. Jesus did this intentionally to throw the ball into the Pharisees court. They could either repent of their sins and believe in Jesus, or reject him.

We also see this with the story of Zaccheus in Luke 19! He is an top example of someone who exploited people for their money, but Jesus saves him just like anyone else. And although he does pay back the people he exploited, he isn’t excluded from grace or mercy just because he is wealthy.

Application

Jesus is concerned to bring the gospel to all people, regardless of status. This is good news for the rich, while it is hard for them to enter the kingdom of heaven, it is not impossible.

We live in a consumerist age, where people are only concerned with buying more and more stuff without any thought to what that stuff does to their soul or society. The god of our modern day is stuff, hoarding more wealth for yourself without any concern for the good of others. Our god is our own “personal peace and affluence” with no regard for the oppressed. (Williams 29)

Illustration - My first time in LA running into a guy that didn't care. And that is something I run into regularly.

And what this should do is scare every American today, because this is what will keep you from heaven, loving the riches more than loving God. And when you get to the end of time, you will see the great reversal, the poor you ignored will be exalted in heaven and you will be in hell, because you allowed your riches to keep you from recognizing your own sin and turning to Jesus alone to save you from your own covetousness and from hell.

See, it isn't through you giving up your wealth that you will be saved, it isn't through turning over a new leaf and giving over to charity that you will be rescued from. It is only through Jesus. Jesus knew we couldn't save ourselves, and that we could not do enough good works to get ourselves to heaven, and that we were deserving of punishment for sin. He loved us too much to let that happen, so he came down, died for our sin, took all the sin you ever did on himself, and took the punishment for it on the cross, and completely took your place so you didn't have to face punishment. And then three days later after he died, he rose from the dead so you could spend forever with God and not have to worry about hell, and to prove he was God himself. And he wraps all that up in a gift and offers it to you, and the way you avoid hell, the way you get forgiveness of sins of covetousness, the way you get a home in heaven is only through trusting and receiving what he already did for you in his death burial and resurrection. Jesus did everything necessary for us to have our sins forgiven, get a relationship with God and a home in heaven. All you have to do is receive as a gift what he already did for you; you don't have to earn it, all you have to do is take it, and you will receive all of the blessings of salvation.

You “wealthy” people need to repent of your sin and turn to Jesus alone to save you, because only he can save you from hell. It is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:23), but the good news is that with Jesus all things are possible (Matt. 19:24-25), which means the only thing that the rich man needed to do is to trust in Jesus to save him from his sins. (Williams 215-216)

God welcomes everyone into his community, whether poor or rich, Jew or Gentile, your standing before God is not based on whether you are an oppressor or oppressed, but

whether you have had your sins forgiven by Jesus. He did not see the rich as completely lost, he did not only see them through the lens of their oppression and exclusion of those who were sinners, he saw them as people in need of the same grace that he gave to the poor. He welcomed them to the table just as he did the poor and needy.

Application

Does our vision of social justice contradict the top priority of Jesus, the gospel?

The filter which we must pass any form of social justice must be the gospel of Jesus Christ. Does it contradict it? Does it add to it? Does it actually do more harm than good?

One of the top ways social justice is talked about today is through the lens of critical theory. This is the view that everyone in society is divided between two groups, the oppressed and the oppressor, drawn along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. (Williams 136) Either you are an oppressor or the oppressed, and everything or at least most things should be viewed through this lens. The worldview that this leads to is “disparity = discrimination”, if there is an unequal outcome it must be the result of the oppressor vs. the oppressed system, and the only way to fix the problem is to tear down the system. (Williams 124)

When it comes to economics, this is how it works, “The oppressors are those whose capitalist greed leads them to use and abuse the poor for their own selfish, materialistic gain.” (Williams 124) Socialist policies are run of the mill solutions to this proposed problem.

Through the worldview of critical theory, the rich and wealthy are blind to their own oppression, and the poor have an infallible voice that we must listen to. (Williams 137) It promotes a loud call of inclusivity, but only includes people who meet the right level of economic oppression. “Saints” and “sinners” are determined by status. (Williams 44) It loves what Rousseau said, “There is no original perversity in the human heart...Man is naturally good...it is by our institutions alone that men become wicked.” Humanity is divided by the condemned oppressors and the “blameless oppressed.” (Williams 46)

There are even theologians who accept this worldview in what is called “Liberation Theology”. The poor are seen as righteous because of their oppression, and the rich as condemned by God because of their wealth. In other words, ‘God sides with the oppressed against their oppressors and calls believers today to do the same in working for a more humane society on this earth’”. (Blomberg, 22) The problem with this worldview is that it clearly undermines the gospel of Jesus Christ in three ways.

First, it contradicts the doctrine of sin. It makes those who are oppressed virtuous, and those who are the oppressors wicked. But as Luke showed us, Jesus did not spare any words with anyone about their sin, no matter their social class. He called both the poor and the rich sinners, and when we realize this, evil cannot be reduced to economic issues, it is a matter of every human heart. (Williams 45)

Second, it tears apart the very people Jesus sought to unify in the gospel. There were so many injustices that Jesus could have used “critical theory” on. He could have pointed out that the poor were exploited by the Pharisees, and have them overthrow the system. He could have pointed to the Jews exile to Rome to cause a riot. But what Jesus did is so shocking, he brought all of those people together into one group, the church, which is what the book of Acts is about. He preached the same message of forgiveness and love to everyone, no matter where they came from. “Being in Christ...transcends other group identities.” As Colossians says, there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female, but all are one in Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ brought together several groups of people that had historically been at odds with one another. (Williams 48) Through the gospel, Jesus tore down all barriers and brought people into one group. He didn’t overthrow the system, cause riots and fights between to separate groups on the basis of economic identity, he brought them together in the gospel.

Third, this vision of justice adds to the gospel. Sadly, many Christians take this social justice and turn it into a “gospel Issue”. (Williams 81) Often the verse that Jesus said in Luke 4, that he has come to “preach good news to the poor, set free the oppressed”, is used to say that social justice for the poor and oppressed is part of the gospel. (Williams 213)

The problem with this is that for Jesus, good works for the poor is not part of the gospel, and Jesus did not teach that. Adding “social justice” to the gospel is adding to the gospel, which is heresy. Paul said in Galatians 1:8-9, “8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Williams)

One social justice defender talks about our “infinite responsibility...we can never allow ourselves to think we are ‘done,’ that we have identified all of the sites, structures, and processes of oppression...” This leads to a completely hopeless worldview of never being able to measure up to the proper standard of righteousness. (Williams 114) But this contradicts the gospel, because we are not called to our own righteousness, but to trust in Christ alone.

Jesus clearly taught that man is only saved by faith in the gospel of Luke. Luke 7, “49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

Luke 18, “13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

And the entire story of Luke is centered on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ where he does everything necessary for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. (Carson) Adding justice to the gospel is completely heretical, and as far from the faith as you can get.

Does our vision of social justice harm more people than it helps?

Many times the proposed solution to the problems of critical theory, at least economically, is socialism. And while I cannot solve this debate between free markets and capitalism at all, I want to at least put a couple stones in your shoe to think about. Many people who disparage the free market and promote socialism have forgotten history in claims that “real socialism hasn’t been tried.” (Richards)

In Chile in the early 1970’s there was a man named Salvador Allende who ran for president, and he was massively in favor of socialism. The shocking thing that came out of that was the Christian support for his policy. Priests in favor of him said, “Socialism...offers a possibility for the development of the country for the benefit of all, especially the most neglected.” Some others said, “Socialism generates new values which make possible the emergence of a society of greater solidarity and brotherhood.” They supported him because of “...our faith in Jesus Christ.” (Williams 147)

Allende won, and started to implement socialist policies of collectivizing land and agriculture to shrink the disparity between the rich and poor. Inflation in Chile skyrocketed 600%, and the poverty rate went up to 50%. (Williams 147) This was not loving, or caring, or anywhere close to true justice.

Now, Chile is one of the most prosperous countries in South America because it turned around! Compared to Socialist Venezuela, the annual gross domestic product of rose 230%, it dropped 20% in Venezuela. Chileans are now 51% richer than Venezuelans. Unemployment is 6% in Chile; it is 17% in Venezuela. Chile grew by 2.7% in its economy in

2016, Venezuela dropped 10%. Chile's debt is 17% of its GDP, Venezuela is 50%. (Williams 238-239)

As Christians, we are called to practice justice, but to do so with discernment. But when we accept a social justice approach that is not only antithetical to the gospel, but also has proven over and over to harm people rather than help, we should seriously take a look at the worldview we have. Do we truly have a gospel-centered worldview, one which promotes justice? Or have we accepted a worldview that is completely in opposition to Christ?

Conclusion

The top priority of Christ was to bring the gospel to the poor and the rich. We are called to do the same, to preach that everyone is a sinner in need of salvation, no matter their race or economic status.

The poor are so much more open to the gospel because of their brokenness, and we need to take advantage of that? Are you sharing the gospel? Are you showing your poor neighbor Jesus or just looking down on them?

Are you giving the gospel to the rich, or has your worldview put them beyond hope because they are oppressors? Jesus didn't do that with you, why should you with others?

Does our social justice system contradict the gospel or hurt more people than it helps?

The Bible & Gender Pt 1

Introduction



Today we are going to begin the first of three messages on the topic of the Bible and gender. It's amazing to me how rapidly this has become a major cultural issue. For instance, if 10 years ago, we had done a series on the Bible and current issues, I don't think this topic would have even made the cut. Then, beyond that, even if it had made the cut, I don't know that many people would have been intrigued by the topic because it wasn't really a part of the cultural conversation.

Fast forward to today, and it's a very different story, isn't it? In fact, I would even go as far as saying that it's probably the most significant topic in our current cultural moment. And yet, it's a topic that is surrounded by this sort of cloud of confusion. For, on the one side you have a younger and more progressive group that can't fathom how conservatives could be so intolerant and mean towards those who are just trying to express themselves. On the other side you have a more traditional and conservative group that does not understand how we got from the simplicity of male and female to gender identity, expression, norms, roles, and fluidity. There's so much confusion surrounding this issue.

And knowing that, my heart for this study is twofold for our church. First off, I want to cut through that confusion and very clearly articulate the **truth** about gender. I'm going to do so by comparing and contrasting what culture says with what God says in His Word. That's what we're going to do today and a little bit of next week. We are going to talk about truth. But that is not where we are going to end our study of this topic. For God's Word tells us that we must not just know the truth, we must also know how to speak the truth in what? Love. It's not enough for us as Christians to just know the truth about gender. We need to know how to lovingly help people who are struggling with their gender, and that's what the message is going to be about two weeks from today. We're going to talk about love. But before we get there, we need to start today by clarifying the truth about gender.

And we're going to do that by examining first off the modern approach to gender.

If you're taking notes this morning, point number one is the modern approach to gender.

1.) The Modern Approach to Gender



Illustration – To get us started with this, let me ask you a question. How many of you in the room today are familiar with snake plants? You know what that is? For those of you who don't know, behold snake plant.



This is actually a picture taken from a planter in our front yard. Apparently, the person who owned our home before we bought it really liked snake plants. Because when we moved in, it wasn't just in the front, it was all over the exterior of the back yard as well. In contrast, when we moved in, we wanted to grow things like fruit trees and vegetables, things, unlike snake plants, that we could eat. So do you know what I did? I plucked up all of that snake plant in the backyard and we put down lots and lots of seeds: lettuce and tomatoes and cucumbers and peppers. Over the course of time, with water and sunlight (and some trial and error), those seeds have grown and brought forth vegetables. But do you think those vegetables are the only thing that has grown in our back yard? Nope. Not at all. Because guess what else from beneath the surface has grown up right alongside of it? Snake plant! I think I have more snake plant today than I did when we first moved in. Why is that? I didn't sow snake plant seed. It's because when I initially got rid of the snake plant, I didn't get to the what? The roots.

Application – church, when it comes to modern conceptions of gender ideology, you can't understand it and properly respond to it, without first understanding the roots of it.

So, the first thing that we're going to look at this morning with regards to the modern approach to gender is its roots.



A.) Its Roots

What we're going to find is that at the root of modern gender ideology there are two foundational beliefs that the whole system (the whole snake plant) grows out of.

What are those two foundational beliefs? What is at the root of modern gender ideology? First off, let's talk about the root of relativism.

(1) Relativism

How many of you have ever heard someone say something like "that's your truth not my truth"? Do you know what that is? It's relativism.

Relativism says that meaning and truth are relative. It is the denial of absolute objective truth.

What relativism does is treat reality and morality as matters of taste, not truth.

This ideology that we see all over culture today is both irrational and unbiblical.

How is it irrational? Let me give you an illustration.

Illustration – Who in here likes mint ice cream? I can't stand mint ice cream. When I eat ice cream, I don't want to feel like I'm brushing my teeth. Ok. But I want you to imagine that I went with "person a" to Mister Softee to go get ice cream. He gets mint ice cream. I get chocolate ice cream. I want you to imagine that he keeps going on and on and on about how good his mint ice cream is. He says, "Come here just try it. It tastes so good." Foolishly, as a byproduct of his continual insistence, I give in. I taste it. I vomit. I tell him "That's disgusting". He says, "Well, that's your opinion. I think it tastes great." And guess what? That's where the conversation ends. Why? Because it's a matter of subjective taste. To him it tastes good. To me it doesn't. It's relative. It's a matter of personal taste.

- But then, I want you to imagine something different. I want you to imagine that my friend has one scoop of mint ice cream, but that he insists to me that he actually has five scoops. I say to him, "That's not true. You only have one scoop of ice cream." To which he replies, "Well that's your opinion." Is that right? Is that the same thing as what we were just talking about? No. Why? Because whereas the flavor of the ice cream is a matter of taste, the number of scoops is a matter of truth. In that scenario,

his belief and his claim about the number of scoops does not change the reality that he only has one scoop of ice cream.

- Let me give you one more illustration of how relativism pertains to morality. Imagine that sitting next to my friend and I at Mister Softee are a mother and her five-year-old little girl. I want you to imagine that my friend takes his mint ice cream cone and slams it in the face of that little girl and laughs at her. I say to him, "Why would you do that? That's terrible. That's wrong." To which he replies, "Well that's your opinion." Is that right? Is that the same thing as having different tastes in ice cream? No. What he did is objectively wrong regardless of whether he thinks it is or not.

Relativism is irrational because when it comes to issues of reality and morality, these are not issues of taste, but truth.

Beyond that, it's not just that relativism is irrational. It's unbiblical.

All throughout the pages of Scripture, reality and morality are talked about objectively.

- What do we find in Exodus 20? Is it the 10 suggestions or the 10 commandments? You want to know what that is? Objective morality.
- When it comes to reality, Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:14 that if Jesus did not objectively, actually rise from the dead, Christianity is a lie and a waste of time. Then in 1 Peter 3:15 the Peter says that if someone has questions about your faith, you need to be ready to give an objective answer. What is that? It's the Bible talking about reality objectively.

And yet despite the fact that relativism is both irrational and unbiblical, we see it all over our culture, and church this ideology is at the root of what culture believes about gender.

- You see it in statements like: "If that's who they think they are, who are you to challenge that? That's their truth, and you need to respect their truth." That's relativism.
- What's happening beneath the surface there? An issue of reality is being talked about as if it were equivalent to someone's taste in ice cream.
- Although it is true that someone might feel a certain way, it is not true that those feelings redefine objective reality.

There's the root of relativism, but then there's also the root of individualism.

2.) Individualism

What is that?

Individualism says that in life, identity, meaning, and direction are not found without, but determined within.

Illustration - How many of you have ever heard someone say, "if it feels good, do it"? "Follow your heart"? "You be you"? What is that? It's individualism.

Individualism makes a god out of self. It's all about self-actualization and empowerment. "I need to figure out what I want, and I'm going to do that, and I'm not going to let anyone stand in my way."

Is that biblical? No.

Jeremiah 17:9 - 9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

But it's not just that it's unbiblical. It's also dangerous.

Can you imagine what your life would be like if you just always did what you felt, what you wanted, regardless of how it affected anyone else? That's how toddlers act, and if you live your life that way as an adult (enslaved to your feelings) you will end up empty and alone.

In contrast with that individualism, in a lot of areas of the world, what you see is collectivism.

When it comes to the big questions of life about where we look for meaning, purpose, and identity, collectivism doesn't point within. It points without. It makes a god out of others and their expectations.

"This is who I am because it's what they say I am. This is what I'm going to do because it's what they expect me to do."

- Identity and purpose. They come from without.

Is that Biblical? No.

Prov. 29:25 - The fear of man bringeth a snare...

Whereas the good of collectivism is that it promotes honor and sacrifice and community, the bad of it is that you live your life enslaved to the opinions of others.

"If your identity is tied to someone else's opinion of you, then your identity is fragile and hostile...and you'll always live your life with this nagging fear of failure...of failing short of other's expectations of you." - Cary Schmidt

If the answer isn't individualism or collectivism, what is it? It's creationism.

It's the idea that my identity and meaning and purpose in life are not defined by me or others but rather by the one who made and knows me and loves me.

Psalms 139:14 - I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...

Colossians 1:16 - "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

Revelation 4:11 - 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

My identity is not found in who I think I am or in who others say I am. It is found in He who has made me to be. My purpose is not found in self-actualization. It is not found in living up to others' expectations. It is found in doing what I was created to do, and I was created to know God and be in relation with Him.

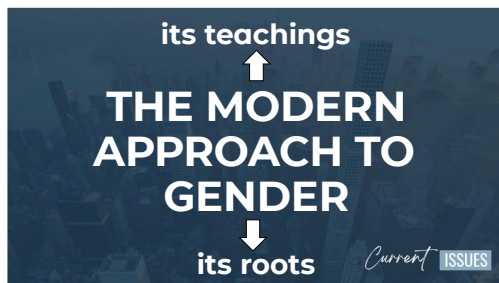
Individualism makes a god out of self. It worships at the throne of desire. Collectivism makes a god out of others. It worships at the throne of expectations. Creationism looks to God as our creator. It worships at the throne of the one who knows us better than we know ourselves.

The key question you must ask yourself as you seek to wrap your head around you identity and purpose is, "Do I believe in a Creator? Do I believe in God?" Because if you do, and you're looking anywhere else than to Him for your identity and purpose, what are you doing?

Church, individualism is at the root of many cultural ideologies, including modern gender ideology which says, "I am not who God has made me. I am who I say I am."

We've seen the roots of modern gender ideology. Now, let's take a minute to examine its teachings.

B.) Its Teachings



Modern gender ideology was really birthed in the 1960s. Prior to that time period, when "gender" as a term was used, it was used in reference to grammar, and it was used as a synonym for biological sex.

- "The words sex and gender have a long and intertwined history. In the 15th century gender expanded from its use as a term for a grammatical subclass to join sex in referring to either of the two primary biological forms of a species, a meaning sex has had since the 14th century; phrases like "the male sex" and "the female gender"

are both grounded in uses established for more than five centuries. In the 20th century sex and gender each acquired new uses.” (Merriam Webster)

In fact, the usage of the term “gender” to describe something distinct from biological sex originated in the 1950s and 60s with a professor of medical psychology at John Hopkins University by the name of John Money. How many of you have ever heard of John Money before?

- Money believed that gender was only a social construct without any real connection to biology. In 1965, he decided to test out his theory in real life when confronted with the case of two twin boys named Bruce and Brian Reimer.

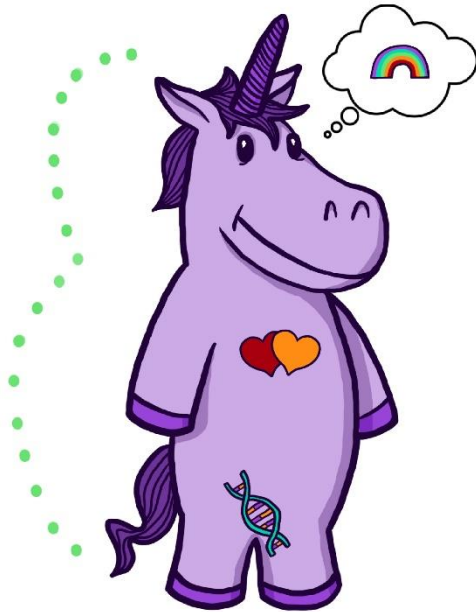


- This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY
- As an infant Bruce had a botched circumcision and after several months of trying to figure out where to go from there, the boy’s parents went and saw John Money. Believing that gender was just a social construct, Money recommended to the Reimers that Brian undergo sex reassignment surgery as an infant and that the Reimers raise Brian as a girl. That’s what they did. For years, Money touted this story as a crowning example in support of his radical gender theory. He was featured in Time Magazine and the Reimers story was included in his famous textbook *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl*. Money would come to be known to this day as the father of modern gender ideology. There was only one problem. It didn’t work. Bruce, who was being raised as Brenda, was on the verge of suicide at the age of 13 until finally his mom told him the truth. He immediately wanted to transition back and took the name of David. Over time, both of the Reimer boys would become outspoken advocates against John Money and his radical gender theories and practices. Unfortunately, over time both of the boys would end up taking their own lives in suicide.
- Although Money’s experiment went tragically wrong, his ideas began to take root in culture and academia.
- Professor Money began using “gender” to describe one’s own internal perception of maleness or femaleness as well as one’s external expression of maleness or femaleness. That usage is where the modern-day terms of gender identity and

expression come from. These terms are what is being used to indoctrinate people in gender ideology.

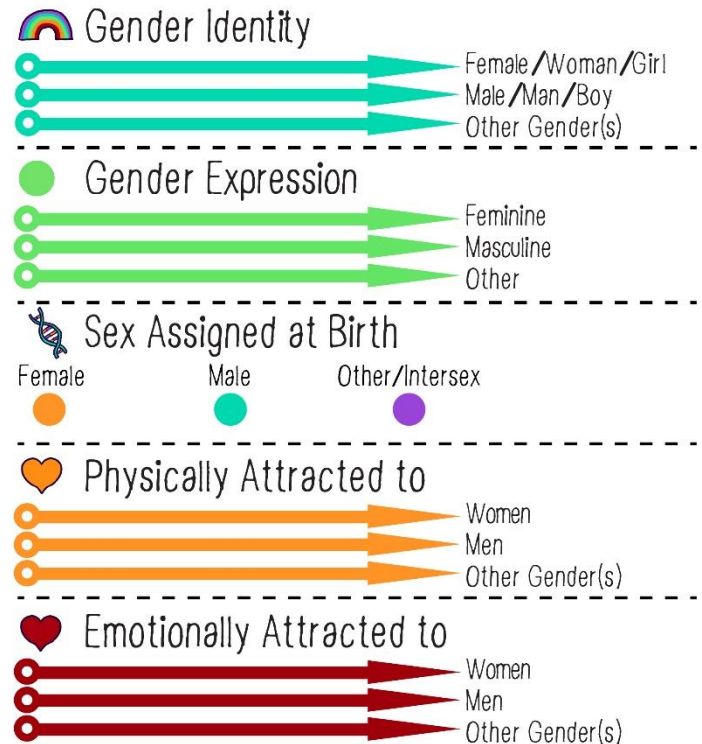
The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



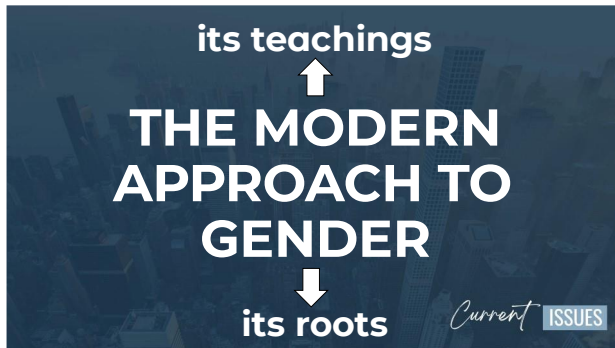
To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



- For instance, this here is a picture of a teaching tool put out by an organization known as Trans Student Educational Resources. It's called the gender unicorn, and it's one of the primary resources used to teach kids nowadays about modern gender ideology.
- But what I want you to notice is those two terms at the top: gender identity and expression.
 - o Gender Identity – take note of how gender identity is represented in the head region. The resource defines gender identity as one's internal sense of being male, female, neither, both, or other.
 - Once again, the way modern gender ideology defines gender identity is in terms of one's own internal perception of maleness or femaleness.
 - o Gender Expression – take note of how gender expression is represented in the external region of the graphic. The resource defines gender expression as the physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc.

- To simplify that, it's defined as the external expression of maleness or femaleness.
- (The Gender Unicorn)



This is how modern gender ideology is being taught and it's rooted in John Money's redefinition of gender as internal perception and external expression of maleness or femaleness. But then, really in the past 10 years or so, we've seen another major cultural shift.

No longer is gender just seen as something that is distinct from biology. Gender is seen as something that takes precedence over biology. If I am biologically a male, but I feel internally like a woman and express myself externally as a woman, then I am a woman and those around me must recognize my true identity or they're being intolerant and bigoted.

So, this is what has happened over the course of the last 70 years to lead to the present. Culture detached the definition of gender from biology, and then more recently it prioritized gender over biology.

The message of culture today is pretty clear.

Your identity is what you decide, and your expression is what you decide...and no one has the right to challenge your divine self-determination.

We've seen the modern approach to gender, but what does the Bible have to say about gender?

2.) The Biblical Approach to Gender



As we look at the Biblical approach to gender, we need to first take note of its roots as well.

A.) Its Roots



Whereas the modern approach to gender is rooted in relativism (that's true for you, not for me) and individualism (which looks within for identity and direction), the biblical approach to gender is rooted in reality and creation.

For instance, the Bible teaches that truth is real and discoverable. As Christians, where do we find that truth? John 17:17 – sanctify them through thy Word. Thy Word is truth. When I am looking for God's truth as a Christian, I'm not looking within. I'm not looking without. I'm looking to His Word.

Beyond that, the Biblical approach to gender, is also rooted in creation. It's rooted in the belief that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. My identity is not fundamentally determined by me. But because I was created, it is determined by the one who made me. We do not create our identity. We recognize it as we look to our Creator and come to understand how He has made us.

Church, in what book of the Bible do we find clearly expressed God's truth as it pertains to creation? Genesis. That's right, and that's where we're going to go to examine the Bible's teaching on identity and expression.

Take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 1. As we're turning there, I want to remind you that the Bible's teachings about identity are not decades old. They are millennia old. Further, the Bible's teachings about identity do not come from John Money. They come from our Creator God.

B.) Its Teachings



As we examine the Bible's teaching about gender, I want us to first off take a look at its teaching regarding our identity.

Genesis 1:26-28 - 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:

So God created man in His own image – what does that mean? You and I are created by God. You are not an accident. You are not a byproduct of chance. Your life is not ultimately meaningless. You were made by your Creator which means that your identity and purpose is not something that is made up. Rather, it's something that is recognized as you look to the one who made you. But God didn't just create you and I, did He? No.

Male and female created he them – He made us biologically male and female. He could have made us the same. He could have created a sexless androgenous humankind to reflect His image, but He didn't. He chose to create us in His image: male and female. (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 65)

- Who am I? I am not who I say I am. I am not whatever I feel. I am what my Creator has made me, as He has made me in His image a male.
- Genesis 1:31 - And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.
- The fact that He's talking about biology is abundantly clear when you see its connection to procreation in verse 28.

Genesis 2 goes into a little bit more detail about the relationship between man and woman. Look at verse 18.

Genesis 2:18 - 18 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Help meet – suitable helper; a companion; a complement – implying difference.

Genesis 2:21-23 - 21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which

the Lord God had taken from man, made her a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

- “Adam celebrates Eve’s similarity (humanness; made in God’s image) and dissimilarity (she was not male; she was female)”
- Woman came from man’s rib. Not from his feet to be walked on. Not from his head to be superior. But from his side to be equal, under his arm to be protected and close to his heart to be loved.

Well you say, “That’s just Genesis.” That’s old fashioned. Well folks, Jesus quoted it and affirmed His belief in it. Jesus believed that what Genesis says about identity and purpose is normative for all people across all times.

Matthew 19:4-6 - 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Who are we? We are those who were made in the image of our Creator male and female.

Ok, that’s identity, but does our Creator have anything to say about gender expression?

The answer is “yes”, but we have to be really careful here about not enforcing rigid stereotypes on behavior that are not actually Biblical.

- Illustration – it is true that men on average are taller than women, but just because a man is 5’11 doesn’t make him a woman. The same is true with behaviors and interests.

It is okay for a boy to be artistic and in touch with his feelings. That doesn’t make him a girl. Those stereotypes don’t define us.

- Illustration – Think about David in the Bible. David was a warrior who killed a lion with his bare hands and chopped off the head of a giant. But guess what? David was also a poet and musician that was deeply in touch with his feelings and regularly recorded them in his personal diary: aka the Psalms.

It is okay for a girl to be a tomboy. Enjoying things that are typically considered more masculine (like sports and the outdoors) does not make her a boy.

- Illustration – Think about the Proverbs 31 woman. She’s depicted as a praiseworthy wife and loving mother who watches over the affairs of the household and feeds everyone. But guess what? She also buys property, starts a business, engages in philanthropy, and is depicted as strong and wise.

- “Women in the Bible do all sorts of things that weren’t considered ‘feminine.’ They fight in battles and win wars, sometimes by smashing tent pegs through the skulls of men (Judg. 4:21). They are unmarried businesswomen like Lydia (Acts 16:14–15). They are fearless, like the three women named Mary who stood by Jesus at the cross after most of the men had scattered (John 19:25).” (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 81)

And all of that is ok. There are actually relatively few activities that the Scripture explicitly prohibits based on gender.

On a practical level, what modern ideology has almost done is redefine gender in terms of “gender stereotypes” so that if a girl is drawn to certain activities that are generally considered more masculine, well she might actually be a boy. No. That notion is not biblical.

Well, what prohibitions does the Scripture place on gender expression? Let me give you three big ones.

(1) Cross Dressing

Different cultures across time have distinguished between male and female dress in many ways. The Scripture teaches that regardless of what that dress distinction is, we as Christians should not present ourselves in a way that would lead others to believe that we are the opposite gender.

Deuteronomy 22:5 - The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

- Don’t go out of your way to present yourself in a way (e.g. dress or physical alterations) that is contrary to how God made you.

Well is that just an Old Testament thing for the Jews? No. It’s not. It’s rooted in creation and beyond that in 1 Corinthians 11, with what Paul says about head coverings in Corinth, I believe that you see a New Testament application of this principle.

What prohibitions does the Scripture place on gender expression? (1) Cross Dressing (2) Sexual Activity

(2) Sexual Activity

Our Creator did not design us for same sex physical intimacy. That truth is explicitly stated in the Creation account in Genesis, and it is very clearly reflected in human biology. Just as the male female gender dichotomy is very clear biologically, so too God’s design for physical intimacy is very clear biologically.

In Genesis 2, it is the gender distinction in verse 23 that forms the foundation for the marriage and physical intimacy that are described in verses 24 and 25.

In terms of gender, the Bible very clearly states that same sex physical intimacy is contrary to God's design.

1 Cor. 6:9 - 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators (*physical intimacy outside of marriage even if between a man and woman*), nor idolaters, nor adulterers (*those who violate their marriage vows*), nor effeminate...

- What does that word mean? It literally refers to men who take on the role of a woman in same sex activity. One of the reasons why same sex activity is prohibited in the Scripture (in other passages too such as Rom 1:26-27) is because it confuses and crosses gender distinctions.

What prohibitions does the Scripture place on gender expression? (1) Cross Dressing (2) Sexual Activity (3) Family Roles

(3) Family Roles

In Ephesians 5, the Scripture is very clear that in the family unit God has given to the husband the role and responsibility of leading the family. He is protector. He is provider. God has called him to that role, and he will give an account to God for that one day.

In the family, as the husband fulfills that role, God calls on the wife to support and encourage him in that role. Furthermore, as God blesses that couple with children, He also gives that wife a unique role as mother (Titus 2:4-5). Particularly in the early years of a child's life, she especially is called upon to care for and nurture that child in a way that only she can biologically. It's not the father that gets pregnant. It's the mother. It's not the father that carries that child to term. Only the mother can do that. It's not the father whose body is designed to nurse that infant. It's the mother's. This is rooted in biology.

Once again, what we see is that God has designed the roles and primary responsibilities of husbands and fathers and wives and mothers to be gendered roles. Those roles are not to be crossed or confused.

I'll say this too, as it pertains to gender, God also has some limitations within the church family...particularly as it pertains to the roles and responsibilities of pastors and deacons. But that's a sermon for another day.

Application

Today we have compared and contrasted the modern approach to gender with the Biblical approach to gender, and really the whole message comes down to one question.

Do you believe in a Creator? If your answer is no, then the gender discussion is the least of your problems. For a world without a Creator is a world in which objective meaning and purpose don't even exist.

It's what led Nietzsche to lament, "God is dead.... And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?"

Do you believe in a Creator? That's the key question. For, if you do, how could you look anywhere else for your identity and purpose?

- He made you and loves you just the way you are. He created you to enjoy the greatest possible good, a relationship with Him. But there was a problem that entered the picture. Sin. Man chose to rebel against God, to replace the will of God with His own, thinking that he as the creation knew more than the Creator. God could have left His creation to suffer in separation from Him never being able to enjoy the relationship he was created for...But God loved us, and that's why Jesus came to this earth. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin and my sin and the sins of the world. Then He rose three days later victorious over sin and death. The Scripture teaches that whosoever will look in faith to Jesus as their Savior will be forgiven of their sin and restored to a relationship with God that will last forever.
- Your Creator loves you. Turn from your sin. Trust in Jesus, and enter into the relationship that you were created to enjoy.

The Bible & Gender Pt 2

Review



I'm excited this morning to continue our fall sermon series on the Bible and Current Issues. Last week we began the first of three messages on the specific topic of the Bible and gender. We talked about the modern approach to gender and how its rooted in relativism (that's true for you, but not for me) and individualism (it is I, not my Creator, who determines my identity and purpose). From there, we critiqued the teachings of the modern approach to gender and then we established from the Scriptures God's approach to gender: namely, that God as our Creator, made us in His image male and female, regardless of what anyone claims or feels.

However, church, does everyone on the planet subscribe to the Biblical approach to gender? No, not at all. Are there critics of the biblical approach to gender? Absolutely and as the Scripture tells us we need to be ready to give an answer. So whereas last week we critiqued the modern the modern approach to gender, today we are going to address five of the most common objections to the Bible's teaching on gender.

Broadly speaking these objections are going to fall into two different categories. There are objections from science. There are those who say that modern science undermines the simplicity of male and female. Then there are objections from Scripture. There are Progressive "Christians" who say that the traditional biblical teaching about gender actually misrepresents what the Scripture says. These folks would claim that the Scripture supports modern gender ideology. We're going to take some time this morning to respond to both types of critiques but we're going to begin with the most common scientific objection to the Bible's teaching on gender which is the question of intersex individuals.

Objection 1.) What about intersex individuals?



Illustration – Imagine yourself having a conversation with someone about how you believe what the Bible says. You believe that God made us male and female in His image. Then I want you to imagine the person you’re talking with says, “Well, what about intersex people? Don’t you realize that 1.7% of the population is biologically neither male nor female?” What would you say? How would you respond to that?

I’m going to answer that question this morning, but before we get there, let me start by asking another question. How many of you have ever heard of the term intersex? Let me see your hands.

For those of you who don’t know, intersex is an umbrella term for people who suffer from a sexual (male/female) developmental disorder (of which there are about 20). For instance, instead of being XX or XY, someone suffering from one of these disorders might be XXY as in the case of those with Klinefelter Syndrome.

Ok, well that’s what it is, but how would you respond if someone brought it up in a conversation about gender?

If someone asked me, “What about intersex”, I would respond by asking them a question: “What does intersex have to do with transgenderism?”

The answer is absolutely nothing.

Intersex is a biological condition that’s based in reality. Transgenderism is an ideology that’s based in a denial of reality. One is based in biology. One is based in beliefs. One has nothing to do with the other.

Appealing to intersex conditions to support transgender ideology is a bait and switch.

Let me give you an illustration of this that will help you see the disconnect.

- Imagine that I were having a conversation with Josh, and I said to him that I, Jacob Bundy, am an armless man. I have no arms. I am unarmed.
- To which Josh replies, “Well, that’s not true. I can see your arms plain and clear. They’re right there. Jacob, you can say and believe whatever you want, but it doesn’t change the fact that you have arms.” You with me so far?
- I want you to imagine that I reply to Josh by saying, “Well, Josh don’t you know that not everyone has arms? Josh, there are people who are born without arms. Had you thought about that? What about them?”
- To which Josh replies, “Well, yes, that’s true. Those people exist. But just because there are people born biologically without arms doesn’t mean that you have no arms just because you claim that to be the case. Jacob, there’s no connection between those two things. One of them is based in reality. One of them is based in a denial of reality.”

Application – church, the same is true regarding the relationship between intersex and transgenderism. Just because there are people who are afflicted with a sex development

disorder doesn't mean that a man who claims to be a woman is in fact a woman. There's no connection between the two. One is based in reality, and one is based in a denial of reality.

As Christians, we don't deny reality. As Christians, we shouldn't be surprised to see the effect of Adam and Eve's sin upon the world.

- Romans 8:22-23 - 22 For we know that the whole creation (*every part of it, including our anatomy*) groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.
- Sin has brought pain and suffering and disorder into God's good creation, and that brokenness extends to our physical bodies.
- "It seems to me that the best way to understand intersex conditions is as just some of the many ways the brokenness of creation can be experienced in our physical bodies. In this way, in terms of theological explanation, those born intersex are no different to those born blind or with a limb which is missing or not fully formed. These things are all biological experiences of the brokenness of creation." (Bunt, 2019)
 - o Intersex conditions have nothing to do with transgenderism.
 - o Intersex conditions shouldn't surprise us as Christians who understand and believe in the brokenness of creation because of Adam and Eve's sin.

But what about those who appeal to intersex conditions (those with a blend of male and female sex characteristics) not in support of transgender ideology, but as an attack on the Biblical teaching that there are two categories of biological sex: male and female?

Illustration – imagine you're having this conversation with someone about your belief that God has made us male and female in His image. They respond by saying, "What about intersex? Doesn't the fact nearly 2% of the population is neither male nor female undermine the Bible's teaching?" How would you respond?

Well, that 2% number is really misleading.

"In fact, most people with an intersex condition are unambiguously male or female in their chromosomes and their reproductive organs...It's been estimated that as many as 99 percent of people who have an intersex condition are unambiguously male or female." (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 120)

- So the claim that 2 out every 100 people are neither male nor female just isn't true. It's really closer to 1 in 10,000, and in such instances that person doesn't represent a third category of sex. It's not like they have a different set of reproductive organs that we don't see in males or females. No, this person is a male or a female who due to a biological disorder embodies traits from both categories. (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 121)
- Our biological sex (our maleness or femaleness) has to do with the ways our bodies are structured/ordered for reproduction. There's no third set of organs that exists

with some alternative means of reproduction. Thus, there is no third sex because that's not how God made us.

“Intersex is a condition—something someone has—and neither an identity nor a third sex. DSD/intersex represent rare conditions requiring highly individualized therapeutic approaches and timelines, not a blanket one-size-fits-all prescription.” (Christian Medical & Dental Associations, 2019)

Intersex conditions don't support transgenderism because one is based in reality, and one is based in a denial of a reality. Furthermore, intersex conditions don't invalidate the idea that there are two categories of sex because there is no third category of reproductive organs.

So we've seen the most common scientific objection to the Bible's teaching on gender, but what about the Scriptural objections?...Let's take some time to examine some objections from those who would claim that the Bible actually supports modern gender ideology.

Objection 2.) Isn't Genesis 1 really nonbinary?



What in the world does that mean? Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 1. Let me show you how the argument goes.

Genesis 1:1-5 – 1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

- Ok. So you have day and night. You have light and darkness.
 - o God made day, and God made night. Is dusk day or night? Is it light or darkness? Well, it's somewhere in between. It's the transition from day to night. What about dawn? Is it day or night? Well, it's somewhere in between. It's the transition from day to night.
 - o Here's the argument – just as God's creation of day and night includes everything inbetween such as dusk and dawn, so too God's creation of male

and female includes everything in between. Just as light is a spectrum, so too gender is a spectrum.

How would you respond to that? What would you say?

Comparing night and day to male and female is like comparing apples and oranges. It's two completely different things. It's an analogy that falls apart when you look at it deeper.

Illustration – we have a billion Erics in the church. Imagine that I brought two of them up on the platform, and I said these men are both named Eric. They are similar in this way. Then I asked the first Eric, what is your wife's name? He said, "Amber." Imagine that I then said, "Both of these men are named Eric. This Eric is married to a woman named Amber. Therefore, this man is married to a woman named Amber." Does that follow? No. Just because you are alike in one way does not mean that you are alike in every way.

The same is true of the different parts of creation in Genesis 1. Day and night and male and female are both part of creation. They are alike in that way, but does that mean that they are alike in every way? No.

Beyond that, when you compare Genesis 1 with the rest of Scripture, it becomes very clear that day and night and male and female belong to very different categories.

- For instance, does the Bible acknowledge the existence of dusk? Yes. Genesis 15:17 and other passages acknowledge the reality of dusk. Does the Bible acknowledge the existence of dawn? Yes. Deut. 16:6 and other passages acknowledge the reality of dawn.
- When it comes to biological sex, does the Bible ever acknowledge anything outside of or inbetween male and female? No. So when you compare Scripture with Scripture it becomes very clear that day and night are very different than male and female. One is a spectrum. One is not.
- "It's true that some statements like 'day and night,' 'land and sea,' or even 'alpha and omega' bear the sense of these two opposites and everything in between. But as we saw in chapter 4, the phrase 'male and female' in Genesis 1:27 refers to biological sex, not gender roles or identities.² No doubt, there are many variations among females and males. Tall, short, strong, weak, hairy, hairless. But the beautiful variations among males and among females do not mean that 'male and female' are only two of many options." (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 96)
- "Plus, a quick scan of the Bible shows that rivers and marshes (Ex. 7:19; Ezek. 47:11), dusk and dawn (Gen. 15:17; Deut. 16:6), and frogs and other amphibians (Ex. 8:2; Lev. 11:30) are part of creation. Genesis 1 certainly doesn't cover every asteroid and amphibian in the universe. But whenever Scripture mentions sexed categories of humanity, it only names male and female." (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 96)

Objection 1 – what about intersex? It doesn't support transgenderism, and it doesn't undermine the Biblical teaching on male and female.

Objection 2 – isn't Genesis 1 nonbinary? Not when it talks about male and female.

Objection 3.) Wasn't Jesus LGBT affirming? (Matthew 19:11-12)



Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 19. We're going to look at verses 9 through 12.

Illustration – believe it or not someone in our young adults small group had just recently seen a video on TikTok using this passage to make the argument that Jesus was LGBT affirming and so we should be too.

The context of this passage is a conversation that Jesus is having with the Pharisees about marriage and divorce.

Matthew 19:9-12 - 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Claim – Jesus accepted and affirmed eunuchs in the first century. If we are going to be like Jesus, we need to accept and affirm transgenderism in the twenty first century.

- There's this equivocation between eunuchs and the LGBT community/ideology.

But church, what's the problem with this argument? What's the elephant in the room?

Eunuchs weren't transgenders. They weren't men living as women. They were men who were infertile (and thus often deemed unmasculine by culture).

- Some were eunuchs from birth (they were infertile due perhaps to some kind of disorder like we talked about earlier in intersex conditions)
- Some who were made eunuchs (due to castration as was common in the case of servants like the Ethiopian Eunuch, who was a servant of Candace the queen of Ethiopia)
- Some who made themselves eunuchs (some who chose to remain single for the purpose of devoting themselves in greater ways to God)

Jesus' teaching on eunuchs in this passage has nothing to do with affirming the behavior of those who cross God given gender distinctions, and it has everything to do with affirming the goodness of singleness (whether because of infertility or choice).

- In a first century culture that idolized family and children, Jesus, like the apostle Paul, had a high view of singleness. He did not see eunuchs as second-class citizens, and neither should we.

By the way, those who try to use this passage to support the idea that Jesus was affirming of LGBT ideology completely ignore the context. For in verses 4-6 of the same conversation Jesus had just affirmed the traditional Biblical teaching on gender and marriage.

- Matthew 19:3-6 - 3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them **male** and **female**, 5 And said, For this cause shall a **man** leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his **wife**: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

In Matthew 19, Jesus was not affirming LGBT behavior or ideology. Rather he was affirming a Biblical view of gender, marriage, and singleness.

Objection 4.) Isn't gender done away with in Christ? Didn't Paul teach that in Galatians 3?



Let's turn there in our Bibles and take a look.

We're going to be in Galatians 3:26-28.

Galatians 3:26-28 - 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek (*nationality*), there is neither bond (*slave*) nor free (*social status*), there is neither male nor female (*sex/gender*): for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Here's the argument - Paul said that for those who are Christians, there is neither male nor female. Why? For you are one in Jesus Christ. It's right there in black and white. Gender is done away with in Christ. Male and female are a thing of the past.

If someone said that to you, how would you respond?

Illustration – how many of you remember our Sunday night sermon series on Galatians? We went verse by verse through the whole book and addressed every passage including this one. By the way, one of the benefits of studying verse by verse through a book of the Bible is that you see it in context.

- Application – if anyone ever pulls out a gotcha verse like this one that just doesn't seem to jive with the rest of Scripture, always start by looking at the what? Context. Read the verses around it. Read the chapter it's in. Read the book that it's part of.
- Church, when you read the context of Galatians 3, it becomes very clear what Paul is and isn't saying.

In terms of our relationship with Jesus Christ, we, as Christians (the people in this room) are neither divided by nor primarily defined by our race, our social status, or our sex. Those are the three things that people in this world have historically divided over more than anything else: race, money, and gender. "I am better than others because of my race. I am better than others because of my money. I am better than others because of my gender." That mentality is wrong, and according to the Scriptures, when we become a Christian those things no longer primarily define us or divide us because of the one who unites us.

These verses don't mean that when you become a Christian these distinctions (nationality, social class, and sex) cease to exist. I did not stop being a man when I got saved. My nationality and social class didn't change when I got saved. Rather, when I got saved, I ceased being primarily defined by those things. I am now first and foremost a Christian more so than I am a man or an American or middle class. But once again, that doesn't mean that those distinctions no longer exist.

Illustration – what Paul is saying here reminds me of my high school football days.



- This is a picture of me and a couple of my teammates at our last ever high school football game for the Space Coast Vipers. We were all seniors, captains, and we were playing Atlantic High School. I'm in the middle. To my left is Devonta Stafford who played running back and defensive back for us. To my right is Jeff Bolognese who was my quarterback in high school. Then there's me in the middle, and I played receiver and linebacker.
 - o One of the things I remember vividly about the team is how diverse it was. There were all kinds of different ethnicities on that team (white, black, Hispanic, Asian). There were guys from all different types of social classes (rich, poor, white collar, blue collar, section 8). There were all of these differences between the guys on that team, but when we stepped on the field, do you know what happened? Those differences that divided us took a back seat to the one thing that united us: the jersey on our backs. It's not that when I stepped on that field with those guys, I stopped being white. Rather, it's that when I stepped on the field and I looked at the guys next to me, all I could see was Space Coast. Thoughts about race or social status didn't even enter my mind.

Application – church, it's the same way when you become a Christian. It's not that you stop being a woman or automatically change social classes. Rather, it's that those things take a back seat to the jersey that unites us: Christian. We're all a part of the same team, the same family.

Is gender done away with in Jesus Christ? No. It's just now that we've been unified in Christ, these things like gender and social class and nationality don't divide us in the way they used to.

Well, okay, gender isn't done away with now. But won't gender be done away with one day?

Objection 5.) Isn't gender done away with in eternity? (Matt. 22:23-30)



There's two passages I want to look at here because there's two angles to this.

Turn to 2 Cor. 5:8.

2 Cor. 5:8 - 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

When a Christian dies and his body is buried in the ground, where does his soul go? To be with God. That's what 2 Corinthians 5 says.

But church, will we exist in that disembodied state for all of eternity? No.

That's not God's plan. The Bible teaches us that there's a day when Jesus Christ is coming back, and when He does, the dead in Christ will be physically resurrected. And their resurrected bodies will be like Christ's: immortal and incorruptible.

1 Thess. 4:14, 16-17 – 14 If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

- That disembodied state between now and when Christ returns at the rapture is a temporary state. When Christ returns, our bodies will be raised, glorified, and reunited with our souls, and that is how we will exist with the Lord for all of eternity.
- Adam and Eve had a physical body before sin entered the world, and we will have physical glorified bodies once sin is done away with as well. So, our bodies do matter as it pertains to eternity.

But hold on a second, pastor, isn't resurrection life going to be different than it is now? Are you sure that our bodies will be male and female in eternity? Well, let's go to one more passage of Scripture.

Turn to Matthew 22:23.

23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven (*i.e. we won't marry and will never die*).

Here's the claim - Jesus taught that there is no marriage (*as it is here*) in the resurrection. Since there's no marriage in the resurrection, there's no need for male or female. Therefore, our resurrection bodies will be neither male nor female.

How would you respond to that?

"He only says we won't marry, not become sexless. Obviously, people can still be male or female even if they never marry. Just look at Jesus. While marriage assumes sex difference, sex difference exists apart from marriage." (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 105)

- Sex distinctions existed before the fall.
- Sex distinctions are one of the ways we mirror the image of God (equal, but different).
- Jesus' resurrection body was male.
 - o John and Paul wrote that when we are raised, we will be like Him.
 - o "Jesus' resurrection is a model for our own resurrection. 'When Christ appears,' John says, 'we shall be like him' (1 John 3:2). And Paul writes, 'he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies' (Rom. 8:11). There's little evidence in Scripture that our 'mortal bodies,' which were created as male and female and declared 'very good' by our Creator, will be sexless when they are raised. While Jesus' sex is not explicitly mentioned in the resurrection, he's still referred to by male pronouns and there's no evidence that he's no longer male." (Sprinkle, 2021, pp. 74-76)
- Paul roots his resurrection theology in Genesis 1-2.
 - o "Paul's most detailed description of our resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:35-58) draws extensively on Genesis 1-2, affirming the goodness of our bodies.21 Paul does talk about some differences between our earthly bodies and our future resurrection bodies. The difference, though, is not between sexed

earthly bodies and sexless resurrected bodies, but between our corruptible earthly bodies and our incorruptible resurrected bodies (see especially 1 Cor. 15:50, 52-54). The fact that our sexed bodies are essential to our embodied existence and our personhood (according to Gen 1-2) suggests that, unless otherwise stated, sex difference will be part of our resurrected state.” (Sprinkle, 2021, pp. 74-76)

Thus, the idea that our resurrection bodies won't be male and female just isn't true or Biblical.

Application

Well, what's the takeaway from today? Here it is. These objections to what the Bible teaches about identity and gender fall flat. Church, we can trust what the Scripture says. We can trust what the Creator says. The truth is not afraid of questions, and my friends, we have the truth. We've got it, and we need to cling to it, regardless of what the culture says.

Proverbs 23:23 - Buy the truth and sell it not.

Have courage. Don't be ashamed of the Scripture. Don't be ashamed of your Creator. Stand firm in the truth.

The Bible & Gender Pt 3

Review



Take your Bible and turn to 1 Corinthians 6.

Today marks the final message in our three-part series on the Bible and gender. Whereas the last two weeks, we talked primarily about truth, today we are going to talk primarily about love. Whereas the last two messages were more educational, today's message is going to be more pastoral, more practical.

At this point in our study we know the truth. We know that God has made us in His image male and female. We know that as those who have been created, our identity and purpose is not self-determined. It is received from our Creator. What we claim or how we feel does not change who He has made us. That's the truth, but how do we use that truth to help people? That's the question we're going to focus on today.

How many of you are familiar with the term Gender Dysphoria? Gender Dysphoria is a very real and serious condition that some people suffer from. It's a "psychological term for the distress some people feel when their internal sense of self doesn't align with their biological sex." (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 31) Moreover, it's important to understand that just because someone has Gender Dysphoria doesn't mean that they've embraced that feeling and started identifying as transgender. There are many who fully understand what they are biologically but still struggle immensely with feeling out of alignment. That's what dysphoria is.

To help us understand a little bit of what it's like to know the truth but feel something so different, let me give you an illustration.

Illustration – have you ever been in a situation where you felt incredibly anxious, fearful, and unsettled even though you knew rationally in your head that you weren't in any real danger? Perhaps it was due to an anxiety attack or PTSD or something like that? In that moment you very well may have known rationally that you were safe and that everything was okay, but that knowledge didn't change the fact that you felt very very distressed.

- In the same way there are many struggling with gender dysphoria who very well may know the truth about what God has made them, but still struggle immensely with these feelings of misalignment.

- And for those who buy into culture's treatment plan for dysphoria by rejecting their biology and embracing transgenderism, the rate of attempted suicide is over 40 percent¹, ten times the rate of the general population. Depression, psychosis, and suicide occur frequently both before and after sex reassignment therapies." (Anderson, 2019, pp. 49-50,107)

There are people who are suffering, and we have the truth. How do we help these people?

How do we, as Ephesians 4:15 says, speak the truth in love?

Today I am going to provide three practical answers to that question...three ways in which we, as Christians, can speak the truth in love about gender.

How do we do that?

1.) Point the Lost to the Gospel



Look at verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 6 with me.

1 Cor. 6:9-11 - 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

- Don't you realize that God will not allow the unrighteous into His kingdom?
- For instance... (Paul provides us with a long list of different types of sin/rebellion against the Creator)

Be not deceived: neither fornicators (*those who violate God's design for physical intimacy within marriage*) *those who practice sexual immorality outside of God's design within marriage*), nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate nor abusers of themselves with mankind (*both terms in reference to homosexual activity which is a violation of God's design for physical intimacy between a man and woman*), 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous (*greedy*), nor drunkards, nor revilers (*verbal abusers*), nor extortioners (*financial exploitation*), shall inherit the kingdom of God.

¹ Anne P. Haas, L. Rodgers, and Jody Herman, "Suicide Attempts Among Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Adults: Findings of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey," Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, January 2014, <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/AFSP-Williams-Suicide-Report-Final.pdf>

- Paul makes this very strong statement in verses 9-10. Those who rebel against God (their Creator) in these ways will not enter in His kingdom. Strong statement... but then in verse 11, he follows up that strong statement with a shocking statement.

Referring to the Christians in Corinth, he says...

11 And such were some of you:

- That's how some of you used to live your life. Some of you used to be caught up in sexual immorality. Some of you were alcoholics. Some of you were lovers of money. Some of you were abusers. Some of you were con men...And such were some of you...but...something changed. Something happened. What was it? what does it say?

And such were some of you, but....

You turned over a new leaf? You graduated from AA? You fixed your marriage? You changed your orientation? Is that what it says? No. It says...

but ye are washed, - your sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ

but ye are sanctified – you have been made holy and set apart to God.

but ye are justified – you have been made so that when God looks down upon you, He sees you just as if you'd never sinned.

How is that possible? What happened in the lives of these people? Church, they got saved.

(1) They recognized that their sin separated them from their God. (2) They recognized that they could never atone for that sin. (3) They recognized that Christ died in their place to atone for their sin, and (4) they turned from their sin to faith in Jesus Christ looking to Him to save them.

They said, "I don't want this sin. I want Jesus. He is better."

Church, God can bring about miraculous, seemingly impossible transformation in the life of a sinner, but do you know where that transformation always begins? Salvation. It begins with someone embracing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It starts with them realizing that He is better than anything sin could ever offer. It is from that starting point that God's transforming work in every area of a person's life begins.

- Here's my point. Here's the application: As a Christian, my aim is not to convert someone from transgenderism apart from the gospel. The issue is bigger than that. Gender is just one area in which acknowledge God's sovereignty in our lives. I'm not just trying to get them to turn from one area of sin in their life. I want them to turn from all of the sin in their life to the only one who can save them from it: Jesus...and the only one who can fulfill them in their life: Jesus! That's the starting point.

- It shouldn't surprise us when lost people act like lost people. So what's the solution? Help the lost to become found, and then watch as God/the Holy Spirit begins to transform that person's life from the inside out.

If the primary need for those struggling with their gender identity is first to be saved and enter into a relationship with God (who can fulfill them in a way that nothing else can), how can we as Christians help them towards that practically?

(1) Be a friend to the lost

Luke 7:33-34 - 33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

- Jesus did not affirm sinners in their behavior, but He spent time with them. Why? Because He cared for them, and He knew that He had what they needed. It was because He came to seek and save the lost that His critics called Him a friend of sinners.
- Jesus was a friend to sinners, and there ought to be people in our lives who do not know God that we are building relationships with for the purpose of helping them know God.
- We build those relationships by spending time with them, by being kind to them, by listening to them...loving the sinner without affirming their sin.
- Now that doesn't mean that we bend the truth.
 - o For instance, I'm not going to use pronouns that contradict how God has made a person. I'm not going to bend on the truth. However, in love for that person I'm trying to share the gospel with and build a relationship with, I might just avoid third person pronouns altogether. If I were talking to them, I could use "you", and if I'm talking about them I could use their name. That's what I would probably do.
 - o Regardless, we need to be a friend to the lost recognizing that people are rarely argued into the family of God. More often they are loved into the family of God as they see God's love flowing to us and through us.

(2) Ask questions

Jesus was a master of asking questions in a way that led people to think on and see the truth.

Example – Jesus with the disciples in Matthew 16:13-17

- Instead of just saying to His disciples, "I am the Christ", He asks them some questions.
- He asks, "Who do men say that I am?" Then He asks, "Who do you say that I am?" When Peter gives the right answer, Jesus recognizes it before the group.

He was a master of asking good questions.

Illustration – I don't know if you realize this, but I actually try to do this a lot in my preaching. Instead of just making a lot of statements, I'll try to ask a lot of what? Questions. See I just did it right there.

I want to encourage you as you're building relationships with lost people who don't know God to ask questions that will lead them to think and begin considering Him.

Do you think there's a Creator? If there were a Creator, what would that mean for us as His creation? What do you think happens after this life? Have you ever had any experiences with church in your past? Has anyone ever shared with you what the Bible says about eternity?

(3) Be prepared to give an answer

1 Peter 3:15 - 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Be ready to answer questions, but also realize that this doesn't mean you need to have the answer to every question memorized off the top of your head. If someone asks you a good question and you're not really sure of the answer, don't be afraid to say, "That's a great question. Let me do some thinking on that and, how about I get back to you next week?"

That's perfectly okay and if you approach questions that way then you won't have to be anxious about someone asking you a question that you don't have an answer to.

As Christians, we need to speak the truth in love about gender. How do we do that? First off, we do it by pointing the lost to the gospel. For, how can the lost recognize the Lordship of Christ over their gender if they don't first recognize that He is Lord? We need to point the lost to the gospel.

Number 2, we need to point the saved to the Scripture.

2.) Point the Saved to the Scripture



The way that we approach conversations with fellow Christians about any topic is inevitably going to be different than the way we approach conversations with the lost. Why? Because the Christian recognizes God as their Creator who dictates their identity,

purpose and expression in life, and so that's our starting point in conversations with fellow Christians.

So, as we seek to help Christians who are struggling with Gender Dysphoria, the key question is, "What does 'who' say?" God. And where do we find God's instructions for us for every pertinent area of life? The Scripture. That's right. Thus, we point the saved to the Scripture.

How do we do that practically? Well let's talk about two different scenarios: (1) General Gender Dysphoria (2) Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria

(1) General Gender Dysphoria

As a reminder with General Gender Dysphoria, there is a very real distressing disconnect between the mind and the body. It's a psychological condition, and there are Christians who struggle with it, just as there are Christians who struggle with schizophrenia. How do we help them? What is the Biblical treatment plan, and how does it compare and contrast with culture's treatment plan? Turn in your Bible to Romans 12:1-2.

Romans 12:1-2 – 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your **bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

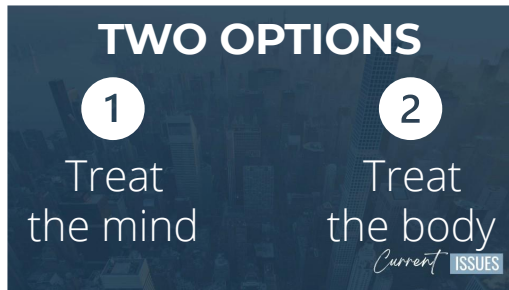
- Implicit in this plea from Paul in verse 1 is the truth that every area of my life, including my body, is His and is to be used in His service.
- Elsewhere Paul wrote...1 Cor. 6:19-20 - 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.
- Present your body, which is God's, as a living sacrifice to Him.

2 And be not conformed to this world:

- Don't be like this world, a world that expresses itself in rebellion against its Creator.

but be ye transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

- The renewing of the mind is the process of bringing my thoughts and feelings into alignment with the truth of what God says. When how I feel or what I think contradicts what my Creator says, I choose to believe what my Creator says.
- Church, more specifically, when a Christian's mind is at odds with his God given body, with reality, the solution is not to try to alter reality, but rather to bring the mind into alignment with reality.



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- This really strikes to the heart of the debate over how to help people with Gender Dysphoria because there really are only two options: (1) treat the mind (2) treat the body.
 - Church, the approach of treating the mind isn't just biblical. It's rational.
 - Illustration – “In all other disorders of the mind, the starting point is to recognize that feelings are not the same as reality.” (Anderson, 2019, pp. 110-111)
 - If someone is struggling with anorexia, the false belief that they are fat, even though they are too skinny (in an unhealthy way), the right treatment plan would not be to affirm them in their delusion, but to help them see the truth.
 - If someone is struggling with any delusion, it doesn't help that person to affirm that delusion and to try to morph reality around that delusion.
- And yet that's exactly what the culture's recommended treatment plan is for gender dysphoria.
 - Immediate Social transition (dress and pronouns)
 - Puberty blockers (age 10)
 - Cross sex hormones (age 16)
 - Sex reassignment surgery (age 18)
 - That's culture's go to treatment plan, and church I'm telling you it is unbiblical and irrational. That's especially true in light of the fact that “the vast majority of children with gender dysphoria - 80 to 95 percent - naturally grow out of it, if they aren't encouraged to transition and they naturally progress through puberty.”² (Anderson, 2019, p. 134)

If there were a Christian within my sphere of influence struggling with Gender Dysphoria, I would encourage them to seek professional and Biblical counseling that would help them to bring their mind into alignment with the reality of what God has made them. Then even

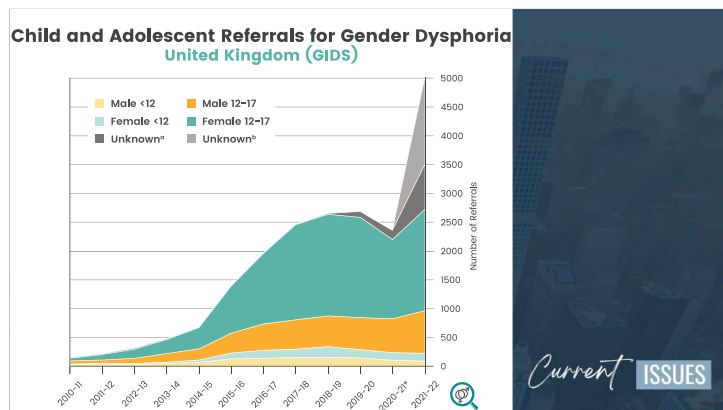
² (Paul R. McHugh, Paul Hruz, and Lawrence S. Mayer, Brief of Amici Curiae in Support of Petitioner, Gloucester County School Board v. G. G., Supreme Court of the United States, No. 16-273 (January 10, 2017), 12, http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/supreme_court_preview/briefs/2016_2017/16-273_amicus_pet_mchugh.authcheckdam.pdf) (Jesse Singal, "What's Missing From the Conversation about Transgender Kids," Science of Us, New York, July 25, 2016)

if that disconnect persists, I would encourage them in faith to embrace what God says over how they feel.

Well, what about scenario 2: Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria?

(2) Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria

There is a big difference between lifelong severe gender dysphoria (as a psychological condition) and rapid onset gender dysphoria. Rapid onset gender dysphoria is a term used to describe a growing number of teenagers and young people identifying as trans because of social influences/social contagion.” (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 161)



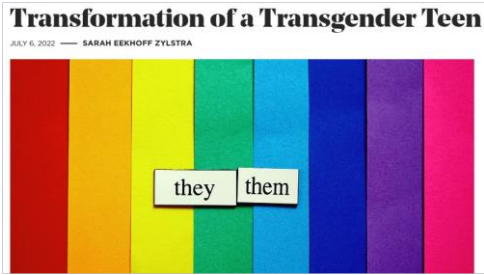
“For instance, the Tavistock Centre in London, the main gender clinic in the United Kingdom, treated 51 (34 males, 17 females) children and teenagers in 2009 who had gender dysphoria or were identifying as trans*. In 2016, the same clinic saw 1,766 (557 males, 1,209 females) children and teenagers, and in 2019 it saw 2,364 (624 males, 1,740 females).⁵ That’s more than a 5,000 percent increase among females in ten years. Researchers have documented similar upsurges, among biological females in particular, in many Western countries: Sweden,⁶ the United Kingdom,⁷ the Netherlands,⁸ New Zealand,⁹ Canada,¹⁰ and the United States.” (Sprinkle, 2021, p. 162)

Church, for us as Christians, in instances in which a loved one of ours (e.g. a child) is caught up in Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria, the key phrase in helping them is not “renew the mind”, it is “rescue the child”.

Jude 1:22-23 - 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

- Church, when someone is on fire, there is an urgency to rescue that person.
- If your child is caught up in ROGD, there has to be an urgency in the way you approach that situation.

To help us understand what this looks like I want to share with you a true story that was put out in an article last year by The Gospel Coalition.



Eva was in a church luncheon when she got an email from her 12-year-old daughter Grace. (Their names have been changed.)

“Mom and Dad, I need to tell you I’m not actually a girl,” she read. “My pronouns are they/them.”

Eva couldn’t breathe. She felt like she’d been punched in the gut. She hadn’t seen this coming.

Grace was experiencing what is often called “rapid-onset gender dysphoria,” in which friendship groups begin to experience similar gender questions at the same time. One in five Gen Z Americans now identify as LGBT+, double the number of millennials (one in 10) and quadruple the number of Gen X Americans (about one in 20).

In many ways, it’s surprising that someone like Grace would struggle with gender identity. Her mom and dad love Jesus and each other. She’s got a couple of siblings, a strong church family, and a sharp mind. For as long as she can remember, she’s believed in God.

When Grace was 12, she logged onto a social networking site called DeviantArt. “At first, I was posting artwork with my friends, but eventually the ‘gay is good’ message became unavoidable,” she said.

She’d never heard of someone being transgender before. “I was like, ‘What is this?’ and they were like, ‘Oh, there are guys who are actually girls, and girls who are actually guys, and some people are actually neither.’”

Grace asked her mom about it, and Eva explained they didn’t agree with those categories of thinking. Grace, who is on the autism spectrum and thinks in black and white, told her online friends she didn’t agree with them.

They didn’t fight her or bully her. Instead, she was invited to the Gender & Sexualities Alliance (GSA) club at her school.

Grace began going to the weekly unsupervised lunchtime meetings, listening to other kids from her middle school and high school talk about sex, gender, and how they felt uncomfortable in their bodies.

Being a 12-year-old girl, Grace felt uncomfortable in her body too.

She thought maybe she was agender, which means not identifying with either sex. But as time went on, Grace realized she'd prefer to be male. After all, she'd love to be as tall and strong as her brother. And it seemed like all she needed was some testosterone.

"Nobody in the GSA club had gotten prescription hormones yet because we were all fairly young," she said. "Nobody knew about all the side effects of giving girls testosterone—the bone demineralization, increased rate of cancer, heart attacks, and vaginal atrophy."

Instead, what everyone talked about was the drama of coming out.

"All my friends on social media and I were going around with each other, dramatizing coming out," Grace said. "I made it way more dramatic than it had to be. I emailed my parents with my announcement and my pronouns."

"It was a nightmare," Eva said. "I've never suffered from anxiety before, but the first two weeks [after Grace's announcement] I didn't eat or sleep." She couldn't believe this was happening.

Eva took Grace to the school counselor, to the pediatrician, to the principal. "They all tell you you have to affirm, or your child will commit suicide," Eva said. "But my background is in education and psychology, and I knew that didn't make sense. I could think of 15 reasons [other than being transgender] why a young girl might do this."

However, with every step Grace took toward the transgender narrative, she was applauded and congratulated at school and online. When she went public with her transition, "it was like eating the Mario Kart ability mushroom," she said. "You start to glow and become invincible."

As a girl, Grace struggled with socialization. However, as a transgender-identified male, Grace was suddenly popular. "Everyone in the school was like, 'You're amazing! We love you!'" she said. "

She was also powerful, because now she was a victim. "People were so obsessed with victimhood," she said. "We'd be in GSA club, listing all the ways we were minorities. . . . I started telling people about the tiny sliver of Jewish I have in me because I wanted to be anything other than white."

Moreover, when you claim a transgender identity, "you're untouchable," Eva said. "Nobody can question you. You can get teachers fired. Adults have to kowtow to you."

Even your parents.

"One of the biggest themes is, if your parent agrees with you, you need to be kind and loving," Grace said. "But if your parents are opposed, hurt them as much as you like. They aren't even human beings."

Time passed and not long after, Grace finished seventh grade and spent the summer with her family.

“By the end of that summer, she had calmed down a lot and was less militant,” Eva said. “We thought we were on the way back to sanity.” Then, the first day of eighth grade, “she was right back into it up to her neck.”

A daughter whose feelings about transgender identity changed with her social environment? Who told her parents if they didn’t agree with her choices, they hated her? Who was able to hide what she was doing at school from her family?

Eva bought another book—this time it was a book by Steven Hassan on how to help a loved one leave a cult.

“Steven Hassan lays out a strategy for getting people out,” she said. “I marked his book up with comments, because it confirmed everything I’d been thinking.”

(1) Step 1- Removal

“The second worst thing we did, besides giving Grace social media, was let her stay in public school another year,” Eva said.

That’s because the first rule of getting a family member out of a cult is to physically remove them from it. Even though Seth and Eva had pulled her internet access, by the end of eighth grade, Grace was firmly entrenched in her male identity. In the spring, Eva found out she was using the boys’ bathroom at school.

“I said to the principal that I didn’t want my 13-year-old autistic daughter in the bathroom with boys,” Eva said. “She said, ‘That’s our policy. Everyone can use the bathroom they want.’ And I thought, I cannot protect my child at school.”

Eva ordered homeschooling curriculum and signed up for a co-op. “I never thought I’d homeschool,” she said. “I was never a supporter of homeschooling. But that April I decided she wasn’t going back to public school.”

Changing schools—especially when your child is in junior high or high school, and especially when they’re receiving piles of affirmation—is not easy. Grace hated the idea so much she ran away for a night to a neighbor’s house.

“That was a nightmare,” Eva said. “And the first six weeks of high school were pretty miserable.”

But she stuck with it.

(2) Step 2- Relationships

Homeschooling also helped with another strategy in cult rescue, which is to build loyalty and healthy relationships inside the family.

"I remember going to Five Guys with Dad," Grace said. "I was so furious with him. And we were sitting there, not even talking, eating our burgers. But I couldn't stay mad at him, because I was eating a burger he bought me."

Eva talked to Grace about things other than gender—her schoolwork, her artwork, their weekend plans. She asked Grace to help her with things or to go places with her.

This was tricky to navigate because, of course, there was always an elephant in the room.

"Some Christian psychologists allow space for letting the kid try out another gender," Ferguson said. "I encourage parents not to give a lot of ground, because there is a usurping of the parents' authority that is deeply problematic." And on a practical level, the less a child transitions—pronouns, clothing, hormones—the fewer barriers are erected to a transition back.

"If you loved me, you'd use my pronouns," Grace told Eva.

"You are asking me to make a choice between offending God and offending you," Eva said. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to offend you."

(3) Step 3 – Reason

For Grace, the first questions that got through didn't come from her parents, but from the kids in her homeschool co-op.

"[The co-op] was so incredibly conservative," she said. "For the first time, I had to defend my opinions or I would risk looking stupid."

When her classmates started asking her questions about gender identity that she couldn't answer she "doubled down." Grace said, "I decided to come up with irrefutable arguments, so I researched and researched. But I couldn't do it. I searched and searched for the logic behind it, but there was nothing to find, because there is no logic behind it."

Mainly, she couldn't figure out why transgender identity was so prevalent in the modern West, but nearly nonexistent in other cultures and times. She wondered, Have I been fighting on the wrong side this whole time?

Grace started to boomerang.

"One day she painted her nails pink, and I tried not to show any reaction," said Eva, who was dancing inside. "But the very next day, she wrote 'he/him' on all her nails."

That continued for six months—a step toward feminine expression, followed by a doubling down on her masculine identity.

"I always tell parents that's a good sign," Eva said, who knows of other children who did this before desisting. "They're starting to come back to you."

Grace began thinking clearly again: “Logic brought me to prayer, and prayer brought me back.”

She remembers walking her neighbor’s dog, wrestling with God, near the end of her freshman year of high school. “I knew I couldn’t be a trans kid and a Christian at the same time,” she said. “I had to choose. Very begrudgingly, I told God, ‘Fine. If you made me to be a woman, whatever. Fine.’”

A week later, her gender dysphoria was gone. She felt uncomfortable but immensely relieved at the same time.

Her mom wasn’t as relieved. “You’d think I’d have been jumping up and down screaming ‘Hallelujah!’ but I didn’t,” she said. “I was wondering if this was just another episode of boomeranging, and if tomorrow or the next day she’d fall back into it.”

As weeks passed and Grace began acting more like herself, Eva slowly let herself relax.

“I cried with relief,” she said. “I slowly began telling family and friends that we’d gotten her back.” ...after two years.

Through online and in-person conversations, Eva’s been able to hear from other families battling transgender identity.

“It’s all the same story,” she said. “The child just came home and said they were transgender or nonbinary. They were on social media. They were invited to the GSA club. It’s almost like I can tell you the story before they even start talking.”

Perfect parenting is no guard against a child’s sin or mistakes. What they need—what we all need—is real God given transformation.

“The Christian hope is to entrust our physical bodies to the Maker, who will raise it from the dead, and in the meantime, we work for the transformation of the inner man. By contrast, the gender movement says, ‘I will arrest control of the body from the Maker and remake it in the image of my own inner self.’” (Zylstra, 2022)

The renewal of the mind and the radical rescue of the child.

As Christians, we need to speak the truth in love on gender. How do we do that? We point the lost to God. We point the saved to Scripture. Finally, this morning, we point our kids to their Creator.

3.) Point the Kids to the Creator



Parents, there are three key terms that you need to be discipling into your kids regardless of how old they are. These terms, when understood and defined biblically, will help prepare your kids to face the falsehoods of the world on gender and a whole host of other subjects.

What are those terms?

Key Term 1: Identity



- Identity addresses the question: "Who am I?"
- Key Verse: Col. 1:16-17 – 16... all things were created by Him and for Him. 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.
- Who am I? I am not what I think or feel. I am what my Creator has made me.

Key Term 2: Expression



- Expression addresses the question: "How do I act?"
- Key Verse: Proverbs 3:5-6 – Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.
- How do I act? I act in obedience to God because He created me and knows what it is best for me.

Key Term 3: Purpose



- Purpose addresses the question: “Why am I here?”
- Key Verse: Matthew 22:37 – Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.
- Why am I here? Why was I created? I was created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I was created to be in relationship with God and make known His greatness to everyone I come in contact with.

Application

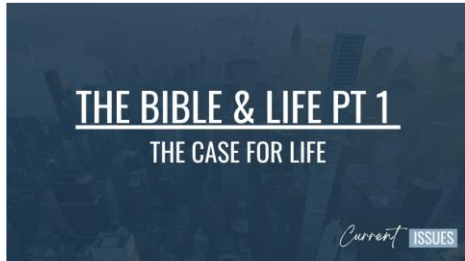
As Christians, we are not only called upon to know the truth, but to speak the truth in love. How do we do that?

- We point the lost to the gospel.
 - o In order for Christ to be Lord over their gender, they first need to accept Him as Lord, and they need to realize that He is better than anything sin could ever offer.
- We point the saved to the Scripture.
 - o We encourage them to renew their mind rather than reject their God given body.
- We point our kids to their Creator.
 - o We do so by disciplining them in their God given identity, expression, and purpose.

The Bible & Life Pt 1

The Case for Life

Sermon



In October for missions month, we took a brief pause from our series on the Bible and current issues. If you recall, up to this point in the series we have already covered several pertinent topics. Josh kicked off our series by speaking on what the Bible says about caring for the poor, and then I followed that message up with a three-part study on the Bible and gender. If you missed any of those messages or you would just like to go back and revisit them or forward them to someone, the recordings of those messages are all available on the church's YouTube page.

Over the course of the next month or so, we're going to talk about what the Bible says about a number of additional topics ranging from marriage to racism and rest, but before we get to those topics, over the next two Sundays I am going to be speaking on the topic of the Bible and abortion...or to title it a little differently: the Bible and life.

Next week we're going to get more practical in talking about the care of life. How do we care for the unborn? How do we care for those who are considering having an abortion? How do we care for those who have had an abortion and are dealing with deep seated guilt and trauma that so often comes with that?

So, next week we're going to talk about the care of life, but today I am going to make the case for life. As we study today what is revealed in Scripture and what is supported by science, we're going to discover that the case for life is really simple, consisting of two primary parts.

As we study these two aspects of the case for life, the first aspect that we're going to see this morning is the value of human life.

1.) The Value of Human Life



If you remember back to our study on the Bible and gender, we talked about how there were three key terms that Christians needed to understand from a Biblical perspective. Those three terms were identity (who we are), expression (how we act), and purpose (why we're here). We talked about how that as Christians who believe in a Creator, all three of those terms are derived from our maker. If God has made me, then I'm not whatever I say I am. I'm what he has made me. If God has made me, then I'm not free to just express myself however I want. I should express myself in light of how He designed me to function. If God has made me, then my purpose/my reason for being is not found within. It is derived from Him, the one who made me.

The truth is that you can't understand who you are, why you're here, and how you should live without understanding how all three of those things are rooted in creation, derived from your Creator. Church, when it comes to the value of human life, you can't really understand that either until you understand how it too is rooted in Creation.

What's so special about human life that's different from plant life or animal life?

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 1:26-27. As you're turning there, let me give you some Creation context.

Genesis 1 tells us that on..

Day 1 – God created the heavens and the earth (time, space, and matter)

Day 2 – God created the atmosphere over top of the water.

Day 3 – God created dry land and plants.

Then on days 4-6 God began to fill the spaces that He had created.

Day 4 – God filled space with the sun, moon, stars.

Day 5 – God filled the sky and the sea with birds and sea creatures.

Day 6 – God filled the dry land with land animals.

God has created all of these things up to this point in time, but then on day 6, God created something unique, something unlike anything else that He had created up to this point in time.

Genesis 1:26-27 - 26 And God said, Let us (there's the trinity: three in one) make man in our **image**, after our **likeness**: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man **in his own image**, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

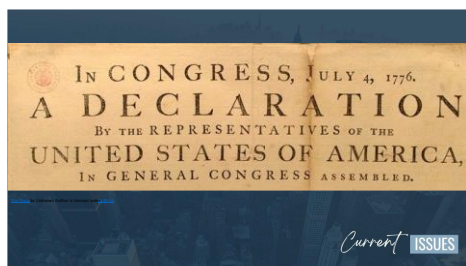
- Every part of Creation has value because God made it. That's why Christians should care about animals and our planet. God made those things. They are His creation...but there is only one part of creation whose intrinsic value is derived from the fact that it was made in the image of the Creator...and that's human life.
- Human life is made in the image of God.
- What does it mean to be made in the image of God? Is it talking about our bodies?
 - o John 4:24 – God is a spirit (*He is an immaterial being*) and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.
 - o “When the Bible says we are made in the image of God, it's not talking about physical characteristics. Rather, it is talking about being like God in immaterial ways – namely that God has given us an immaterial, eternal soul with the capacity for reason, free will, and a real relationship with Him.” (Chappell, 2021, p. 89)

Every single human being on the planet was specially made by God, in His image, to be in relation with Him...and that, Biblically, is why every human life has such immense value...because it belongs to Him.

It's the reason why the taking of innocent human life is such a big deal. It's because we are taking something that does not belong to us...but rather that belongs to Him. This concept is clearly stated in the Scripture.

Genesis 9:6 - 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood (*who taketh innocent human life*), by man shall his blood be shed: (*why?*) for in the image of God made he man. (*the reason why the taking of innocent human life is so significant is because that life was made by God in His image, and it belonged to Him*)

I don't know if you realize it, but this concept of human value being rooted in God creating us in His image is baked into the foundation of our country.



July 4, 1776 – the unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America: “we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights...among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”



Aug. 28, 1963 – Martin Luther King Jr declared from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, “Even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Our country was built upon the belief that human value and rights are not granted by the government. They are God given from our Creator to all mankind.

The greatest moral injustices that have ever occurred on the face of this planet have been the direct result of the denial of that truth...the denial of the truth that all human beings have equal value because they are all made in the image of God.

Illustration – how does the Holocaust happen? How does slavery happen? It starts with the denial of the value of some human lives, whether they’re Jewish or African American of whatever they may be.



Illustration – This past year I set out to do a lot of study on American history (ranging from the Water gate scandal to the American Revolution and everything inbetween). One of the books I read was *Up from Slavery*. It’s Booker T Washington’s autobiography describing his journey following the Civil War in the reconstruction time period...a journey that began with him as a slave and ended with him as the pioneer of African American education. It’s a remarkable story, and his positive attitude and outlook was incredibly inspirational to me.... but it also made me curious about the Civil War and slavery and the end of slavery in our country and how all of that came to be...so I decided to read a biography on Lincoln. I figured it would give me a good peripheral view of what was going on in the country at the time (to live through that time period from his lens). But I didn’t want to just read some skewed accounting that only highlighted the positives. I wanted the whole picture. So I

decided to read a two volume 2,000-page accounting of the life of Lincoln entitled *Lincoln: A Life*.

- I'll tell you this. It has been sobering in a lot of ways. It was gut wrenching to be exposed first hand to the animosity that so many had towards African Americans. From the awful denigrating language used by presidential candidates like Stephen Douglas to the consensus opinions that existed in both the north and the south about inferior races, it was really hard to read.
- But for me, the most eye-opening realization that I came to was that during this time period, the justifications/the arguments for slavery revolved around the dehumanization of African Americans and the talking points that were used are almost identical to how the unborn are being talked about and dehumanized today. Listen to this.
 - o The slaves are not people...well, they're not people like you and me.
 - o If you don't like slavery, then don't have one.
 - o If you're not willing to provide room and board for my freed slave, then you don't have the right to say I should free him.
 - o Even if you made slavery illegal, you couldn't enforce it. You couldn't stop all slavery.
 - o If slavery ended tomorrow, what would we do with all the freed slaves? It's inconceivable.
 - o It's my property. It's my choice.
 - o Reading those dehumanizing talking points, and realizing that the same playbook is being used today went a long way in helping me to understand the moral significance of the moment we find ourselves in.

History is repeating itself, and it is repeating itself because a large portion of our country considers a significant part of the population as less than human and is treating them as such for their own convenience.

To help put it into perspective, let me share some statistics with you.



As of 2016, there are 186 abortions per 1000 live births (about 1 in 5). That means that for every five people in our country, there is one missing because of abortion. For every five people in this auditorium, there is one missing because of abortion. (Students for Life)

Between 1973 and the present, there have been nearly 65 million abortions that have taken place in the United States alone. (National Right to Life Educational Foundation) That number is 10 times the number of Jews who were killed during the Holocaust and is the equivalent to the entirety of the population of the United Kingdom.

On an annual basis, our country aborts a million babies. That is as many abortions every year as the number of Americans who were killed in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War 1 and 2, Korean War, Vietnam, Persian-Gulf War, Iraq and Afghans wars combined. (98 Avoiding Confusion)

According to data that came out last month, since the overturning of Roe v Wade in June of 2022, although the number of abortions in states that enacted restrictive legislation has declined significantly, the total number of abortions in the country increased year over year. (Sherman, 2023)

What's happening is a big deal, and understanding the magnitude of what's happening in just our country, the key question then becomes, "Well, are the unborn human beings?" It's pretty self-evident that human life has value, but are the unborn really human? Because if they are, then you can't justify the taking of their life any more than you could justify taking the life of a three year old.

We've seen the value of human life this morning, but then secondly today, we see also the origin of human life.

2.) The Origin of Human Life



If human life is sacred and precious, then it is of utmost importance that we know when it begins, and that we protect it when it does.

When does human life begin? For the answer to that question, we're going to start with the Scripture, and then we're going to look at the science.

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 139:13-16. Listen to what David writes about God's role in his fetal development (and consider that this was all written before the days of ultrasounds).

Psalm 139:13-16 - 13 For thou hast possessed my reins (*the Hebrew phrase that's used here can also be translated: you have formed my inward parts*): thou hast covered me in my mother's womb (*you have protected/shielded me in my mother's womb*).

- I want you to take note how David identifies with the fetus in his mother's womb. That wasn't some blob of cells. That was me.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

- Take note of how David looks to God as the one who made him. He's going to describe what he means by that.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

- When I was developing in my mother's womb, that was no secret to you. You knew me when I was being knit together in the womb of my mother.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect;

- You saw me in my earliest stages of development.

and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

- Every part of me, and every day of my life was written in your book before any of them ever even came to be.

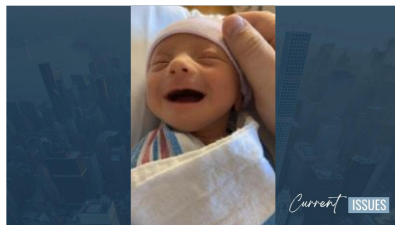


Illustration – baby Danielle

- My brother and sister-in-law just gave birth to their first child: a little girl by the name of Danielle. Mom was diagnosed with severe preeclampsia which led to Danielle being born 6 weeks early weighing 4 ½ pounds.
- But what passages like Psalm 139 tell us is that Danielle did not magically come into being the moment she was delivered. She was just as much Danielle in the womb, and she wasn't alone in there either. God was present with her from the very first moments of her life, and He wasn't just some passive observer. He was the orchestrator of the whole thing.

What David says about God's involvement in his formation in his mother's womb isn't an isolated occurrence. In fact, it's confirmed by God Himself when speaking to the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:4-5 - Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before **I formed thee** in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee (*I set you apart*), and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

- I made you in the womb...and before you were even delivered I had plans for your life.



One last passage I want you to turn to is Exodus 21:22-23. In this passage, we're going to take note of how the law of Moses for Israel dealt with the issue of the unborn in the Old Testament.

Exodus 21:22-23 - 22 If men strive, *(if two guys are fighting)* and hurt a woman with child *(and one of them brings harm upon a woman with child; perhaps he accidentally strikes her)*, so that her fruit depart from her *(so that it causes her to go into early delivery)*, and yet no mischief follow *(she delivers early, but mother and baby both end up okay)*: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine *(he'll pay some kind of civil settlement as determined by the woman's husband and as approved by the judges)*. 23 And if any mischief follow *(to either the mother or the unborn baby)*, then thou shalt give life for life, *(why? Because as Gen. 9:6 tells us, both mom and baby are made in the image of God.)*

- "Under God's law in Exodus 21, the unborn child was given legal protection as a human being made in the image of God. Thus, causing the death of an unborn child was a serious crime, and the punishment for it was 'a life for a life.'" (Got Questions)

So according to the Scripture, the unborn in their mother's womb are known, made, and protected by God as human beings made in His image. There is no distinction made in the Scripture between the value of babies inside of versus outside of the womb.

Scripture teaches us that human life begins in the womb as a work of God, but when exactly does that take place? When specifically does human life begin?

Advancements in biology and medical technology have provided a clear scientific answer to this question.

Dr. Hymie Gordon, professor of medical genetics and physician at the Mayo Clinic said the following:

"I think we can now also say that the question of the beginning of life – when life begins – is no longer a question for theological or philosophical dispute. It is an established scientific fact. Theologians and philosophers may go on to debate the meaning of life or purpose of life, but it is an established fact that all life, including human life, begins at the moment of conception. I have never seen in my own scientific reading, long before I became concerned with issues of life of this nature, that anyone has ever argued that life did not begin at the moment of conception and that it was a human conception if it resulted from the

fertilization of the human egg by a human sperm. As far as I know, these have never been argued against.” (Beckwith, 2007, p. 68)

Leading embryology textbooks affirm this. Keith Moore and T. V. N. Persaud, in *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology*, a widely used embryology text, write that “human development begins at fertilization when a male gamete or sperm (spermatozoon) unites with a female gamete or oocyte (ovum) to form a single cell—a zygote. This highly specialized, totipotent cell marked the beginning of each of us as a unique individual.” (Moore & Persaud, 2008, p. 15)

In 1981, a U.S. Senate judiciary subcommittee heard expert testimony on when human life begins. Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth of Harvard University Medical School told the subcommittee, “It is incorrect to say that biological data cannot be decisive. . . . It is scientifically correct to say that an individual human life begins at conception.” Dr. Watson A. Bowes of the University of Colorado Medical School stated, “The beginning of a single human life is from a biological point of view a simple and straightforward matter—the beginning is conception.” The subcommittee report concludes, “Physicians, biologists, and other scientists agree that conception marks the beginning of the life of a human being—a being that is alive and is a member of the human species. There is overwhelming agreement on this point in countless medical, biological, and scientific writings.” (Subcommittee on Separation of Powers to Senate Judiciary Committee S-158, Report, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 1981.)

“In short, what that means for each of us in the room is that you didn’t come from an embryo. You once were an embryo...and the science today has never been clearer that from the earliest stages of development, the unborn are distinct, living, whole human beings, regardless of size or location.”

Just as infants and toddlers and teenagers are all human beings at different stages of development, so too the unborn are human beings, just at an earlier stage of development.

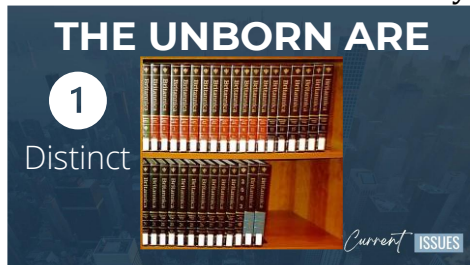
What does it mean though to say that the unborn are distinct, living, whole human beings?

Let’s take this one step at a time.



The unborn are distinct. What does that mean? From the moment of conception, that first embryonic cell is distinct from any cell in either of its parents. There's mom's DNA. There's dad's DNA, and then there's baby unique DNA which is a combination of the two. That embryo is distinct from mom and dad, and from within itself, that single cell has everything it needs to direct its own development. (Klusendorf, 2009, p. 38)

- The genetic information stored at conception in this one cell...this information that will direct every step of the child's development is 50 times the amount of information contained in the encyclopedia Britannica. (Beckwith, 2007, p. 70)



You have mom. You have dad, and from the moment of conception with that embryo you have something unique and distinct. It is incorrect biologically to say that that embryo is mom or dad. No. It's something new. The unborn are distinct.

Number two: the unborn are living.



This seems pretty obvious at face value, because dead things don't grow, and yet the unborn obviously do, and they do quite rapidly.

Nevertheless, in a more technical sense, scientists typically have three criteria for determining whether or not something is alive. (1) Is it irritable? You say, well pastor, if that's the case, I know some people who are very alive. Well, that's not exactly what they mean. When we talk about irritability, we're talking about whether or not it reacts to external stimuli. Living things react. (2) Does it metabolize? Every one of us in this room has metabolism. We eat or drink things that our body then takes and processes and converts into energy. That's why the longer you go without food or drink, the weaker you get. Your body needs food to metabolize into energy. Living things convert food to energy. (3) Does it grow? Living things grow.

Do the unborn meet those three criteria? Absolutely. From the moment of conception, the unborn are irritable. They respond to external stimuli. They metabolize. They convert food to energy. They grow...rapidly. (Klusendorf, 2009, p. 38)

- Within one week, that single cell divides and increases to over 100 cells.

- Within three weeks, a primitive heart muscle begins to pulsate.
- Within the first month, other organs such as the liver, umbilical cord, kidneys and digestive tract begin to develop.
- Towards the end of the first month, arms and legs begin to appear as tiny buds.
- At the outset of the second month, the unborn look distinctly human, and mom likely doesn't even realize that she's pregnant yet.



- By the end of the second month, every internal and external organ the baby will ever have is present. From that point until adulthood, nothing new is formed. The changes we see are really just the growth and refinement of what's already there. (Beckwith, 2007, pp. 70-71)
- This picture right here (9 weeks) is the reason why 84% of mothers decide not to go through with abortion if they're shown an ultrasound. Because it's hard to look at that and to believe that it's not a living human being.

(1) The unborn are distinct. (2) The unborn are living. (3) The unborn are human beings.



“It's also clear that the embryo is human since it comes from human parents and has the genetic constitution characteristic of human beings. Put simply, human parents produce human offspring. To deny this, one must explain how two human parents can produce offspring that is not human but later becomes so. Most importantly, the embryo is a complete or whole human organism rather than part of another living entity. All of its cells work together in tandem toward the growth of a single entity, the embryo.” (Klusendorf, 2009, pp. 37-38)

The unborn are distinct, living, whole human beings made in the image of God. They are valuable to Him, and as such they should be valuable to us.

And yet there are many today that despite the scientific evidence still seek to dehumanize the unborn based on a number of factors: the four most common of which form the acronym SLED.

LESS THAN HUMAN BECAUSE OF

Size

Level of development

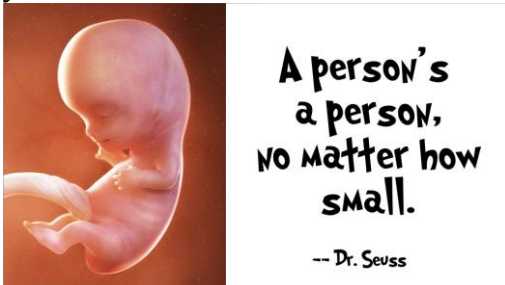
Environment

Dependency

Current ISSUES

Some try to dehumanize the unborn based on their size. It's true that they are small. At 9 weeks, the unborn are the size of an olive.

- But since when has size been the determination of human value? Are large people more human than small people? Is my three-year-old more human than my one-year-old?



- Illustration – how many of you have ever heard of the Dr. Seuss book *Horton Hears a Who?*
 - o My favorite line in that book is when Horton the elephant says, “A person is a person no matter how small.”

LESS THAN HUMAN BECAUSE OF

Size

Level of development

Environment

Dependency

Current ISSUES

Some try to dehumanize the unborn based on their level of development. It's true that the unborn are less developed than you and I.

- But once again, why would that be the determination of human value? My one-year-old is less developed than my three-year-old. Is she less human?
- Along these lines some try to tie an individual's humanity to the property of self-awareness. Only self-aware humans have value. Well then what about people who are sleeping or are in temporary comas? You say, “Well, that's not the same. Sleeping people wake up. Their lack of self-awareness is temporary.” The same is true of the unborn!!!
 - o Their self-awareness may not be an immediate property, but it is an inevitable one.

Some try to dehumanize the unborn based on their environment. They're a fetus inside the womb. They're a human being outside the womb.

- But where you are has no bearing on who you are. Does your value change when you cross the street or roll over in bed? If not, how can a journey of eight inches down the birth canal suddenly change the essential nature of the unborn from non-human to human?

Some try to dehumanize the unborn based on degree of dependency. They're not valuable because they're not viable.

- Here's the problem with that. When you tie value to viability, you are tying human value to technological advancement. Do you realize that in the last 50 years with the advancement of modern medical technology, the viability cut off for the unborn has shifted from 24 weeks to 20 weeks? Does that mean that a 20-week-old today is a human being, but a 20-week-old back in the 1970s was not? Then what about places in the world today that don't have modern medical technology? Does that mean a 20-week-old in America has human rights and value, but a 20-week-old in Africa is less than human? How can technology be the foundation of human value and rights?
- Here's the bigger issue with trying to dehumanize the unborn based on dependency. Do you think my one-year-old could survive on her own without someone taking care of her? Does her dependence make her less than human? No.

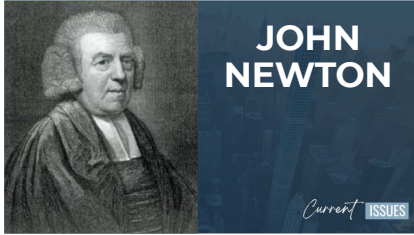
When does human life begin? The clearest and correct answer is that life begins at conception, the moment at which a distinct, living, whole human being comes into existence...and that life matters. It matters to God, and it should matter to us, because it is a life made by Him, for Him, and in His image.

The case for the sanctity of life is simple, and it is built upon two foundational principles. Human life has value, and human life begins at conception. If both of those statements are true, then the taking of that life is a matter of utmost moral significance.

Application

What's the takeaway from today?

First off, I would encourage you to stand as an advocate for those who cannot yet advocate for themselves. Fast and pray for life this Wednesday. Take part in the prayer walk for life on Saturday. We'll talk more practically about what it looks like to care for life in next week's message, but for today I just want to encourage you to stand up for the unborn, not with cruelty, but with courage and compassion.



Secondly, if you've had an abortion (which in a room this size, knowing the statistics, wouldn't surprise me) ...if you've had an abortion, I'm reminded of the words of Jesus from John 3:17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world though him might be saved." God desires all of us to receive His unmerited grace and unbounding forgiveness, but in order to receive that, we must first recognize our sin before God and then turn in faith to Jesus Christ to save us from it.

- I think most of us are familiar with the hymn "Amazing Grace", but what you may not know is that the author of it, John Newton, was a slave trader before he got saved...and it was God's amazing grace and forgiveness towards him that led him to pen the words of that song, which I will end today's message by reciting:
- Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see. Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
 - o He later said, "Two things I know. I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior."

The Bible and Life Pt 2

The Care for Life

Review



Well, last week we began the first of two messages on the Bible and the sanctity of life, and we started by examining the case for life. Looking to Scripture and history, we talked about how that human life is unique from other parts of creation in that it is made in the image of God...and as something that is made in the image of God, human life has tremendous value to God and therefore should have tremendous value to us. We talked about the value of human life.

Then, from there we talked about the origin of human life. We said that if human life is sacred and precious, then it is of utmost importance that we know when it begins, and that we protect it when it does. What did we discover? Well in looking to the Scriptures and then examining the science, we discovered that the unborn from the moment of conception are distinct, living, whole human beings and that differences in size, level of development, environment, and degree of dependency do not detract from their humanity.

Last week we examined the case for life which is basically built upon those two foundational ideas: (1) human life has value (2) human life begins at conception.

Nevertheless today for our message, we're going to get a little bit more practical. You say, "Okay, we understand that human life made in the image of God begins at conception. On the other hand, we also understand that abortion is commonplace in our world today. So, what do we do? How can we have a part in caring for life?" Well, today I'm going to give you five simple and practical ways in which you and I as Christians can care for life.

How can we as Christians care for life?

1.) Speak Up



Proverbs 31:8-9 – Open thy mouth for the dumb In the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy.

8 Open thy mouth for the dumb – speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

In the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction – speak up in the cause of those who without outside intervention will perish.

Open thy mouth – speak up.

Judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy – of those who have nothing and no one.

The unborn in our society today have no voice. They have no vote. They have no say. They are the poor and needy. They are the dumb in mouth. They are those who by the hundreds of thousands are appointed for destruction. Although as Christians, we can't fully eradicate evil, we can and should speak up against injustice when we encounter it.

When I think of speaking up against injustice, I can't help but think of William Wilberforce.

Illustration – William Wilberforce



- “William Wilberforce was born to Anglican parents in Hull, England in 1759. He grew up privileged and wealthy. He lived with an aunt and uncle for a period after his father’s death in 1768, at which time Wilberforce was exposed to evangelical views. In college, William Wilberforce lost his religious interest and began to engage in self-pleasing behavior. At the age of 21, Wilberforce became a member of Parliament and started his political career. Around this time, clergyman Isaac Milner accompanied Wilberforce to France, and they discussed religious matters. Milner

invited Wilberforce to study the New Testament with him, and in the course of study Wilberforce developed great sorrow over the condition of his soul. Soon after this, Wilberforce placed his faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Wilberforce experienced a radical change in his life: he stopped drinking and gambling and seriously considered life as a minister.

- In talking to his friend John Newton, Wilberforce was dissuaded from removing himself from politics, since a Christian presence would be valuable in Parliament. At Newton's urging, Wilberforce devoted himself to the abolition of slavery. His strong belief that all people were made in the image of God compelled him to fight against the British slave trade (see Genesis 1:27). Wilberforce was wealthy, as were the other members of Parliament, but sought to live a life in service to others due to his love for Christ. Not only did he persevere in fighting to end slavery, but he also founded a Bible society, regularly gave to charity, started a society ministering to the poor, founded a group focused on preventing animal cruelty, wrote tracts about the evils of slavery, and published a work on theology.
- Wilberforce experienced repeated legislative defeats in his quest to end slavery, but he finally saw success. The Slave Trade Act was enacted in 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, just three days before Wilberforce died. Although many people attempt to keep their 'private' Christian faith separate from their 'public' life, William Wilberforce did not see these distinctions." (Got Questions)

William Wilberforce spoke up for life. How can we do that?

How can we speak up for the unborn when we run into this issue in day-to-day conversations and interactions?

A.) Know the Scriptures

I would encourage you to know and have on hand these 4 Scripture passages. First off, on the value of human life:

Genesis 1:27 - 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

- Human life is made in the image of God, and it has value.

Then, on the origin of human life:

Jeremiah 1:5 - Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Psalms 139:13-16 - in which David talks about God knowing him and forming him in his mother's womb.

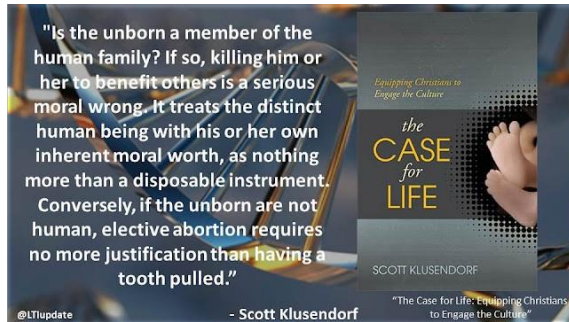
Psalms 127:3 - Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

How can Christians speak up on this topic?

- First off, know the Scripture...Secondly,

B.) Know the science

How many of you have ever heard of the name Scott Klusendorf?



Scott Klusendorf is probably the most well-known Christian author and speaker on the issue of abortion. He wrote the book *The Case for Life*, which is a must read on this topic for Christians. In particular, if you are a parent in this room of a high school or college aged young person, your child need to read this book. It would be a fantastic resource for them. It is a fantastic resource for any Christian.

Klusendorf does a really good job of presenting both the Scripture and the science. Last week when I talked about the unborn being distinct, living, whole human beings, that concept is taken straight from his book...and he does a really good job of breaking down and unraveling the pro-abortion talking points about viability and degree of development and some of those other things we talked about last week.

Another resource that I'd recommend that's a little bit more technical is a book entitled *Defending Life* by Francis Beckwith. It's written from a strictly philosophical and scientific perspective (there's no Scripture verses in it or anything like that), but this would be another great resource on this topic that I'd recommend.

Know the Scriptures. Know the science. Question the talking points.

C.) Question the talking points

It's important to remember that when it comes to day-to-day conversations about the sanctity of life and abortion, the goal is not to win a debate. It's to change a mind, and perhaps by extension to save a life.

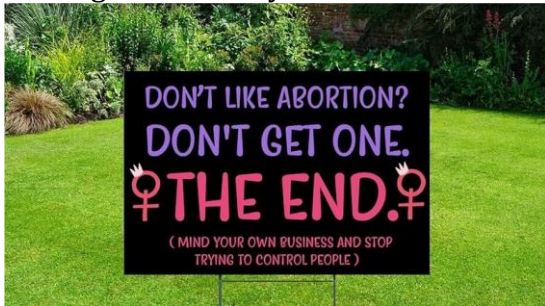
What's the best way to do that? Questions. Know the abortion talking points and question them. What do you mean by that? Let me give you a couple illustrations.

Talking Point 1 – It's my body. It's my choice.



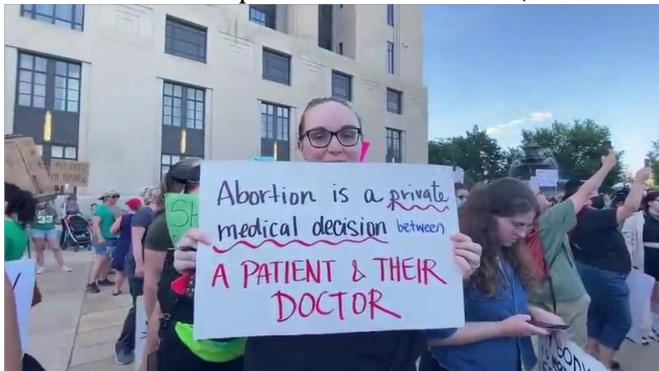
- How could you respond that?
 - o Is it really true that the unborn are identical to their mother's body? Isn't their DNA unique? Wouldn't it be more accurate to say that the unborn are in their mother's body?
- Well, women shouldn't have to care for that baby against their will. That's an infringement on their rights.
 - o Don't parents have a responsibility to care for the children they bring into the world? Isn't that why we have child neglect laws? Why does that responsibility apply to a three-year-old outside the womb, but not a 3-month-old inside the womb?

Talking Point 2 – If you don't like abortion, then don't get one.



- Doesn't that assume that the unborn aren't human beings? You wouldn't say that about taking the life of a three-year-old, would you? Isn't that the real issue, whether or not the unborn are whole human beings?

Talking Point 3 – Abortion is healthcare. It's a very private and intimate medical decision that should be kept between a woman, her doctor, and her family.



- Would you say that about a woman taking the life of a three-year-old?
- If a woman wanted to take the life of her three-year-old, would you say that such is a private decision that should only involve her and her doctor? Doesn't this assume that the unborn aren't human beings?

Talking Point 4 – Keep your Bible off my body. Christians are stepping into politics when they talk about abortion.



- Did you know that Christians have been against abortion since Christianity began in the first century?
 - o Although life was cheap and abortion was both legal and common in the first century Roman Empire, the early church took a strong stand against abortion. The Didache, an early Christian document states, "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born." (Taylor, 2021)

How can we as Christians care for life? (1) We can speak out.

2.) Pray



James 5:16 – 16... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

- The consistent, passionate prayer of a godly Christian makes a difference.
- How does that work? How does prayer work as it relates to the unchanging will of God and what He knows about the choices we'll make? I don't know. I just know that prayer does work.
- Illustration – I look at prayer like I look at my iPhone. I have no idea how it works, but I know that it works, and I know how to work it.

- When it comes to prayer, you don't need to know how it works. You just need to know that it works, and you need to work it.

Illustration – this is what the prayer walk was all about yesterday...



- What did you pray about? What can we pray about?
 - Pray for the babies that God would protect them and comfort them in their mother's womb.
 - Pray for mothers to have courage and hope. Pray that God would put the right people in their lives to help them choose life.
 - Pray for dads. Pray for dads to step up to the plate and not pressure that young women to abort their children.
 - Pray for abortion workers that God would convict their hearts and draw them out of the industry like he did with Abby Johnson (former clinic director) whose story is told in the movie Unplanned.
 - Pray for those doing outreach at abortion clinics that God would give them wisdom and discernment for the words to stay to breathe life and hope into expectant mothers.
 - Pray for churches. Pray that the church would be a place where expectant mothers would find support and hope rather than be shunned. Pray that churches would be able to stand strong on the belief that although sexual immorality is a sin, life that results from that is not a punishment, but rather a gift from God made in His image. Pray that the church would never be a place where a young woman feels like her only option for staying in is getting an abortion in secret.
 - Pray for lawmakers. Pray that they would be saved. Pray that God would help them to see the truth of what abortion is. Pray that they would stand up for the lives of the most innocent and voiceless in our society today.

Abortion is the moral pariah of our day in our culture. Put it on your prayer list. Put love life on your prayer list.

How can we as Christians care for life? (1) Speak out (2) Pray

3.) Adopt



James 1:27 - Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

I love the mission of Love Life. Their mission is to mobilize the church to create a culture of love and life that will result in an end to abortion and the orphan crisis.

- Application – by the way, if you're interested in adopting, you can reach out to them via their website and that's one of the services they help provide. They help Christian parents who want to adopt do so. They help people walk that path.

As Christians who believe the human life is sacred, made in the image of God, we should be pro-life from womb to tomb, and one of the ways that we can do that is through adopting ourselves or getting behind adoption organizations.

Adoption is a big one, and I don't necessarily believe it's for everyone, but what a tremendous opportunity it is to care for the unborn.

Illustration – To help us grasp the power of adoption, I want to read for you this morning the story of a young mother by the name of Jasmine Proctor.



- “When I was 23 I had an unplanned pregnancy. I was already raising two children, and after suffering postpartum depression I knew I was done having kids.
- I was so embarrassed I refused to tell anyone and didn't know what to do. My boyfriend and I decided that getting an abortion would be the best decision.
- I made an appointment to do so, but, the week I was supposed to get it done I broke my arm and was transported by ambulance to a hospital for surgery.
- The morning I was scheduled to be operated on the hospital technicians showed me an ultrasound and there I saw my 10-week-old baby.

- A huge hand was on the monitor. It looked like he or she was waving. They showed me my baby's heart rate and I knew then [I couldn't go on with my appointment to get an abortion.](#)
- Weeks passed and my arm healed. One day I told my boyfriend that we should look into adoption and [finding adoptive parents](#) because I didn't think having a third baby with us unemployed would be good right now.
- I looked for and eventually found an adoption agency online. Initially I was planning on doing a closed adoption and told one of my boyfriend's close friends about my decision.
- I was about to turn in my final paperwork to the agency and start the process when she told me to look at her cousin's Facebook page, so I did.
- I know it sounds crazy but the first time I saw [Tysie](#), the woman I chose to adopt my baby, I knew she would be his mom. It was just a feeling I had.
- As time went on we talked daily, and I just knew she was the answer to my prayers.
- She loved my baby so much already and he wasn't even here yet. I felt that Zane was meant to be hers from Day One.
- We arranged a day to meet when she and her husband, Chris, were in town. The day my boyfriend and I met them, they hugged us. I really loved how open they were.
- My boyfriend and I instantly knew they would be our baby's parents. Every day I talked to Tysie about Zane's kicking and about all his hiccups.
- Eventually I went into labor. Zane was ready to be in the world. After arriving at the hospital at 8:30 pm he was out within an hour. He was perfect.
- My boyfriend didn't hold Zane. The placement was harder for him than it was on me.
- Tysie was on her way to the hospital, and I couldn't wait for her to see her baby.
- Before she got there the nurses were asking me all these questions about his name, if I wanted to breastfeed, etc. It was very overwhelming.
- When Tysie got there it all made sense and I was so glad she was finally there to see him.
- He was ours. Mine in a way he will never be hers yet hers in a way he will never be mine.
- Nowadays there are times when I struggle, but for the most part it's been great. Zane's dad and I feel like we didn't lose or [give up a baby.](#)
- We feel like we guided him to his parents and gained more family.
- Not only does Tysie make me feel special, she also makes my kids and my boyfriend all know how blessed she is to have us in her life.
- I get pictures daily, we skype, and talk on and off every day. We had our first visit recently and it was amazing.
- Not only does Tysie and her husband allow us to see Zane, they are also open to our family seeing him with their family.
- For me, seeing him doesn't feel weird. It reminds me why I chose open adoption over abortion. I get to see him live a life I couldn't give him. He is beyond loved and the happiest baby. I wouldn't change anything." (Proctor)

How can we care for life? We can speak up. We can pray. We can adopt. We can...

4.) Vote



The Bible is very clear that although this world is not our home, and although we are citizens of another kingdom (a heavenly kingdom), we are still to be responsible citizens of our earthly country.

In Matthew 22:17, Jesus was asked by some of his critics whether or not Jews should pay taxes to Rome, the governmental authority that they were under the jurisdiction of?

Does anyone remember how Jesus responded? He asked for a coin. He said, “Whose image is on this?” They answered, “Caesar.” Then he said to them, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesars (*fulfill your civic duty*) and unto God the things which are God’s. (*fulfill your moral duty*)”

- Side note – I want you to catch the point Jesus is making. If the things that belong to Caesar are the things that bear his image, then what Jesus is implying is that the things which belong to God are the things which bear His image. Who bears the image of God? That’s you and me. It’s like Jesus is saying, “Yeah, pay your taxes, but don’t forget that God wants more than that. He asks more of you than your government ever could. He wants all of you.”
- Jesus’ answer here is a great reminder to us that although civic duty has a place in the Christian’s life, it should never take precedence over our spiritual duty to God.
 - o I am a Christian first and an American second, and the second those two things get out of order, we’ve got a major problem, because I am rendering to Caesar that which belongs to God. We need to beware of that.

And yet the Scripture is clear that we as Christians today do have a civic duty. What does that mean practically for us today?

We live in a very unique civic structure today in the United States of America. Democracy has not been the norm for most places across the history of the world. Democracy is unique in that it not only calls upon its citizens to yield to governmental authority (Romans 13 talks about that), but it also calls upon its citizens to wield governmental authority.

How do you do that? You vote. In a democracy, rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s/fulfilling civic duty involves voting.

What that means is that as a Christian, if you can vote, you should vote...and I believe that we should vote in such a way that honors God, that shows love to our neighbor, that spreads righteousness and combats injustice.

When it comes to the issue of caring for the unborn, voting matters. It's not the only way we care for them, but it is a way in which we care for them. We care for them by voting for life from the moment of conception...by voting for the needs of mothers...by voting in a way that supports women who keep their babies.

- And by the way I'm fully aware of how much of an outlier the Christian position on the sanctity of life is today in our country.
- The state of Ohio this past week voted to add the right to abortion to their state constitution. That vote passed, and it passed in a red state with the majority of every gender, race, and age group voting in favor of it with the exception of those 65 and over.
- The Christian position is not a popular position, but the abolition of slavery was not a popular position either.
 - o Illustration - One of the other things that stuck out to me from my reading on Lincoln was how much of a radical, fringe, idea the abolition of slavery was in the mid-1800s. To be honest with you, Lincoln himself initially was not an abolitionist. He was against the expansion of slavery, and then he was for the gradual end of slavery, and then there reached a point in the Civil War where so much blood had been shed that Lincoln was determined that the war would not come to a resolution without slavery coming to a resolution as well. That began with the Emancipation Proclamation, a war time measure applying only to the southern states of the confederacy. It came full circle with the passing of the 14th amendment to the US Constitution officially outlawing slavery in the union, an amendment that Lincoln was determined to get passed before the end of the Civil War. Man, that was radical.
 - o We don't vote for life because it's popular. We don't vote for life because of what a political party says. We vote for life because as Christians we believe that every life is made in the image of God, and we have believed that for 2000 years.

How can we care for life? We can speak out. We can pray. We can adopt. We can vote. Finally, this morning, we can share hope.

5.) Share Hope



Romans 15:13 - 13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

- We serve a God of hope. We are a people of hope. We have received a message of hope.

How can we as Christians minister to expectant mothers who are considering abortion? We can offer them hope. We can reach down to them in their moment of fear and uncertainty and isolation, and we can offer them hope.

Illustration – I remember the first time I sat down and talked with some of the representatives from Love Life. I asked them about their outreach teams that pray outside of Planned Parenthood. I was curious. I said, “What do your volunteers say to these ladies? How do you encourage them to choose life?” You know what they told me? “Hope. We don’t berate them. We don’t pick them up. We offer them hope.”

- They have a little brochure that says, “Hope is here.” (real-choices.com)



- “There is a network of churches and organizations in this city that are ready to help you walk through the challenges you are facing today. Please know that you are not alone and God, has people here to help you through your entire journey of pregnancy and beyond. The truth is that God loves you and your child in your womb immeasurably. God, the creator of the universe, finds value in you and your child. He has a plan for both of your lives. Your child is not a mistake.”
- Pastor, how do I share hope? What does that look like?
 - o If you somehow find yourself in a situation where you have an opportunity to speak hope into the life of someone with an unplanned pregnancy, let me encourage you to do a couple of things.
 - o Listen
 - James 1:19 - Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:
 - Suppress the urge to speak, and listen. Give the mother the space to express her thoughts and fears and feelings, and listen to understand.
 - If you will give her the space to exhale and if you will allow her to feel heard, she’ll give you the space to talk.
 - o Support
 - What do I mean by that?
 - Galatians 6:2 – bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

- It's saying, "You're not alone. I'm here for you, and I will help you walk this path."
- Application – we need to be willing to do that as a church. We need to be a place that will support those who choose life, not shun them. The church must never be a place where a woman feels like the only way she can stay is if she aborts an unplanned pregnancy before anyone finds out about it.
 - That doesn't mean we affirm sexual immorality. We don't, and there's a need for repentance there...but there is a difference between that sin (which is wrong) and the life in the womb (which is a gift from God made in His image).
- Share
 - We share Scripture (Psalm 139, Psalm 127, Jeremiah 1).
 - We share options.
 - What would it look like to choose life? How could we make this happen together?
 - Let's talk to Love Life. Let's talk to Pastor. Let's talk to the church.
- Illustration – back when I was in high school, in the Christian school I attended there was a girl in my class who was miss everything. She was super popular, super athletic. All the guys liked her. She was the girl that every girl wanted to be. She was in my class, my youth group. We were friends.... Anyways, time passed. Towards the end of her time in high school she ended up going to the public school. Hadn't really heard anything from her/about her for a while. But then word got around that she was pregnant. She had been sexually immoral, and she was now facing an unplanned pregnancy. To my surprise, she kept the baby. She gave birth. She raised the boy with the help of her parents...and I remember at the time almost looking down on her. "Well, that's what happens when you disobey the Scripture. I guess her life's not going to go the way that she thought it was." ...and yet now I look back on her, and I'm so proud of her. Not that she was immoral, but that she didn't allow one bad decision to turn into two...and I'm so thankful for the people in her life that rallied around her and supported her and encouraged her to keep the baby, despite the gossip and difficulties I'm sure it elicited.
- How can we care for life? We can share hope with moms when they are scared and need it the most.

I'll say this too, and this is where we'll draw the message to a close.... we can also share hope with those mothers who have had an abortion in their past.

- That hope is found not in guilt, but in the gospel. It is found in repentance from sin and an exchange of that sin for Christ's perfect righteousness...an exchange that is made possible through Christ's death on our behalf.
- Romans 5:6-10 - 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for

a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

- Illustration – “The story is told of a king who, having discovered a theft in the royal treasury, decrees that the criminal be publicly flogged for this affront to the crown. When soldiers haul the thief before the king as he sits in his judgment seat, there in chains stands the frail form of the king’s own mother. Without flinching, he orders the old woman to be bound to the whipping post in front of him. When she is secured, he stands up, lays down his imperial scepter, sets aside his jeweled crown, removes his royal robes, and enfolds the tiny old woman with his own body. Baring his back to the whip, he orders that the punishment commence. Every blow meant for the criminal lands with full force upon the bare back of the king until the last lash falls.”
- Church, that is what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary. You see, the gospel does not minimize sin. It doesn’t minimize abortion or immorality of any kind. The gospel declares that every sin will bear the full force of justice. Every sin merits death. The only question is, “Whose death?” Through the cross of Calvary, Christ offers His death in your place, but He puts the ball in your court. It’s your choice. Will you bear the penalty for your sin, or will you accept Christ’s payment on your behalf in your place? How do I accept that? You acknowledge your sin before God and the penalty it merits, and in faith you turn to Christ asking for it.
 - The Bible says that if you do, you can be confident that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord for salvation will be saved.
 - Moreover, if you have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ, your sin has been paid for. It is forgiven. It is gone. There is no point in continuing to crucify yourself for that which Christ was already crucified. Such self-deprecation is not a mark of piety. It is a misunderstanding of the power of the cross.
- If you’ve sinned by participating in an abortion-related decision, the solution to your guilt is not denial—it’s forgiveness. It’s forgiveness rooted in the understanding that the wrath of God against abortion is counterbalanced by the love of God for those who have sinned in such a way. There is hope for you. There is healing, and it is found in acknowledging and forsaking your sin at the foot of the cross.

Application

My prayer for our church is that we would be a place that loves and cares for life. I don’t know what your next step is personally in that regard, but I’d encourage you to take it.

Maybe you need to ask God for the strength to speak up for those who have no voice.

Maybe you need to commit to start praying for the cause of life.

Maybe God's working in your heart about adoption or voting for life.

Maybe God's given you a unique opportunity to share hope into a young woman's life that so desperately needs it.

I don't know how God has spoken into your heart, but you pray at your seat as the piano plays.

The Bible & Rest

Review

Well today we continue our series on the Bible and Current Issues with a study of what the Bible says about rest. And I just want you to know what I have been working hard on this sermon on rest...and no, the irony of that statement is not lost on me.

Some might think that such a topic is out of place in a series on current issues, and yet I believe it's one of the most important messages of this whole series. We live in a culture that does not know how to rest, and in many ways, we live in a culture that does not care to rest. And when I talk about rest, I'm not using that word as a synonym for vacations and time off. For instance, how many of you have ever had a vacation that you came back from more tired than when you left? I have. How many of you have ever had a day off that didn't feel like a day off? That's what I mean. Even when we're off, often times we don't know how to rest, and that is especially true of a younger generation that is growing up on screens and whose minds are constantly being inundated with stimulation.

One writer pastor put it this way, "Achievement is the alcohol of our time. We have made an idol of exhaustion." – AJ Swoboda

I am firmly including myself in that "we".

Illustration - Rest is something I have struggled with going all the way back to elementary school. As a kid, I would push and push and push myself, and I would get sick. As a 10...11-year-old, I would hit a proverbial wall, and my body would go into shut down mode, and I'd just sleep for three days. My parents took me to the doctor on a number of occasions. They ran all kinds of tests on me. And yet, there was no identifiable underlying cause other than the fact that I was pushing too hard, and my body was compensating by forcing me to rest.

But it doesn't have to be like that in our lives. We don't have to limp from vacation to vacation overstressed and under rested. How do we rest? What does God say about that, and what does it look like in the 21st century? Well, take your Bible and turn to Genesis 2 as we embark on a journey through the Bible on this topic of rest.

As we look at Genesis 2:1-3 this morning, the first truth that we're going to see in the Scripture is the foundation of rest.

1.) The Foundation of Rest: Creation

Genesis chapter 1 describes the six days of God's creative work. On those days, He created the universe: the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and all of its inhabitants (including mankind). He worked, and He worked, and He worked, and He worked, but then something unexpected occurs at the beginning of Genesis 2.

Look at what the Scripture says.

Genesis 2:1-3 – 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

- God finished creating. He had completed six days of work. He had accomplished what He set out to do. Well, what would He do next? Look at verse 2.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he **rested** on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

- What did God do on the seventh day? He rested. He stopped. He stopped producing. He stopped creating. He stopped working.
- Why? I believe it was to set an example for His creation so as to teach a lesson to His creation. Let me say that again. I believe it was to set an example for His creation so as to teach a lesson to His creation. What was the lesson? Rest. You and I were not made merely to work, to produce, to labor in never ending perpetuity like slaves. You and I were made both to work and to rest...to work and to cease....to work and to enjoy the fruits of that work.
- Church, that is exactly what we see in the actions of our Creator going all the way back to the first weekend.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

- Whereas verse 2 describes the action of God in resting, verse 3 communicates the significance of that action. It was not arbitrary. It was not meaningless. It was the means by which the Creator taught His creation a lesson. God did not just take a day of rest. He took that day of rest and blessed it and set it apart from the others. (MacDonald, 1992)
 - o “Legal observance of the Sabbath did not begin till the days of Moses (Exodus 31:13; Exodus 35:2); but this blessing and sanctification were given prior to any covenant with man, and by Elohim, the God of nature, and not Jehovah, the God of grace. The weekly rest, therefore, is universal, permanent, and independent of the Mosaic law.” (Ellicott, 1905)
 - o “As the whole earthly creation is subject to the changes of time and the law of temporal motion and development; so all creatures not only stand in need of definite recurring periods of rest, for the sake of recruiting their strength and gaining new power for further development, but they also look forward to a time when all restlessness shall give place to the blessed rest of the perfect consummation. To this rest the resting of God (ἡ κατάπαυσις) points forward; and to this rest, this divine σαββατισμός (Hebrews 4:9), shall the whole world, especially man, the head of the earthly creation, eventually come.” (Keil & Delitzsch, 1857-1878)
- What’s your point Pastor? Here it is. The importance of taking one day a week to rest from labor finds its root all the way back in Genesis 2 in the example of our Creator. On the very first week, God took one day out of seven and blessed it and set it apart as a day of rest.

In order to illustrate how deeply rooted the week and the weekend are within creation as a whole, I want to take a few moments to talk about several other larger measurements of time that we live by in our day to day lives.

For instance, when we refer to our age, we don't typically keep track of our age in weeks, we keep track of our age in what? Years. That's right. Now can anyone here this morning tell me where the year as a measurement of time comes from? What is the year scientifically based upon?



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- The sun – one year is the amount of time it takes for our planet to complete one revolution around the sun. The year is rooted in the sun.

What about the month? Can anyone tell me where the month as a measurement of time comes from? What is the month scientifically based upon?



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- The moon – one month is the amount of time it takes for our moon to progress through one cycle of all its phases (crescent moon, half-moon, full moon). The month is rooted in the moon.

We've talked about the year and the month. Now, let's get even smaller and talk about the day. Can anyone tell me where the day as a measurement of time comes from? What is it scientifically based upon?



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- The earth – one day is the amount of time it takes for our planet to complete one rotation on its axis. When our side faces the sun, it's day time. When our side faces the moon, it's nighttime. The day is rooted in the earth and its rotation.

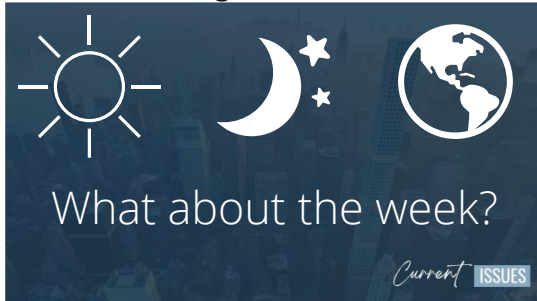
By the way, the idea of these different measurements of time (the day, the month, and the year) being rooted in astronomy goes all the way back to Genesis 1. Listen to what the Scripture says about the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day of creation.

- Genesis 1:14-16 - 14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: 15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven

to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16 And God made two great lights; the greater light (the sun) to rule the day, and the lesser light (the moon) to rule the night: he made the stars also.

The year, the month, and the day are all rooted in the activities of the sun, moon, and earth. That's great and all, but what does any of that have to do with resting one day out of seven.

Here it is. The year, the month, and the day are all rooted in astronomy, but what about the week (the seven-day week)? Where does it come from? What is the astronomical explanation for the origin of the week?



- I'm going to save you a little bit of time this morning. There is no astronomical explanation for the origin of a seven-day measurement of time.
- Where does it come from then? It comes from our Creator. The week and the weekend find their origin in Genesis 1-2.
- The week is derived from the fact that God worked for 6 days and that He then rested for one. You have God to thank for the weekend. And by the way, over the past hundred or so years, scientific advancements have led to the realization that the seven-day week is not just rooted in creation. It is also reflected in our biology. God didn't just set the example of a weekly day of rest (1 day out of 7). He built it into our biology.

The Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology put out a fascinating article on this topic.

“Mankind has long understood that our bodies operate on circadian (daily), monthly and annual rhythms, but chronobiologists have only recently discovered seven-day patterns written into the biology of people, animals and plants. According to *The Secrets Our Body Clocks Reveal* by Susan Perry and Jim Dawson, the blood pressure cycle, coping hormone cycles, immune responses to infections, production of blood and urine chemicals, and even the heartbeat operate on a seven-day pattern. Experiments conducted by scientist Franz Halberg also prove that seven-day cycles govern fundamental aspects in the lives of flies, rats and other critters. (Jacques)

“Many researchers have strained to attribute the week's origins to something secular, but it cannot be done. The Bible, however, provides a very different answer: that the week was created by God. The first two chapters of the book of Genesis detail God's creation of the face of the Earth, with the Creator resting 'on the seventh day' following the six days of creation.” (Jacques)

“Even in purely physical terms, there are some fascinating proofs that the seven-day rhythm of life leads to maximum productivity and health. The seven-day week is ubiquitous (*commonplace*) around the world. In almost every nation and civilization on the planet, throughout all chapters of human history, you will find people living out their lives to the rhythm of the week. On one extreme, however, there are some few cultures that have operated on a week of only three or four days. But the economic output of such cultures is naturally weaker than those of societies that labor six days before resting one.” (Jacques)

“On the other extreme are civilizations that have experimented with “weeks” longer than seven days. In 1793, just after the French Revolution, France adopted a 10-day week (along with a 10-hour day, 100-minute hour, and 100-second minute). The revolutionaries made the move in an effort to simultaneously de-Christianize the country and increase its productivity. But productivity did not increase. According to R. R. Palmer’s *The World of the French Revolution*, France only kept the 10-day week around for 12 years because of its extremely disappointing results. During these years, French society saw a stark increase in injuries, exhaustion, illness, and work animals that collapsed and died at astounding rates. These people were attempting to operate on a rhythm unnatural to the design of their bodies, and the results were disastrous. Other societies have conducted similar week-extension experiments, but, like the French, they all reverted back to the seven-day model within a short time. As the Bible informs, the week and the day of rest was made for man, and mankind functions at its best when operating on a seven-day cycle.” (Jacques)

Where does the weekly day of rest come from? It is rooted in the example of our Creator, and it is reflected in the biology of creation. By the way, the day of rest came before sin ever entered the picture. The need for rest is not a byproduct of the fall. It predates it.

You know what I’m thankful for today? I’m thankful that... “We worship the God who created the weekend.” (Swoboda, 2018)

As we journey through the Scripture this morning and what it has to say about the topic of rest, we’ve seen first the foundation of rest in Genesis, but then turning to Exodus, we see also the enforcement of rest. Take your Bible and turn to Exodus 20.

2.) The Enforcement of Rest: the Jewish Law

Whereas the foundation of rest in Genesis teaches us about need for rest, the enforcement of rest in Exodus teaches us about our struggle with rest.

This is a struggle that takes root very early on. Let me ask you a question. Do little children need to take naps? Yes or no? Yes. Do little children like to take naps? Yes or no. Typically no.

Illustration – I don’t know about you, but with our young kids, we have a bed time routine in place. We get everyone dressed for bed. We brush our teeth. We do our Bible story. We say our prayers. We take the girls to their rooms for bedtime. But just about every night,

both of my girls voice their displeasure with bedtime in different ways. As I'm carrying Jacqueline down to her room, she will almost religiously ask me, "Daddy, why don't we watch a show? Don't you want to watch a show?" Of course I want to watch a show, but not with her at that moment time. So I take Jacqueline to her room, and then, after I've tucked Jacqueline in, I'll put Jessica in her crib. We'll play for a minute. I'll kiss her good night, leave the room, and then she voices her displeasure in a different way. She does not ask me to watch a show. She screams like a banshee as if by leaving the room I have just committed the greatest atrocity in the history of the universe.

They need to rest, but they don't always like to rest. Yet, Liz and I as loving parents force them to rest.

When it came to the children of Israel in the Old Testament, God did something similar. He gave them a law of rest based on His example of rest in Creation. Let's look at #4 of the ten commandments found in Exodus 20.

Exodus 20:8-11 –

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

You need to remember the day of rest, so as to keep it separate and distinct from the other six. Here's how you're going to do that. (Blum, Walvoord, & Zuck)

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

- So God gives the Jews this very specific law of rest.
- Now, can anyone tell me where Israel had just been for 400 years prior to the giving of this law? They had been in Egypt. They had been in slavery. Their enslavement was significant because it meant for 400 years that had had no what? Rest. They had worked and worked and worked and worked and worked, with presumably no break in their daily routine.
- So having just delivered Israel from the slavery of Egypt, this commandment to take one day a week for rest would have been in stark contrast with the constant work they had known their whole lives.
- And yet God commands Israel to rest.
- Why? What was the foundation of this law forbidding the Jews to do any work on Saturday, their day of rest. Look at verse 11.

11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

- The Jewish Sabbath day law was rooted in the foundation of God's own rest on the 7th day of creation.

Moreover, from other passages in the Old Testament, we know that their Sabbath went from Friday at sunset to Saturday at sunset. It was not only a day of rest, but it was also a day of dependence upon God for provision, and it was a day of worship as well (Lev. 23:3).

- The New Testament records Jews and converts to Judaism meeting in synagogues on the Sabbath (Mark 6:2; Luke 4:31; Luke 13:10–16; Acts 13:14, 27, 42–44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). Obviously, with no work being done on the Sabbath day, the Sabbath day would be the ideal day to have organized worship services.

It was a weekly reminder of their Creator (Ex. 20:8-11) and it was a weekly reminder of His deliverance of them from 400 years of no rest in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). It was a sign of their covenant relationship with God (Ex. 31:13), and it was one of the most significant practices that distinguished them from the pagan nations that surrounded them...the practice of dedicating one day a week to refrain from work to remember God and to enjoy His creation.

Illustration – To give you an idea of how seriously the Jews took the Sabbath Day historically, during the time period of the Maccabees (around 160 BC), when the Jews were attacked on the Sabbath Day, they let themselves be slaughtered, men, women and children, rather than break the Sabbath by defending themselves. At a later time Pompeii was able to erect the earthworks (fortifications) that made his siege of Jerusalem successful quite unhindered by the defenders because he did it on the Sabbath.” (Morris, 1992, p. 299)

So the Sabbath Day was a really big deal to the Jews in the Old Testament, but in addition to the aspects of it that we’ve already discussed, the Jewish Sabbath had one other major function. It pointed forward to the arrival of true spiritual rest. That Jewish law would be fulfilled and come to an end with the arrival of a person.

We’ve seen the foundation of rest in creation. We’ve seen the enforcement of rest in the Jewish law. Thirdly this morning we see the fulfillment of rest in Jesus Christ.

3.) The Fulfillment of Rest: Jesus

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 11.

Just as the Jewish sacrificial system looked forward to an ultimate sacrifice (Jesus), and just as the Jewish festivals looked forward to the coming Messiah (Jesus), so too the Jewish laws about rest looked forward to the arrival of the one who would bring true Rest (Jesus).

Paul put it this way. He wrote in Colossians 2 that Jesus was the substance of which the Jewish Sabbath laws were a shadow. The purpose of the shadow was to point us to the one who cast the shadow. The Jewish laws about physical rest were meant to point us to Jesus, the one who would fulfill those laws and bring us true spiritual rest. And because Jesus has fulfilled the Jewish Sabbath law, there is now freedom in how or when we as Christians meet our need for physical rest. We are not bound to observe our day of rest on Saturday as

the Jews were. So, to summarize, Biblically the coming of Jesus was significant because it brought true spiritual rest as well as freedom in how and when we as Christians meet our need for physical rest.

Well, what do you mean when you say that Jesus brought true spiritual rest?

Listen to what Jesus Himself said in Matthew 11:28.

Matt. 11:28- 28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden – this is a universal invitation. He says, “All you who toil continuously and are weighed down (burdened by life), come to me...”

and I will give you rest – How does Jesus give us rest? The cross! He died for our sins in our place so that we might have peace with God...spiritual rest.... the rest of knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt right now in this moment that I am accepted by God because of Jesus Christ. There is no rest in these works based religions that promise the possibility of acceptance with God in exchange for a life well lived....but there is real peace and rest found in the gospel...in the good news that Jesus Christ has paid my sin debt and that through receiving Him as my Lord and Savior I can be fully forgiven and know that I have a relationship with God right now.

- I can go to sleep tonight to with a clean conscience and a rested soul. Why? Because of Jesus...because of what He has done...That is a rest that I get to enjoy right now in Jesus. It is a rest that I will enjoy in its fulness when I see Him face to face (Heb. 4:1-11) ...and it is a rest which in the meantime frees me to serve Him with joy and gratitude in my heart. I don't serve God out of a hope that in so doing I might earn His acceptance. No! I serve God with joy and gratitude from a heart at rest because it knows that in Christ I have already received His acceptance.
- “Spiritual rest here, peace of conscience, ease of mind, tranquility of soul, through an application of pardoning grace, a view of free justification by the righteousness of Christ, and full atonement of sin by his sacrifice; and eternal rest hereafter, in Abraham's bosom, in the arms of Jesus, in perfect and uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit.” (Gill, 1811)

Come unto me and I will give you rest!

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Take my yoke upon you – “A yoke was a wooden device used to harness an animal for work. Jesus is calling on us to give Him control of our lives, to allow Him to direct us for His work.”

- Let me direct your life.

And learn of me – be my disciple. Why?

For I am meek and lowly in heart – for I am a good master...and in serving me...

And ye shall find rest unto your souls – we don't just find spiritual rest through receiving Jesus as our Savior. We also find spiritual rest through serving Him as our Lord.... serving Him is a privilege that He empowers us to undertake, and when we do, it's work, but it's the type of work that brings meaning and refreshment into your life. As Christians, we don't work for acceptance. We work from acceptance, and that type of work brings joy and refreshment and rest.

- We find rest in salvation from Jesus. We find rest in service to Jesus.
- “That rest does not mean that they are excused henceforth from hard work. On the contrary, to be a follower of Jesus is to enter a way of life that necessarily involves hard work...Those who bear Christ's yoke know rest at the center of their being. Paradoxically, those who take Christ's yoke on them have rest, rest now and eternal rest in the hereafter.” (Morris, 1992)

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

There is joy and life and refreshment in serving Jesus. His way is good. His burden is light.

- But here's where it can become grievous. It can become grievous when we forget that we're serving from acceptance, not for acceptance. It can also become grievous when we forget that we're serving Him, not the other way around.

Week after week, Sabbath after Sabbath, every time the Jewish people observed that day of rest, that day was designed to point them to the one that would do for their souls what the Sabbath did for their bodies. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, and those who enter into a relationship with Him can enjoy now the everlasting rest that the people of God will enjoy with Him together in its fulness one day.

- Yet even now, Hebrews implies, we feel the first waves of the coming rest. In Christ, we “have [already] tasted . . . the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:5), rest included. For, the author writes, “We who have believed enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:3) — not “will enter,” but “enter”: fully later, truly now.
 - o “The New Testament uses the concept of Sabbath rest in a spiritual sense. Believers have ceased from their labors and have entered into that divine rest (Heb. 4). Yet there remains a rest in the world of peace to come. Salvation, to the writer of Hebrews, is the new beginning of the theocratic rest begun in the creation.” (Ross, 1997, pp. Loc 1257-1259)

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Pastor, you've talked a lot about rest today from creation to the law to Jesus, but what does all of this have to do with me? How does any of this apply to me as a Christian living in the 21st century?

Well, we've seen the foundation of rest in creation. We've seen the enforcement of rest in the Jewish law. We've seen the fulfillment of spiritual rest in Jesus. Finally, this morning, we see the freedom to rest.

Jesus' fulfillment of the Jewish Sabbath law didn't just bring true spiritual rest. It also brought the Christian freedom in regards to how and when he meets his need for physical rest.

4.) The Freedom to Rest: Jesus

Romans 14:5-6 - 5 One man esteemeth one day above another (*the day of rest should be on Saturday*): another esteemeth every day alike (*Saturday is no different than any other day*). Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

- "The primary problem with Sabbath observance was a failure to reckon with the fulfillment of such institutions in the new era of salvation that Paul without any qualification can relegate sabbaths to shadows certainly indicates that he does not see them as binding and makes it extremely unlikely that he could have seen the Christian first day as a continuation of the Sabbath. In a way similar, then two Romans 14:5, Colossians 2:16 can validly be used to conclude that the observance of a Sabbath day is no longer a requirement of God's people in the new realm." (Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 2008)
- "The Apostolic fathers point to the same conclusion, for they emphasize that believers keep not the Sabbath but the Lord's day. They do not argue that the Lord's day is the Sabbath. Instead, they distinguished the two, claiming that believers observe the former but not the latter." (Schreiner, 1998)
- "Observance of days was important in the Old Testament and in Judaism. Whether the specific point at issue was the observance of the great Jewish festivals, regular days of fasting, or the sabbath is difficult to say. But we would expect the Sabbath, at least, would be involved, since sabbath observance was, along with the food laws, a key Jewish distinctive in the 1st century, and surfaced as a point of tension elsewhere in the early church... inclusion of Sabbath observance among the matters of dispute in Rome and demonstrates that it was not considered by Paul to be an obligation binding on Christians. This suggests, further, that the early church did not take over the decalogue as a whole." (Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 1996)

The New Testament is very clear that since Jesus has fulfilled the Jewish Sabbath laws, Christians are not bound by those laws to observe a day of rest on the Jewish Sabbath (i.e. Saturday). And yet, do you and I still need rest? We do! Remember, that the need for rest is rooted in the example of our Creator and reflected in our own biology. So what that means for us practically as Christians is that there is freedom in how we rest. There is freedom in when we rest.

- “Sunday was the day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, an act that forever separated Christianity from any other religion (John 20:1). Since that time, believers have gathered on the first day of the week to celebrate His victory over sin and death (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). Even though the Sabbath day was designated by God as a holy day, Jesus demonstrated that He was Lord over the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8). Jesus stated that He had come not to abolish but to fulfill the whole Law. Rule-keeping could not justify anyone; only through Jesus could sinful humanity be declared righteous (Romans 3:28). Paul echoes this truth in Colossians 2:16–17 when he writes, ‘Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.’ The Lord’s day is typically thought of as Sunday, but it is not a direct counterpart to the Jewish Sabbath—in other words, Sunday is not the ‘Christian Sabbath.’ Although we should set aside a day for rest and honoring the Lord who died and rose for us, we are not under the Law (Romans 6:14–15). As born-again followers of Jesus, we are free to worship Him on any day that our conscience determines. Romans 14 gives clear explanation of how Christians are to navigate those subtle gray areas of discipleship. Verses 4 and 5 say, ‘One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.’” (Got Questions)

To give you an idea of what that might look like, I want to take a few minutes to share with you what my family’s day of rest looks like and some of the changes that we’ve implemented into our family rhythms this year.

Earlier this year I read a Christian book on rest called *Subversive Sabbath*. That book spurred a lot of conversations between Liz and I about changes that we could make to our weekly day off that would honor the Lord and refresh our family. So this morning I’m going to share with you five principles that we implemented into our weekly day of rest that have paid major dividends for our family.

(1) Rest through preparing

Real rest doesn’t happen by accident. It takes preparation and prioritization. By the way, that was true in the Old Testament with the Jews as well. They prepared for and prioritized

their day of rest. If you don't place it on the calendar, other things will squeeze it out because work never ends.

"We don't rest because the work is done. A to do list is never actually complete. If we only rest when everything is done, we will never rest." (Swoboda, 2018)

What does this preparation and prioritization look like in the Bundy family? Well, for many Christians, their day of rest is on the weekend. It's Saturday or Sunday, the Lord's Day, our day of worship. But in the Bundy family, weekends are kind of a busy time for us. Saturday is all about getting ready for Sunday, and then Sunday is a full-on ministry day. So our weekly day of rest is on Tuesday, and we prioritize it on the calendar.

My family knows that every week barring some major emergency that day is the day that we rest and have fun and enjoy one another and the blessings that God has given to us. We prioritize it.

But we don't just prioritize it. We prepare to make it happen.

We prepare by trying to think ahead. A lot of time on Mondays Liz will cook double so that she doesn't have to cook on Tuesdays, and we can eat leftovers. Earlier this year I started trying to get home a little bit earlier on Mondays so that I could get the yard work done on Monday afternoons and not have to worry about it on Tuesdays.

How do you build rest into your life? Rest through preparing.

(2) Rest through disconnecting

As much as you need physical rest on a weekly basis, so too you need mental rest. It's not enough to be physically separated from work if your mind is still there. "Sabbath is not just ceasing from work. It is ceasing from thinking about work." (Swoboda, 2018) How do you disconnect mentally? Stop checking your email. Even better, turn your email off, or at the very least, turn off email push notifications. Turn your phone on airplane mode or do not disturb. If you need to be available in case of a legitimate emergency, do what I do and give your phone to your wife as a filter. Disconnect your body and your mind from work.

Another thing I'd encourage you to do is to disconnect your mind from media. Don't check the news on your day of rest. Delete the social media apps from your phone. One day a week refuse to allow your mind to be inundated with junk food. Cut it off. Cut it out. Rest through disconnecting.

(3) Rest through resisting

Through resisting what? Through resisting the compulsion to do...to produce. This is hard because doing is hardwired into us. I remember when Liz and I earlier this year first started trying to implement some of these practices into our Tuesdays, it was really hard. I did not realize how addicted I was to activity. We'd be enjoying our Tuesdays and about 30-

40 times throughout the day I'd have the urge to go pull some weeds or fix a sprinkler or do a project instead of waiting until the following day to do it.

In those early days, those Tuesdays really centered around breaking the compulsion of production. Sabbath without work is laziness, but work without Sabbath is slavery, and I didn't realize it at the time, but I was a slave to activity...and I think that's true of many of us.

Rest by preparing. Rest by disconnecting. Rest by resisting.

"Ok you've shared with us what you don't do on that day of rest, but then what do you do?" That's a great question because the reason we empty our days of rest of distractions and work is to fill them with something better/something life giving.

What does that look like?

(4) Rest through enjoying

Enjoying what? Life! Through enjoying the many gifts that God has given to you. Participate in life giving activities on your day of rest. Spend time with your family (with no devices). Get out in nature. Have fun. Go play pickleball. Six days we tend to God's creation. Take one day in gratitude with intentionality to enjoy it.

In our family we try to do breakfast together on Tuesdays. That's always fun. We'll go on walks. Sometimes Liz and I will go out on dates. Sometimes we'll do a family activity like going to the zoo.

I like how one pastor put it. He said, "God never outlawed Sabbath play. Sabbath is about ceasing, resting and playing and feasting." (Swoboda, 2018)

By the way that doesn't mean we can't do good things on our day of rest. Jesus healed on the Sabbath on many occasions and defended such activities. The key question you have to ask yourself is whether or not a given activity is life giving or taking. Is this breathing life into me or sucking life out of me?

Rest by enjoying the life that God has given to you.

(5) Rest through worshipping

The day of rest is not just a day to enjoy creation. It's a day to enjoy the Creator. Spend time with your family. Spend time in creation, but then spend time with God, and enjoy it.

I love my Bible reading time on Tuesday mornings. I'm not sermon prepping. I'm not reading so as to prepare for ministering to others. I'm just reading to spend time with God. I love praying with Liz on those days or just talking to God as we're walking through His creation.

“In rest we say no to some things so we can say yes to God. Spend time with God on your day of rest merely for the purpose of reflection. Your time with God should not have anything to do with production or construction.” (Swoboda, 2018)

Application

It’s amazing. Liz and I built these principles into our day of rest earlier this year, and it has been a game changer for our family. Tuesdays are so much longer than they used to be. Our day off used to fly by, but now it just seems like they kind of happen in slow motion. They really feels like two or three days wrapped into one, and I think that’s how it’s supposed to be. It goes so much slower, and it refreshes and reenergizes in a way that time off never really did before.

I don’t know where you’re at in your life, but I know this. Jesus is Lord over both your work and your rest, and God has built into your biology a need for both work and rest. In Christ, there is liberty, there is freedom in how you meet that need...but I want to encourage you to meet that need. I’ve shared with you five principles that my family has built into our day of rest. My intent in so doing is not to be dogmatic or to say that if you don’t do it exactly this way that you’re sinning. Rather, my purpose in so doing is to paint a picture of what rest could look like in your family and to get you started in thinking about how you might implement some of these principles into your own family rhythm.

The Bible & Marriage

Speaker - Josh Young

Introduction

Illustration³ - Four chairs. In chair one, a girl who is a good Christian, but has struggled for years with same-sex attraction. In chair two, we will call her Karen, a green haired activist for LGBTQ+. In chair three we have a mom, crying, calling out to God about their college age son who just came out to them over Christmas break. In chair four we have a man who is same sex attracted, and has resisted the temptation to lust, resisted the temptation to date men, but feels like there are only two options. Either follow Jesus and feel lonely, or follow lusts of the flesh and feel companionship.

All of these situations tend to raise the blood pressure a bit, don't they? And sometimes it feels like they are insurmountable; they are just too big to deal with. But what is so amazing about Jesus is that this is where he thrives!

Matt. 11:28-30, "28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Rom. 5:20b, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:"

Jesus is in constant pursuit of the broken. His love shines the brightest in the darkness, and His grace abounds more than you could ever imagine! And as believers we have the wonderful opportunity to be used by God to bring that love to people like this. So as we look at this topic, the topic of same-sex attraction, we need to remember that this is where Jesus wants us to thrive! Thriving in showing people that following Jesus, no matter what, is always better than anything Satan has to offer, because this is what you receive, the matchless Savior, Jesus.

And this really brings us to the heart of the issue for many who struggle with this, whether God's commands are for our good. (McDowell) Many in our culture today are less concerned with whether Christianity is true, and more concerned with whether it is good. (England)

³ This idea for this illustration comes from a sermon given by Preston Sprinkle, which can be found at the following link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGFIDsQcZCg>

There are few doctrines where this is more clearly articulated than the Biblical view of marriage between one man, one woman, for one life.

Matthew Vines, an affirming biblical scholar who wrote *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, says it clearly, “Non-affirming beliefs about same-sex relationships and transgender people contribute to serious harm in LGBTQ people’s lives...(LGBTQ) adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high...depression, (and) 3.4 more likely to use illegal drugs...” (Sprinkle 177-178)

We should not only show that the Biblical view of marriage is true, but also that it is good. Our message to the world is that the traditional, Christian view of marriage and sex is true, and it is completely worth following because Jesus is worthy.

Transition

So as we dive into this topic, let’s look at a Biblical Theology of Marriage.

1.) A Biblical Theology

Now what do I mean by a Biblical Theology? Oftentimes when I heard this passage talked about in sermons growing up the preacher almost always emphasized the prohibition passages, such as Lev. 18:22, Romans 1, 1 Cor. 6:9, etc. While I do not want to delegitimize this approach, it isn’t the strongest approach Biblically. The question we should start with is not “Does the Bible prohibit same-sex relationships?” but “How does the Bible as a whole define marriage?”. In other words, a Biblical theology of marriage looks at the whole Bible to see what it teaches us about this doctrine. (Gentry and Wellum 22) (Belousek 17-18)

Now, the popular way to define marriage in our culture is the union of two consenting adults. Whether this is lifelong, opposite sex, or a same-sex partnership is left open by this definition. Love is love, it doesn't matter who you marry, as long as it fulfills your true heartfelt romantic desires. And really to go against this definition is to be bigoted and hateful. (Sprinkle 36 and 211)

But what does the Bible tell us about marriage?

The Bible defines marriage as “a lifelong one-flesh covenant union between two sexually different persons...” (Sprinkle 36) In other words, marriage is between one man and one

woman for one life. This union is for the purpose of procreation, companionship, and signifies God's plan of redemption for all mankind. (Belousek 31) All sexual and marital activity outside of this relationship is sinful and unequivocally prohibited by Scripture. (Sprinkle 36)

To see this definition play out in Scripture we need to look at two primary places, Genesis, and Jesus.

A.) Genesis

One line that has stood out to me this year in my reading is "All good theology starts in Genesis." (DeYoung 23) That is very apt for our current series. If you haven't noticed, it is where we started in almost every single one of our sermons in this series.

As Christians, when we look at questions of identity, attraction, love, and sexuality, we must ask "Who has God created me to be?" Our identity is not driven by our subjective preferences, feelings, or desires, no matter how strong they are, but from God's design in creation. God's design in Genesis informs our identity. It tells us who God created us to be, therefore it tells us how we ought to behave. So how does creation define marriage?

Genesis 1:26-28, "27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

The "image of God" and "male and female" are parallel to one another, which shows that both are a necessary part of God's design and plan for mankind. "God intended male and female to work together as the image of God in the service of God." (Belousek 36) As the image of God, men and women are called to rule creation as God's vice-regents. (Belousek 36-37)

But more importantly for our discussion, God's plan for creating us as men and women is so we can participate in his creativity through procreation. (Belousek 37) God immediately gives this man and woman the command and blessing to fill the earth with their offspring. (McDowell)

Sexual difference is part of God's original design in creation, and that difference is there to complement one another to fulfill God's purpose on the earth. And what is interesting is

Genesis doesn't start with a definition of marriage, but with the purpose of marriage and sex, which is to have kids. (McDowell)

Now some of you may have heard the objection "Well, what about infertile couples?" Basically, if we allow people who know they can't have children get married, what's wrong with a same-sex couple getting married? There is a massive problem with this objection. First, can a marriage between a man and a woman be infertile? Absolutely. Can a same-sex couple be infertile? No, because it is literally impossible for them to have children. (McDowell)

Illustration - Imagine with me the piano is broken. Does that mean that I can use it as a trumpet? No! When something breaks it does not change its inherent design.

But God is not only concerned with the purpose of marriage in chapter one, but the foundation of marriage in chapter two, which is the one-flesh covenant union between a man and a woman.

Genesis 2:18-23, "18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

This is the first time that God has noted that something is not good! It is not good that man is alone, so God to give Adam a companion God decides to create a "help meet" for him. The word for "help" is often used to describe God's divine assistance for his people. The word "meet" is a combination of two words in Hebrew, which only found here in the entire Bible. (Wenham 68) The Hebrew word behind this word "meet" is the word *kenegdo*, which is a combination of the words *ke*, which means "like or similar", and *neged*, which means "opposite, in front of, against". (Sprinkle 39) If you translated the word literally it would be "like opposite him". (Wenham 68)

In other words, the helper that God was making for Adam was similar to and different from Adam! It seems pretty clear what those two things are; Eve is similar to Adam in that she is human and different from him in that she is female. (Sprinkle 39) Sexual difference forms the foundation for the one-flesh covenant union that takes up the rest of this passage.

God brings Eve to Adam, which makes Adam break out in praise for the companion that he now has in Eve. “23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

This is not just a friendship or super tight bond, this is a one-flesh covenant union between him and Eve, which is based on their sexual difference. This is explained by the narrator in the next verse. “24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

Suddenly the narrator steps into the passage and explains the significance of what is going on. Therefore, the word which points back at the preceding verses, because God created a suitable helper for Adam, a man shall leave his old family and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Sprinkle 40-41) The word cleave means to be united, literally glued to something. It also refers in other parts of the Bible to a binding oath and covenant between God and mankind. (Keller and Keller 86)

Deuteronomy 10:20, “20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”

The man and the woman are united together in a covenant, and they become one-flesh. This concept of one-flesh is multifaceted; Adam and Eve, through the physical consummation of their marriage, became one-flesh physically, spiritually, emotionally, (Lee and George 41-45) and they now form a new kinship bond and family unit. (Sprinkle 29-30)

A complete one flesh union is only possible through the consummation of marriage between a male and a female. Every other organ in our body works completely in itself. I chew my own food, digest my own food, walk on my own two feet. But when it comes to procreation, the male and female are incomplete on their own. It is through the consummation of marriage that the male and female complete, they become one organism, which results in little babies running around. It is only in this type of union that you can have a physical, emotional, spiritual, and familial union. A complete one-flesh union is only possible when you have a male and a female. (Lee and George 42-51)

A same-sex relationship is unable to become complete in either a physical or familial sense. Robert P. George, a teacher at Princeton said it this way:

“...acts...of the same sex...do not make them organically one and so cannot establish the bodily foundation for the multileveled union that marriage is. A mere geometrical union - say, sticking one’s finger in a person’s ear - does not unite the person organically; a man

and a woman (in consummation) ...become the single subject of a biological function.” (Lee and George 51)

The basis for this new one-flesh union is their sexual difference. In other words, marriage according to Genesis is a one-flesh covenant union between a male and a female for the purpose of procreation. Marriage is not just a union between two consenting adults, it is the union of a male and female.

Transition

But not only does Genesis affirm this, but so does Jesus!

B.) Jesus

Matthew 19:3-9, “3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The Pharisees come to Jesus and ask him a question about the law of Moses, whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. And what Jesus does is fascinating. He moves the discussion “from the legality of divorce to a theology of marriage”. (Belousek 61)

And what is interesting is that Jesus could have just quoted Genesis 2:24, that the man and the woman are one flesh so you shouldn't separate them. Instead Jesus effectively cites the entire story of man's creation and vocation in Genesis 1-2. Jesus put together Genesis 1: 1, 27 and 2:24, 2:24 is rooted in 1:27 and 1:27 is rooted in 1:1; one flesh is rooted in sex difference which is rooted in the beginning of creation. (Belousek 63)

Jesus rooted the one flesh union in the sexual difference. This difference was necessary to make a marriage, which Jesus uses to make his command about divorce, what “God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Sprinkle 35) Marriage being between a man and a woman is not simply descriptive but prescriptive; it shows us how marriages ought to be.

Many affirming Biblical scholars will try to argue that Genesis and Jesus are simply describing what normally happens, they aren't saying this ought to be normative for all people at all times. Especially since Jesus never even talked about homosexuality!

They say that Genesis and Jesus are commanding monogamy and permanence in marriage, but sex difference really isn't that important.

“Loyal, covenanted love, not sexual differentiation, is the foundation of biblical marriage.” - Karen Keen

It is worth noting that Jesus condemned all sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage. Matthew 15:18-19, “18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.” The word for fornications is the Greek word πορνεία, which was a catch all word in the first century Judaism and Christianity for all sexual behavior outside of marriage. This included same-sex sexual behavior. (Sprinkle 146)

Furthermore, Jesus took a stricter stance on sexual ethics than the Jews, namely on lust in the heart in Matthew five and divorce in Matthew nineteen. (Sprinkle 146-147) Given all Jews in Jesus day believed same-sex relations were a sin, it seems historically irresponsible to rip Jesus out of his culture. (Sprinkle 65)

The problem with this is that it takes neither text seriously. First, in Genesis after God creates a helper fit for Adam, which is Eve, the narrator steps in and give a statement that is normative for all future marriages, “24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Genesis is telling us what ought to be! (Sprinkle 67)

Second, it is important to note the ethical implications of this view. Remember the textual parallel between the image of God and male and female in Genesis 1:26-27 and how Jesus united this with the one flesh union in Genesis 2:24. It seems that if God creating them male and female is simply descriptive then the image of God is as well. (Belousek 65)

Third, it seems way more likely that Jesus believed all that he said in Matthew 19! Jesus cites the entire creation story of mankind, from the beginning God created them male and female, therefore a man shall leave his family and cleave to his wife. (Sprinkle 68-69) You need to really strain the text to say Jesus was only concerned with monogamy and fidelity, not sexual difference.

Genesis and Jesus clearly teach that marriage is a one flesh union, which is only between one man, one woman, for one life, for the purpose of procreation. By definition this excludes same-sex marriage, because Biblical marriage is between a male and a female!

Application

Now how are we supposed to lovingly help LGBTQ people when it comes to the Bible's definition of marriage? There are a couple things we need to emphasize. ⁴

Identity In Christ

What is so awesome about this study in the last year is that I have gotten to read many stories of people who came to Christ and now find their identity in him and not in their sexuality. And many of them still struggle with the temptation of same-sex attraction.. But instead of giving into the temptation of sin they choose to live a holy life for Jesus.

Illustration - Beckett Cook - He became a Christian and now lives a holy life instead of following after his sexual desires.

The Bible teaches us that in Christ we have a new identity which gives us the power to live for him. And this new identity is so much better than everything else because it means we get Christ!

Matt. 11:28-30, "28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Luke 9, "23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

2 Cor. 5:17, "17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Phil. 3:7-10, "7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,"

⁴ The impetus for this section comes from Jackie Hill Perry's book "Gay Girl Good God".

As a believer, your identity is not in the temptation of your sin, but in the victory which was won by Jesus Christ in the gospel. As a believer, your reward is not temporal, it is the eternal Christ himself. As a believer, taking up your cross, denying yourself, is so much better because it is in following Jesus. (Perry)

But second, we should emphasize that singleness does not mean loneliness.

Singleness does not mean loneliness.

As I said earlier, many people, because the same-sex attraction is ever present, feel like their only option is to follow Christ and be lonely or have a same-sex relationship and have companionship, because they aren't attracted to opposite sex people.

And as Christians sometimes we don't help with this, because we idolize marriage more than the Bible does! In our culture and sadly with some Christians marriage and romance are seen as the only ways to live a fulfilled life! (Sprinkle 230)

But that is not what the Bible teaches at all! The Bible honors singleness and shows us that a single person can live a beautiful, fulfilling life. The greatest example of this is Jesus himself, the author and finisher of our faith, who was never married, and yet lived the most fulfilled life of anyone who ever lived! (McDowell)

I think of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7, where he says it is better for someone to be single because they are not burdened down by the cares of this world. In other words, they are able to fully devote themselves to Jesus, and what could be better than that? (Perry)

A person should not feel second-class because they have chosen to live a holy, single life for the Lord. This is where the church needs to shine, and emphasize community in the church.

And finally, the church should emphasize community in the church.

Community in the Church.

By this, I do not mean that we compromise and allow people to commit this sin. But the church needs to step up and be the family of God, not just the gathering of well put together people. (Sprinkle 232)

The church needs to be a place where people who are single have a home, a family, and friends who will be there for them at a moment's notice! A place where service and sacrifice and community are commonplace.

Horizon, no one should feel alone in our church. That no one cares, no one notices. If they knew my struggle they would hate me. If they knew my struggle they would shun me. Everyone who walks through the doors of Horizon should be welcomed into the family with open arms.

Horizon should be a place where single people who choose to live a holy life for God in celibacy not only find a place of worship, but a people to call family.

Transition

Now that we have a Biblical Theology of marriage under our belt, let's take a look at what the Bible prohibits when it comes to same-sex relationships. So not only do we see a Biblical Theology, but also a Biblical Prohibition.

2.) A Biblical Prohibition

Illustration - Brandan Robertson - Calling the passages that prohibit same-sex behavior in the clobber passages.

Here is what he has to say in an article about the passages that explicitly prohibit same-sex attraction. "Simply put, the six references to homosexual sex in Scripture are *all* references not to consensual, loving, same-sex behavior, but references to sexual exploitation, abuse and idolatry. If you open up the Bible to any of the clobber passages and read the entire chapter to which each singular verse or story belongs, you will find multiple references to the worship of idols and to other heinous, exploitative and abusive sins." - Brandan Robertson (Robertson)

Is he right? Are these passages only talking about exploitation and idolatry? Or is it a bit more complicated? I think so, because as you look at all the passages over the Bible, there is an unequivocal prohibition against same-sex behavior, and on top of that there is no ethical development of the prohibition.

Lev. 18:22, "22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination."

Lev. 20:13, "13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination:"

Romans 1:26-27, "26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also

the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”

1 Cor. 6:9, “9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...”

1 Tim. 1:9-10, “9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;”

These are the clearest prohibitions of same-sex behavior in the Bible, and on the face of it there seems to be a very clear prohibition of same-sex sexual behavior.

Now notice something interesting with me. There is no development as you go across the trajectory of Scripture; in other words, God does not make allowances in one verse and raise the standard in the other. This is worth comparing to the Bible’s teaching on divorce that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 19. As we saw, God allowed Moses to allow divorce in the law, but when Jesus came, he raised the standard. We don’t see that with the prohibitions in the above verses! There is no development, no upward trajectory, it stays stable. (Sprinkle 43-45)

But as we saw above, there are a good number of scholars who think that the Bible is simply referring to exploitative relationships, like pederasty (men with boys), temple prostitution, rape, etc. And honestly there is a good bit of strength in this argument. As you look at the ancient literature, most of the male homosexual relationships described are like this. Therefore, the argument goes, Paul is not condemning loving, monogamous relationships of the same sex. (Sprinkle 87-88)

The problem with this argument is that it does not give the full picture of ancient literature, nor does it do justice to the text itself. Let’s look at Romans 1:26-27.

Romans 1:26-27, “26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”

Notice first that Paul does not use the normal words for these abusive relationships, such as *erastes*, *eromenos*, which are often used for dominant and dominated partners in same sex relationships, or *paiderastes/paidophthoros*, which are the common words for men with boys. (Sprinkle 89)

Moreover, the language used here seems to be giving the sense of mutual consent, “men...burned in their lust one toward another...men with men...receiving in themselves...”. It doesn’t really sound abusive. (Sprinkle 90)

On top of that, Paul mentions lesbian relationships. In ancient literature, lesbian relationships were mostly between two consenting adults, which can be seen in such sources like Asclepiades, a Greek poet, Clement of Alexandria, Ptolemy of Alexandria, Iamblichos who wrote a novel about a queen who married a woman, and the list could go on. We even have some examples of consenting relationships between two adult men. (Sprinkle 91-92)

It seems to me that if you are going to stick with the logic of the argument, Paul at least had consensual lesbian relationships in mind, and given the diversity of literature about men, he didn’t have to be talking about exploitative relationships. (Sprinkle 94)

Given Paul’s language in the text, and the diversity of ancient works at the time of Paul, it seems likely that he is actually talking about consensual, loving same-sex relationships. Here the best reading of the text of Romans 1:26-27 is that Paul is prohibiting same-sex relationships as a whole, not just exploitative ones.

This can be shown in Leviticus. Many popular level books will say that Moses is condemning temple prostitution, but there is a big problem. Recent studies in OT scholarship have effectively killed this view, because the evidence for temple prostitution in the ancient near east and especially in Israel is very little. In fact it probably didn’t exist. Leviticus 18:22 is just condemning same-sex, consensual relationships. (Sprinkle 45-46)

As you walk text by text, and look at the evidence, the diversity of the ancient literature and the actual wording of the Scripture, the best reading is that the Bible clearly prohibits same-sex relationships. And not just abusive ones, but consensual, loving relationships.

Application

Again, how do we lovingly help people who struggle with same-sex attraction?

As I mentioned earlier, some are not as concerned with whether Christianity is true, but whether Christianity is good. And what some people say, as we have already seen, the traditional ethics of Jesus are harmful to lgbtq people. To tell someone who struggles with same-sex attraction that to give into that temptation is a sin is not only wrong it is harmful.

Many times, stats about the suicide rate among LGBT people are brought up. And to put this in a real-world situation, these stats are absolutely scary to parents whose kids come out, or even to the kids themselves. It feels like standing firm in your faith when you have loved ones who are gay is sounding a death knell for them.

But there are a couple problems with these statistics. First, correlation does not equal causation. Someone who is a racist could try to prove their position from the Bible, but that doesn't mean the Bible itself caused them to be racist. There are also other factors to consider, the families reaction to a kid coming out, hatred instead of love from their local church, bad therapy options, and the list could go on. (Sprinkle 177-188)

Second, there are many people who are tempted with same-sex attraction but still live holy lives for Jesus. They are not harmed by their beliefs! (Sprinkle 177-188)

Third, the data is more complicated than this. Preston Sprinkle in his book covers a lot of the different sociological studies that have been done, and several of them are fascinating.

1. LGBT people who identified as religious reported higher levels of happiness than those who didn't. There was no difference between those who were in traditional churches or more mainline denominations. (Sprinkle 177-188)
2. A large study was performed on gay men in the Netherlands, which was ranked as the number one affirming country on the planet. Younger gay men were at higher risk of suicide than older gay men, even though the society was more "tolerant". (Sprinkle 177-188)

And there are many more examples than this, but I think the point is clear. The traditional sexual ethic of Jesus is not harmful. So, as Christians, when someone we love comes out to us, what should we do?

First and foremost the church should be a place where people are able to share their struggles with other people and not be condemned. Jesus, while not compromising on sin, ate with publicans and sinners. He loved reaching out to the poor, the lepers, the prostitutes, the people who society had rejected. He loved them unconditionally and got them out of their sin. (Messy Grace)

The church should be a place where people can struggle, where people know they can come to receive the love, strength, and help from their Savior through his church.

So if someone comes out to you, what should you do?

Affirm your love

You need to do this in a number of ways. First, do not get angry, yell, scream, or look disappointed. This will not help; it will only drive someone further away. Jesus, when we came to him with our sin, didn't lose his mind, he died for our sins. Second, instead of getting angry, thank them for sharing this with you. It is probably the most difficult thing they have ever done, so thank them. Third, listen. Now is not the time to preach a sermon on the evils of homosexuality. Allow them to share their story. (Messy Grace)

Affirm Christ's Love

Many people who share this with you are under the impression that God hates them. Now is the perfect time to emphasize strongly that God loves them no matter what.

Think long term.

Many people feel like they have to solve this issue overnight. But most of the time that a teen or someone in your life shares this with you this has been brewing for a long time. It is so important that you tap the breaks, and work on building a normal relationship with that person. Don't shove them into counseling right away, don't change everything on your schedule because of it, keep building a loving relationship. Because most of the people who stay faithful to Christ do so because of a loving relationship, not because of the doctrine being preached. (Sprinkle, Yarhouse)

This is going to be a long process of them and you processing their feelings and growing into their identity in Christ. Take your time, love them unconditionally, and allow them and yourself time to work through this.

Seek Help

Good, godly Christian counseling and therapy is helpful in situations like these. Go to trusted families in your church and ask for help and prayer. Many parents burn out because they keep this burden to themselves and do not seek the encouragement and prayer of other Christians around them. (Yarhouse) And for the record, the church should be a place where people can share this without being shunned.

Conclusion

So as we have seen, a good Biblical Theology of marriage states that sexual difference, between male and female is necessary for there to be a one flesh union.

We also saw that the Bible unequivocally prohibits same-sex behavior as sin, and the argument that this doctrine is harmful is very far-fetched.

Now we can hear a sermon like this, and look at the culture, and throw up our hands in defeat, thinking that the culture is too far gone, there is no hope, the gospel would be ineffective. But Horizon, nothing could be further from the truth.

Illustration - Messy grace

Just as I said in the beginning, where sin abounds Jesus thrives, and we have the wonderful opportunity to thrive along with Hi and share the hope of the gospel to a lost and broken world. So church, let's thrive.

The Bible & Racism

Introduction

We'll take your Bibles this morning and turn to Genesis 1. Today, we are bringing to a close our series on the Bible and current issues. We've talked about a wide array of topics ranging from gender to abortion to rest, but today we are going to finish our series with a study on the topic of the Bible and racism. Today's message is going to be a sandwich. Yes, you heard me right. It's going to be a sandwich. What do you mean by that? It's going to begin with a brief explanation of the biblical position on racism. It's going to end with some practical applications, but the meat of the message today is going to be a story from Galatians 2.

It's a story that is not very well known, and yet it is a story that is very applicable to the topic of racism. It's a story about how the prejudice of a people group and the cowardice of a Christian leader almost split the first ever fully integrated (Jewish & Gentile) Christian church that existed some two thousand years ago. So we're going to spend a great deal of time walking through that story this morning, but before we get there I want to start this morning with the Biblical position on racism.

Sermon

1.) The Biblical Position on Racism

What is the Biblical position on racism? Well, once again, for our answer we turn all the way back to the beginning of the Bible in Genesis.

Look with me at Genesis 1:26-27.

Genesis 1:26-27 - 26 And God said, Let us make (*white man in our image, black man in our image, Asian man in our image...is that what it says? No*) man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man (*the **human** race*) in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

- What does that mean? I like how Dr. King explained it in a speech he gave: "You see, the founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole concept of ... the 'image of God,' is the idea that all men have something within them that God injected. Not that they have substantial unity with God, but that every man has a capacity to have fellowship with God. And this gives him a uniqueness, it gives him worth, it gives him dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: there are no gradations in the image of God. Every man from a treble white to a bass (*base*) black

is significant on God's keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God." (Andrusko, 2018)

The Christian position on racism is simple. As fellow participants in the human race who are equally made in the image of God, we are all equally valuable in the eyes of God regardless of where we've come from or what our skin color looks like.

I don't know if you realize it but the abolition of slavery and the advancement of civil rights in our country were both rooted in this Biblical teaching that all men are created equal in the image of God.

And by the way in direct contrast with that, the chief architect of the theory of evolution, Charles Darwin believed very differently with regards to the value of different human races. Not only did he believe in the superiority of certain races, but he also believed that it was only a matter of time before the superior races exterminated the inferior ones.

"Darwin in *The Descent of Man* – 'At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.'

I read an article on Darwin's views this past week put out by Evolution News & Science Today. In that article, the author writes (and this is a direct quote), "Not only racism, but racial extermination was an integral feature of Darwin's theory from the start." (Weikart, 2022)

What a vivid contrast that is with the Biblical position of Genesis 1 that we are all created equal in the image of God. We are equally made.

But according to the Bible, we are not just equally made. We are also equally fallen. That's why sin exists. That's why the sin of racism exists.

Romans 5:12 – 12 Wherefore, as by one man (*Adam*) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

- As those descended from Adam, we are equally made in the image of God, but we are also equally fallen into sin. We routinely do that which is in direct opposition to the nature and the will of the one who made us. As a result of our sinful actions, we have separated ourselves from our God.

We are equally made in the image of God. We are equally fallen into sin. We are equally separated from our God, but then thanks be to God that we are all also equally offered the free gift of salvation from our sin and reconciliation with our God.

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever (*anybody*) believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

When God looks down on the world, He sees one human race with one universal problem: sin. And in the person of Christ, God provides the only acceptable payment for our sins. On

the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ bore our sin on His back in our place so that He might offer us as a gift forgiveness from sin and reconciliation with God. It's not a gift that you receive through good deeds. It's not a gift that you receive through baptism or communion. It's a gift that you receive in humility through faith in Christ alone.

What's the Biblical position on racism? It's equality. We are equally made, equally fallen, equally separated, and equally saved. The ground is level at the cross.

And yet because of the presence of sin in the world, racism exists, and it has reared its ugly head at times even within the church. This morning I'm going to tell you a story about one of those times.

Take your Bible and turn over to Galatians 2:11-14.

We've seen the Biblical position on racism. Next this morning we see a Biblical example of racism.

2.) A Biblical Example of Racism

In these verses Paul is telling a story. He's telling a story about a time in which Peter made a big mistake at the church of Antioch (Paul's home church). This mistake had such major ramifications that Paul had to confront Peter in front of the entire church about what he had done. It's a pretty explosive story, and we're going to dive into it this morning.

Galatians 2:11-14 - 11 But when Peter was come to Antioch (*to visit the church at Antioch*), I (*Paul*) withstood him to the face (*why?*), because he was to be blamed. 12 (*Well, what did he do?*) For before that certain came from James (*from the Jerusalem church*), he (*Peter*) did eat with the Gentiles (*non-Jewish Christians in the church*): but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself (*from fellowshiping with the Gentile Christians*), (*why?*) fearing them which were of the circumcision. (*There's the mistake. Here's the ramifications*) 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (*Here's the confrontation*) 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel (*that all men are made and saved equally*), I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

- What is going on here?
- In Antioch, there was an integrated church of Jews and Gentiles.
- Peter visited and fellowshiped with Jewish and Gentile Christians together at meals.
- Well, not long after Peter arrived, some prejudiced Jews from the Jerusalem church arrived in Antioch, and they didn't think Peter had any business eating with unclean Gentiles regardless of whether or not they believed in Jesus. So what did Peter do?
- He stopped eating meals with Jewish and Gentile Christians together. His decision to do so led to every other Jewish Christian in the church doing the same.

- Paul arrived back. He discovered the division now present in this first integrated church, and he publicly called Peter out about what he had done.
- That's basically the story, but if you're hearing this story and you're anything like me, there's parts of it that don't make sense.
 - o Why was it such a big deal for Jewish and Gentile Christians to eat meals together? Why did Jewish Christians from the Jerusalem get upset about it? Why was Peter so afraid of them? Why was Peter's withdrawal such a big deal that Paul confronted him publicly as a hypocrite in front of the whole church?

We're going to answer all of those questions this morning, but in order to understand the significance of what happened in Antioch, you first have to understand the history of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) in the early church and the unique challenges that came with integration.

Let me give you some context here.



The early church of Acts 1-9 was almost exclusively Jewish (racially) with some proselytes mixed in. Proselytes were non-Jews (also known as Gentiles) that converted to Judaism (consequently they kept the Jewish law: they were circumcised, they ate kosher, they worshipped in the synagogues and at the temple). They were Gentiles that acted like Jews.

- To give you some examples from the Old Testament, Rahab and Ruth both would have been proselytes. They were Gentiles that converted to Judaism.

In Acts 1-9, these were predominately the people that the gospel was being presented to and that were accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior: Jews and Gentiles that had previously converted to Judaism and for all intents and purposes lived like Jews.

- Acts 2 (Pentecost)
 - o Acts 2:5, 9-10 – 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and **proselytes**,
 - o At Pentecost, those who got saved were devout Jews and proselytes: Gentiles that had previously converted to Judaism (and were already keeping of the law)
- Acts 6 (Deacons)
 - o There was a problem with widows being neglected in the early church.

- 7 men were selected to help care for this need, and at least one of them Nicolas is specifically named as a proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6:7).
- Acts 8 (Ethiopian Eunuch)
 - He had come to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27). This means he was probably a proselyte.
 - He was likely a Gentile that had converted to Judaism and was on his way to Jerusalem to worship. He met Philip. Philip shared the gospel, and he got saved.

Here's my point. Up through Acts 9, every Gentile that we have record of getting saved was a proselyte, someone who had already converted to Judaism in the past. Thus, they had already been circumcised and kept the law. They acted like Jews. They worshipped like Jews.

Here was the million-dollar question that needed to be answered in the early church. Could Gentiles that weren't proselytes be saved? Could a Gentile that hadn't already converted to Judaism just become a Christian? Could someone that didn't eat kosher, that hadn't been circumcised, that didn't live like a Jew just become a Christian?

This question would be answered in Acts 10 where we see the first Gentile convert to Christianity that had not already converted to Judaism... the first Gentile convert that did not keep the Jewish law, that didn't act like a Jew: a Roman by the name of Cornelius.



Acts 10:1-6 - There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band (*he was Roman*), 2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa (*a port city in Judaea about 32 miles south of Caesarea*), and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner (*someone who transformed animal skins into leather*), whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

- What did Cornelius do? He sent two of his servants and one of his soldiers to Joppa to fetch Peter.
- Meanwhile, the next day as the men were on their journey to find Peter, it was lunch time and Peter was hungry. While they were preparing the food, Peter was on the

rooftop and had a vision. There was a sheet coming down from heaven with all sorts of non-kosher, unclean animals on it.

- God said to Peter, "It's lunch time. You're hungry. Go ahead and eat." Peter said, "No way. I've never eaten anything non-kosher, anything unclean." God said, "Don't call that which I have cleansed, unclean."
- After the vision, Peter was confused trying to figure out what the vision meant. Guess who showed up? The two servants and the soldier from the Gentile Cornelius. Remember the Jews considered the Gentiles unclean. They showed up asking for Peter by name.
- Peter asked them, "What do you want with me?" They told him the story about the vision God had given to Cornelius about sending for him (Peter) and that Peter would tell Cornelius what to do.
- The next day Peter returned with the men to see Cornelius, and Cornelius had gathered his friends and family to hear the message from God through Peter. Listen to what happened when Peter arrived.

Acts 10:27-29a – 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. (*uncircumcised, unclean* Gentile) 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for:

- Cornelius told Peter the story of his vision from God, and then Peter responded by saying that God was no respecter of persons and that anyone from any background could be saved through Jesus Christ. He shared the gospel saying:

Acts 10:39-43 -39 And we are witnesses of all things which he (*Jesus*) did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

- Guess what happened? Those uncircumcised, unclean, non-law observing Gentiles believed the gospel and the Holy Spirit fell down on them. They started miraculously speaking in tongues and praising God. And the Jewish Christians that were there were shocked that the Holy Spirit would indwell these unclean Gentiles who did not keep the Jewish law.

Acts 10:46b-48 - Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

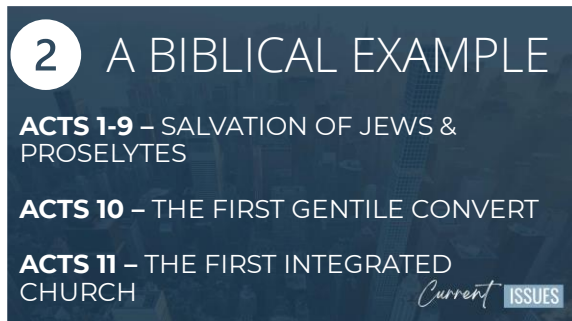
- Wow, the first full on Gentiles that we have record of getting saved, and who does God use to share the gospel with them? Peter.

Acts 11:1-4 – 1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision (*congratulated*) contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them (*take note – this ties in directly with what is happening in Galatians 2*). 4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them.

- Acts 11:18 - 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.
- Peter was the first one to lead an “unclean”, non-law observing Gentile to the Lord, and afterwards he ate with them. He fellowshiped with them in their home. Why? Because they were saved, and how could he consider a Gentile Christian unclean that had been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ? How could he refuse to fellowship with one that the Holy Spirit Himself had indwelt?

In Acts 1-9, we see the salvation of Jews and proselytes.

In Acts 10, we see the first Gentile convert, but in Acts 11, we see the first integrated Jewish and Gentile church. Where was it? Antioch...this is the church that the Galatians 2 incident is going to occur at.



Acts 11 – first integrated church (Antioch)

Acts 11:19-21 - 19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians (*non-Jews*), preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

- Guess what happens as Jews and Gentiles are getting saved up in Antioch? A church starts.
- The Jerusalem church (*where the apostles are at*) starts getting reports of this integrated church in Antioch of Jews and non-law observing Gentiles. What do they do

about it? They send Barnabas to investigate and when he got there, he got so excited over what God was doing. Shortly thereafter, Barnabas went and got Paul from Tarsus and they went and ministered together at the church of Antioch. This was their church.

- Acts 11:26 - And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
 - o Why? Because this growing group of Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch had integrated. You couldn't just call them Jews. You couldn't just call them Gentiles. You had to call this united group of believers something, and they came to be known by that which united them: Christ.

Shortly thereafter, Paul and Barnabas made a visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10) to talk with Peter, James, and John about the gospel and to make sure they were all on the same page about the gospel and about the practical implication of the gospel to Jews and Gentiles.

- During the course of that meeting it was very clearly agreed upon that Jews and Gentiles were both saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and that Gentile converts to Christianity (like Titus) did not also have to convert to Judaism. They did not need to be circumcised or observe the other Jewish laws in order to be saved, even if their fellow Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ of their own volition continued to do so.
 - o And even though through Christ they were no longer obligated to, many of those early Jewish Christians continued to observe the law as a part of their lifelong culture...and as a means of opening up doors of opportunity for sharing the gospel with their fellow unbelieving Jews.

Time passed and eventually Peter made a trip up to Antioch to see this thriving Christian church composed of Jews and (non-law observant) Gentiles. This is the trip that Galatians 2:11-14 is describing.

So we've seen the context. Peter was the one who led the first full on Gentile to the Lord and afterwards he fellowshiped with that Gentile in his own home because he had been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ...and when he caught flack back in Jerusalem for fellowshiping with this Gentile, he stood firm in his conviction that he would not consider unclean a Gentile brother that had been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

That context sets the stage for our story in Galatians 2. Turn back to Galatians 2.

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

This trip that Peter took to see the first integrated Christian church in Antioch (Paul's church) ended with Paul confronting Peter to his face. Why?

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles – when Peter first arrived in Antioch, he found Jewish and Gentile Christians eating together in Christian fellowship (likely including communion), and he joined them. Peter ate and fellowshiped with these Gentile Christians just like he ate with Cornelius and the other Gentile Christians that he himself had led to the Lord in Acts 10 in Caesarea.

But when they were come He withdrew and separated himself fearing them which were of the circumcision – Just as was the case in Acts 11, there were those from the Jerusalem church that did not think that Peter had any business fellowshiping with unclean, uncircumcised Gentiles and that in so doing he was violating God’s law. Rather than standing firm as he had in Acts 11, Peter went a different route this time. What did he do?

He withdrew and separated (segregated) himself – he cowered and excluded himself from table fellowship with the Gentile Christians. He stopped attending these joint meals. Why? Fear.

Fearing them which were of the circumcision – he was afraid of the opinions of these Jewish Christians from Jerusalem.

- Why was Peter afraid? What was there to be afraid of? There was a lot to be afraid of.
- Peter was called to be the apostle to the Jews. Reports of him eating with Gentiles could have impacted his ability to minister to Jews both within and without the church, many of which would have been appalled at even the thought of eating with an unclean Gentile.
- What did he do? For the sake of his reputation among the Jews, he separated from his fellow Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ.

That was a major error, but it gets worse. That major error was going to have major ripple effects in the first integrated Christian church at Antioch.

That decision had ripple effects. Look at verse 13.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him – his withdrawal from eating together with Gentile believers caused all of the other Jewish Christians in the church at Antioch to do the same.

- This makes sense. Peter is like “the apostle”. “If he’s not eating with Gentile Christians, I probably shouldn’t either.”
- The word for “dissembled” literally means “to act hypocritically together”.
- Peter was being a hypocrite because he was acting in contrast with his own convictions.
 - o Remember, he led the first Gentiles to the Lord, and then he ate with them, and when he got grief for it back in Jerusalem, he stood firm. “They’re just as

much Christians as we are. Why would I refuse to fellowship with and call unclean those who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ?"

- That was what he believed, but because of fear he was acting in contrast with his convictions, and his actions led the other Jewish Christians to follow suit.
- The fracture was so great among the believers in that church that even....

Insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation – Remember, Barnabas was Paul's partner in ministry in spreading the gospel to the non-Jews. He also withdrew from eating with the Gentile Christians.

We've seen the context. Peter led the first Gentiles to Christ and then shared meals with them because through Christ they were just as clean as he was. We've seen the confrontation. Paul withstood Peter to the face. We've seen the cause of the confrontation: Peter, in contrast with his own convictions, withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentiles because of fear. Finally, we see the critique. What did Paul say to Peter when he confronted him publicly?

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel – when I discovered (this seems to indicate that Paul was away while this happened) that these Jewish Christians were not walking in accordance with the truth of the gospel (MacArthur, 1987)

- What's the truth of the gospel? The truth of the gospel is that whether you're Jewish, Gentile, white, black, Latino, Asian, tall, short, smart, dumb, rich, poor, male, female...if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are clean, and there is no room for prejudice, disenfranchisement, or castes within the Body of Christ.

I said unto Peter before them all – in the midst of the whole assembly.

If thou, being a Jew, - by birth

livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews – since Cornelius got saved, you have freely and openly eaten with saved Gentiles.

- If you have lived that way.

Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? –Peter, you say that the Gentiles aren't saved by the keeping of the Jewish law, and you say that the Gentile believers aren't bound by the Jewish law, but by withdrawing from fellowship with them for the sake of your "testimony" among the Jews, you are, in essence, forcing them to live like Jews...why? Because apparently that's the only way you'll fellowship with them. (Spence & Exell, 1883)

- “Peter, if that person is clean enough to be God’s Son, he’s clean enough to be your brother. How can you withhold fellowship from one that God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit indwells?”

In Galatians 2 we see a biblical example of racism...a story about how the prejudice of a people group (Jewish Christians from Jerusalem) and the cowardice of a Christian leader (Peter) almost split the first ever fully integrated Christian church (Jew & Gentile) that existed some two thousand years ago. Who knows? It might have happened if Paul hadn’t stepped in and cleaned up Peter’s mess.

God forbid that that should ever happen in our church. God forbid that we should ever look down upon someone who has been made in the image, and God forbid that we should ever look down upon someone that Christ died to saved regardless of...

- Their race
- Their income
- Their culture
- Their education
- Their past

There’s no place for that here.

We’ve seen the Biblical position on racism: we are equally made, fallen, and saved. We’ve seen a Biblical example of racism in the church at Antioch and the destruction it wrought. Finally this morning we see a Biblical response to racism.

3.) A Biblical Response to Racism

How do we as Christians respond to racism in the 21st century? In closing, let me give you five practical things you can do.

(1) Treat all people with dignity



James 2:8-9 says this, “8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons (*treat people unequally*), ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

Affirm the biblical doctrine of equality by treating people as those made in the image of God, regardless of race, social status, or bank account balance.

(2) Help the needy



Isaiah 1:17 - 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

When someone is in the gutters of life, our primary calling is not to assign blame, but rather to try to help.

Illustration – one of the best illustrations of this biblically is the Good Samaritan. When he found the guy left for dead on the side of the road, he didn't devote some large period of time to discern whether the man was deserving of his help. He just tried to help.

As we personally come across people who are done and out, our first impulse should be to try to help.

(3) Support just laws and processes



Micah 6:8 - 8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Here we're talking about equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome. There's a difference between the two.

Equality of outcome is socialism, and it's destructive.

Equality of opportunity means that every person should receive equal protection of the law, and that laws and processes should not infringe upon people's rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As Christians, we should support just laws and processes, and in contrast we should oppose unjust laws and processes.

(4) Model unity amidst diversity



Galatians 3:27-28 - 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Within the church, within our church, there is a wide range of diversity...racial diversity, economic diversity, ethnic diversity...etc. etc. As Christians, we acknowledge those differences, but we also understand that we are not defined by them. We are fundamentally defined by our common unity that we have in Jesus Christ.

So within the church, we should model an uncommon unity amidst diversity. There should be a strong familial bond that binds us together despite our superficial differences.

(5) Prioritize the gospel



Romans 1:16-17 - 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The gospel is the ultimate solution to the sin of racism. It is a message that seeks not merely to alter the behavior of a person, but goes deeper than that to the heart. And it is a message of equality. We are equally made in the image of God. We are equally fallen in the rebellion of sin. We are equally separated from God because of that rebellion. We are equally offered the free gift of salvation in light of what Christ has done for **all** of us.

Application

As a Christian people that believe the Biblical teaching that all people are made in the image of God, may we be known as those who (1) treat all people with dignity (2) help the needy (3) support justice (4) model unity and (5) prioritize the gospel.

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