

“QUESTION 28: TRANSGENDER - WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?” (Genesis 1:26-31)

1.26.20

INTRODUCTION

Before we get started on today's topic, I want to say a little something to tie last week's look at gay marriage with today's topic of transgender. While we can debate the seriousness of sins or the disgust we may feel at how some people so proudly live out their sins in our culture, there are some truths that we absolutely need to hang on to. Why? Because God has put us in this place, and in this time. So it all in a sense boils down to one central question: HOW do we minister to this culture? How do we reflect Jesus Christ to the time, place and people with which we live, regardless of the sins and other issues that seem to be so very much a part of the world today?

To be most effective in reflecting Christ, we cannot ignore these truths:

- 1) ***[A]ll have sinned and fall short of the glory of God — Paul, Romans 3:23.*** That is the great common denominator that ties all people together — sinner and saint. Because of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden, sin was passed on to everybody! That sin, that brokenness, is a character trait we all share. That applies to all of us.
- 2) ***[T]here is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus — Paul, Romans 8:1.*** The blood Christ shed on the cross is available for anybody. And once claimed, ANYBODY no longer stands condemned because ALL sins, regardless of what they are, have been washed away — completely!
- 3) ***God created mankind in his own image — Genesis 1:27a.*** We often use this verse as an argument for the sanctity of life. That's absolutely correct — which is why we need to view all the sin around us as a product of brokenness, as an end result of sin allowed to dominate and rule our culture. But the lives behind the sin, the lives caught in all the traps of sin, are still sacred, and still need to be viewed as products of God's image. That applies to all of us.
- 4) ***“I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth” — God speaking, Exodus 9:16.*** Nobody, regardless of the state of their life right now, regardless of the sin in which they live, has removed themselves from one overriding truth: Nobody is here by accident; rather, everybody is here by God's plan and FOR God's plan. Everybody is designed, everybody is ***fearfully and wonderfully made — David, Psalm 139:14a,*** by God himself; ***we are all the work of [his] hand — Isaiah 64:8b.*** The key is: Who sits on the throne of our lives? That applies to all of us. And lastly . . .
- 5) ***He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” — Jesus Christ, Mark 16:15.*** “Go to ALL — preach to EVERY!” That's what we are called to do, as individuals and as a body of believers — no exceptions, no restrictions, no limits. And there is no “Plan B.” We're it. But that's why Paul encouraged us with these words reflecting his experiences in ministry: ***[M]y God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus — Paul, Philippians 4:19.*** How can we not be excited to be a part of that mission when we will be given EVERYTHING we need to succeed! And praise God — that also applies to all of us.

So now, with all that being said, we are ready to hit this week's topic: transgender. Let's start with our text.

TEXT

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day — Genesis 1:26-31.

Some takeaways from this Scripture:

- 1) God “chose” to make mankind. He did it for a purpose — with his own being as the blueprint.
- 2) God “blessed” them, meaning that mankind had God’s favor to rule over his creation, in other words, to care for everything provided for them in order that God’s purposes be accomplished.
- 3) God looked at his creation, the way he designed it and brought it to be, and declared it to be “very good” — including his design of mankind being created *male and female*. It couldn’t have been done better or improved upon. Nothing was left out; nothing was incomplete.

APPLICATION

Now as we look at the topic of transgender, some things to be aware of:

- 1) The Bible has addressed the issue of same-sex relationships as far back as the time of Abraham — some 4,200-4,300 years ago. The Mosaic Law talked about it, as did the apostle Paul. The point: The sin of same-sex relationships has a very long and documented response from God in very clear and unequivocal terms.
- 2) By contrast, the term “transgender” did not even appear in the language until 1965, when a professor of psychiatry at Columbia University first used it in a book, *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology*. In other words, the idea of “transgender” as a recognized segment of our population is a reality within many of our lifetimes — which also means some 2,000 years after the Scriptures were completed. By 1992, the term had become synonymous with a political movement for all non-binary forms of gender identification.

So what exactly does that word, “transgender,” mean? To be transgender means to be somebody who has a gender identity or gender expression that differs from the gender assigned to them at birth — in other words, their natural, physical gender identification is at odds with the gender with which they feel connected. The term is often shortened to the term “trans,” and can also be used as an umbrella term to include, beyond trans men and trans women, people who are not exclusively masculine or feminine, such as people who are nonbinary or genderqueer (identities that are outside the binary genders of male and female), including bigender (identifying as both male and female or moving between male and female, having two distinct gender identities simultaneously or fluctuating between them, sometimes overlapping with the term “androgynous”), pangender (identifying with all genders within a given culture), genderfluid (remaining flexible about their gender identity instead of committing to a specific gender) or

agender (having no gender or being without a gender identity). There is even a way to identify as a “third” gender — which in practical terms means much the same as those who do not put a name to their gender. Many people who identify as transgender also deal with “gender dysphoria,” which is a clinical distress over the mismatch of their gender identity and the gender assigned them at birth. Accepting one’s gender identification is called “transgender congruence.” Incidentally, guys who identify as guys and girls who identify as girls are called “cisgender,” from the Latin prefix “cis” which means “on this side of,” versus “trans” which means “across from” or “on the other side of.”

Now, just to make sure this is understood, this is not the same as our conversation last week involving “same-sex.” Last week was a look at sexual attraction, what becomes somebody in a romantic sense. Gender issues have to do with how you see yourself in terms of male or female or, according to contemporary society, a wide range of menu options.

In 2008, the New York Times for the first time used the phrase “genderqueer” in one of its articles. With a lot of celebrity influence in the 2010s, this term became more popular as being synonymous with “gender nonconforming.” And, in February of 2014, “agender” was one of 50 available custom genders available to choose on Facebook.

Also, as a result of this, there is a movement called “gender neutrality” which aims to end discrimination of gender altogether in society through the means of gender-neutral language, the end of sex segregation (including bathrooms), and other means. It’s the idea that policies, language, and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles according to people’s sex or gender, in order to avoid discrimination arising from the impression that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than another.

Ominously, gender neutrality is just one piece of a developing philosophy called “transhumanism,” which is described as the movement to erode the cultural, biological, psychological, and social role of gender within society. Gender is a detriment to society. Some of the proponents of this philosophy look to the day that, as assistive reproduction technologies continue to advance, it is feasible that, one day, postgendered humans would have the ability, if they chose to do so, to both carry a pregnancy to term and father a child, thus eliminating (in their mind) the need for genders in that society. There is even talk within this philosophical community of the possibility of human immortality right here on earth — thanks to the possibilities that biotechnology and human ingenuity provide. All of this is, fundamentally, coming from a notion created by the minds of broken, fallen human beings that two genders isn’t enough, that it is all about how I see things, what makes me happy. All of this makes for one incredibly slippery slope.

So, does the Bible say anything that could be construed to apply to such a contemporary issue? There is some:

- 1) ***“A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this” — Moses, Deuteronomy 22:5.***
- 2) ***For God is not a God of disorder but of peace — Paul, I Corinthians 14:33.***

That’s pretty much it — which by itself is no big deal. The Bible doesn’t say anything about gun rights or anorexia either. So in looking to issues that have no explicit Biblical response, we need to start with Biblical principles. Here are three principles with which we can begin regarding this subject:

- 1) God’s design was gender-binary, in other words, male and female. Any anomalies to that would not be a nod to God’s design but rather to man’s fall; as Paul described it: ***We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time — Paul, Romans 8:22.*** It cannot be stressed enough that male and female is not God’s “plan A” with a “plan B” waiting on the sidelines. Male and female is God’s ONLY plan, his perfect design. So when the woman, who was created from a rib “taken out of the man,” returns to the man and joins to the man in sexual union, the two become “one flesh.”
- 2) While there may be people who genuinely feel that their identity does not correspond with their biological “assignment,” our moral directions and choices are not to be based on our feelings. The question becomes: Is how I feel about myself match God’s design for myself? God must rule, in this or any other question in our lives. Being “true to myself” is never right if that means living contradictory to God’s word. Being a born-again believer in Jesus Christ involves three (3) things:
 - a) Dying to self: ***“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” — Jesus Christ, Matthew 16:24.***
 - b) Being reborn in our minds: ***Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will — Paul, Romans 12:2.***
 - c) Repenting — changing the direction of our lives: ***I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. . . . they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness — Paul, Ephesians 4:17, 19-24.***

Pastor and teacher Kevin DeYoung says it this way: “As much as contemporary academia says otherwise, the Bible believes in the organic unity of biological sex and gender identity. This is why male and female are (uniquely) the type of pair that can reproduce. It’s why homosexuality — a man lying with a man as with a woman — is wrong. It’s why the apostle Paul can speak of homosexual partnerships as deviating from the natural relations or natural function of male-female sexual intercourse. In each instance, the argument only works if there is an assumed equivalence between the biology of sexual difference and the corresponding identities of male and female.” In other words, biology and identity are inseparable.
- 3) If we therefore conclude that male and female is God’s idea and God’s perfect design for his creation, and if we are therefore meant to embrace that design, then anything that confuses those realities would necessarily displease him.

The truth is that, because transgender is a much more contemporary concept, and since due to our considerable abilities in the fields of biotechnology and medicine we can very directly intervene in our biological and physical make-up, there must be something much more basic at play that needs to be addressed here. It was Solomon who, in some of the first words of the book of Ecclesiastes, said: ***What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there***

is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new?” It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time — Solomon, Ecclesiastes 1:9-10. While the outer looks of sin may be new, while new trends or ideas may occur in our lives, in our abilities, in our knowledge, there is one underlying issue that goes back very literally to the beginning of time: sin. Sin is, at its most basic, us telling God (and everybody else) that I will take care of myself, I will decide for myself; my ideas are best, what’s right for me is the way to go. I am in charge of my life, and nobody else. I will do as I please. It is us literally saying, “My name is God.” The issue of transgender, just like same-sex relationships, is at its heart a spiritual issue, reminding us of the words of the apostle Paul: ***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms — Paul, Ephesians 6:12.*** That means that, to address it, we must make sure that we are coming from the only foundation that will never pass away: the authority of Scripture.

You see, if God is simply me, when that happens, we lose any sense of right or wrong because, by turning our backs on God, by depending on the rule of “us,” we have lost all sense of moral compass. As we mentioned last week in describing America’s move from law based on God to law based on moments and individuals, “Without a belief in God, nothing is unconditionally wrong.” That is what the prophet Isaiah was trying to get across to the nation of Israel when he famously said: ***Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. . . . they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel — Isaiah 5:20-21, 24b.*** That’s what happens when there is no standard — and that happens when there is no God.

Our nation is unfortunately one of many which has come to hold that everyone should be free, to borrow from the books of Judges, to do as they see fit (Judges 21:25b). There is no king, there is no God, except they themselves. One result of that: Anybody who does hold to standards of right and wrong, who does call evil what it is, and sin what it is, is labeled as being narrow-minded and bigoted. Why can’t all those crabby fundamentalists just let people alone to live whatever life makes them happy?

But who says that? Mainstream media says that. Hollywood says that. Boards of education say that. But why should we be surprised? What reason would we ever have to think that mainstream media has a biblical worldview? Why would we ever think that Hollywood has a biblical worldview? Or boards of education? Or television executives? Or governments, at any level? A biblical worldview is only possible when Jesus Christ is firmly in place on the throne of a person’s life. Until then, biblical worldview = “crabby fundamentalists.”

But against that particular stream of ethics and morality, Southern Baptist theologian Albert Mohler stated: “Only God has the right to determine gender . . . any attempt to alter that creation is an act of rebellion against God.” He later made it clear: “Christians are obligated to find our definitions . . . in the Bible. . . . When a nation’s moral rebellion comes down to this level of confusion, we are already in big trouble. A society that can’t distinguish between men and women is not likely to find moral clarity in any other area of life.”

And while it is not often that I would agree to a Catholic position on some of our contemporary issues, I absolutely agree with the words of Pope Benedict XVI regarding the current popular themes of gender theory, warning that it risks blurring the line between male and female to such

an extent that it could lead to the “self-destruction” of the human species. He said this regarding any attempts to alter the definition of the term “gender”: “What is often expressed and understood by the term ‘gender’ is definitively resolved in the self-emancipation of the human being from creation and the Creator. Man wants to create himself, and to decide always and exclusively on his own about what concerns him.” Benedict went on to say that this is humanity living “against truth, against the creating Spirit.” Once again, the culture is trying to say, “My name is God.”

Back in August 2017, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood released a statement on human sexuality that came to be known as “The Nashville Statement.” It was signed by more than 150 evangelical leaders (including Francis Chan, William Lane Craig, James Dobson, Ken Ham, Richard Land, John McArthur, J.P. Moreland, J.I. Packer, Tony Perkins, John Piper and R.C. Sproul) and, among its points, was saying “NO” to the idea that “adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption,” and further, saying “NO” to the idea that “the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.”

And what was the conclusion of The Nashville Statement in the midst of this cultural attempt at sexual reimagining? They referred to the Scriptures:

- 1) ***Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — Paul, I Timothy 1:15b.***
- 2) ***“[R]epentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations” — Jesus Christ, Luke 24:47.***
- 3) ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness — I John 1:9.***

Folks, whatever its trappings, transgender, like same-sex issues, is all about mankind desiring ownership of himself over God. And it is about the culture falling into an incredibly shortsighted, dangerous trap, spelled out like this:

- 1) This life is all there is.
- 2) Live for the moment; eat, drink and be merry.
- 3) What makes me happy, what works for me, is all that matters.

Well, no; this life is NOT all there is. Life is but a moment, in biblical terms, a vapor or mist; eternity is the life that matters. Pleasing God is the goal; I find my happiness, my joy, my pleasure in his happiness, his joy, his pleasure.

All of the sexual orientation or attraction issues (or, for that matter, any sin issues) fail because nothing people in those situations do in their own efforts will ever even begin to approach the joy they are designed to experience only in God through Jesus Christ. They feel an incredible sense of unhappiness but they have no idea of where to turn to find a life that will satisfy, of a joy and peace and contentment that will never go away. In short, they are looking for Jesus. How do I know that? The Bible says this, again going back to Ecclesiastes: ***[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart — Solomon, Ecclesiastes 3:11a.*** We are hard-wired, or “heart-wired” if you will, to feel that there is something more, something beyond this life. And God has given us the privileged gift of being that link, that ambassador, to present that joyful, reassuring, redemptive message to everybody we encounter — including those caught in same-sex issues or in all the variations of gender issues. Folks, when people genuinely meet Jesus Christ, things change. Life changes because he makes life-

change. That's what he came to do. So Paul's words in II Corinthians aren't just a matter of theological fact; they are a celebration, that we can be freed from ANY sin that traps us: ***[Christ] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. . . . Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*** — Paul, II Corinthians 5:15, 17.

CONCLUSION

So at the end of the day, how do we minister to transgender? The same way we would minister to anybody else:

- 1) We reach out with the fruits of the Spirit: ***love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*** — Paul, Galatians 5:22-23a.
- 2) We reach out from relationship. For many people, to buy what the Bible says, they first need to see what the Bible says — its evidence in us. That takes some hanging out with us so that they can learn how Jesus changed us, how he continues to change us. And we need to treat our relationships like investments. With our investments, we watch over them, we track them very carefully, to make sure we are getting a return on our investment. We need to take the same approach in all our relationships, but especially with our relationships with nonbelievers. Watch over them, stay connected with them, continue with them. We are talking an eternal end-game here, so we need to be faithful to the people with which we are connecting.
- 3) We reach out in the strength, confidence and presence of the Savior. This is not a venture of our own strength or goodness. This is Holy Spirit stuff — so we rely on him in every aspect of these relationships. Remember the words of Christ: ***“[D]o not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you*** — Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:19-20.
- 4) We reach out as a reflection of the image of God. Now certainly we are extremely troubled to see all these results of sin, and we recognize them as being contrary to the image of God. But the image of God cuts two ways. Remember Paul's words to the Galatians? ***So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*** — Paul, Galatians 3:26-27. That is not simply referring to reflecting the holiness of Christ or the perfection of Christ but also the character of Christ. That means his attributes — his love, his mercy, his gentleness, his compassion, and his joy — must be ours as well. Sin in our society should literally be a siren call for the incredible need that, as the Steve Green song says, “People need the Lord.” We are not here to build walls to separate us from sinners. We are here to build doorways to the body of Christ, where everybody is welcome, to come and learn the truth of God to experience the grace of God, the forgiveness of God, and the life of God through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The abundant life that Jesus promised does not come through human effort. That only comes through realizing the life that is available and offered through him. And that is the greatest, most joyful life possible — because it's founded not on a momentary whim, but on an eternal relationship.

And yes, we are to be a welcoming church. I hate that that word has been hijacked to mean something else, that, regardless of behaviors or beliefs, people are being welcomed into fellowships where those behaviors or beliefs are also being affirmed and encouraged and continued. That is not what welcoming means here. To be welcoming here means that we invite

anybody, everybody, into this fellowship, to experience the truth of God, to experience the saving power of Jesus Christ, and to experience the life-changing power of the gospel. We welcome people here that God in his grace will change others as he has changed us.

Remember: Sinners are what we once were. Saved is what we became — and what through the blood of Christ ANYBODY can become. Do you believe that? Remember Paul's words to Timothy: ***[T]he Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline — Paul, II Timothy 1:7.*** We have the power, we have the call — and we are surrounded by the field. Let's get going! Let's pray!