

HUMAN SEXUALITY: MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM

Genesis 1:26–32; 2:15–25 • Char Brodersen

Introduction: Good morning, Church! If it's your first time joining us, welcome! We are continuing our current series, The Story of Humanity. Last week, we looked together at the doctrine of the image of God—that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. This is not something we attain to, or even maintain, but a gift and an honor bestowed on us by our loving Creator. We saw how humans are created to image the invisible God to the physical creation and to serve as God's steward over all of the creation, bringing it to its full potential that it might magnify and glorify the goodness of its Creator.

This morning, we want to consider together what it means to bear God's image and likeness in our physical bodies as both male and female.

Last week, we opened with this question from Billie Eilish's Grammy award-winning song: "What Was I Made For?" I don't know if this existential question has been more at the forefront of our cultural dialogue and debate in my lifetime. There are such radically differing opinions on this topic, and we could spend hours and even weeks talking through the many layers and nuances of this conversation, especially when it comes to sex and gender identity.

Here's what I aim to do this morning. I want to show the biblical image of male and female, how the church has been complicit in creating the current issues on sexuality and gender because of our own discounting of the physical body, and yet how the hope is not to abolish gender theory and debate but to bring people back to their Creator through our own character and way of life.

Last week, we asked: Is there a cosmic identity, meaning, and purpose for humans? A grand narrative that we are all a part of? If so, what kind of freedom and choice do we have in the matter? Or is our identity and purpose something that is completely subjective that we and we alone can decide for ourselves? Is it framed by culture or by tradition?

There are basically two held views on the subject: Essentialist View and Constructionist View.

"An essentialist perspective affirms that men and women are fundamentally, or essentially, different. This doesn't have to mean that they are polar opposites, different in every way, but rather that there is some distinguishing feature that all women have and all men do not, and vice versa."

Abigail Favale, *The Genesis of Gender*

Then there is the Constructionist View, which essentially says that there are no differences between men and women at the level of being. Any differences we perceive are products of society and culture.

Is this true? Is there essentially no difference between male and female? Is our identity and sexuality something that is completely subjective and only perceived as different because of culture and society?

The historic orthodox teaching of the Church, based on the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, has been in line with the *Essentialist View*—that men and women are fundamentally and essentially different. But is this really the thing that Scripture highlights? As one New York Times best-selling author once put it, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. This is why it is so important for us to look at the actual Scriptures to know what the Bible teaches about human sexuality expressed in male and female.

Let's consider the Genesis creation account again.

I. **Male and Female He Created Them. (Read Genesis 1:26–32; 2:15–25)**

- A. Considering the Genesis creation account, we see again that the creation/matter and the physical world itself is good, and on top of that, the creation of humanity is doubly good. I mentioned last week how the literary pattern of the narrative breaks to show us that this creation of humans on the sixth day is the most glorious and climactic work that YHWH, the Creator, has done; therefore, it deserves this double goodness in its affirmation.
- B. Here as humanity is made in YHWH's image, we leave the normal script and style as the writer breaks into a poetic celebration of humanity, poetry that celebrates how humans—embodied middle creatures—image and are like their glorious Creator.

1. **“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**

- a. The image bearers are one kind—Mankind; and yet they are diverse in their kind—complementary halves—male and female.
2. Now it's interesting to note that chapter 2 of Genesis, with its zoomed-in detail of humanity as image bearers, follows the same climax of Genesis 1. Just as Genesis 1 climaxes in poetic celebration of humans in the image of God, Genesis 2 climaxes in poetic celebration over the creation of the woman!

a. **“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was take out of Man” (ESV).**

- b. Adam exclaims, “At last!!” He has found his own reflection and likeness, and both her likeness and her sexual difference are celebrated in beautiful poetry. Remember previously, God had brought all of the animals to the man to see what he would name them, then this comment comes: **“but for Adam, no companion who corresponded to him was found” (NET).**

- c. So when Adam sees the woman, his first words are not: *What is this? This creature is nothing like me; she is my opposite.* No: *This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.* Adam celebrates the woman's likeness and sameness to him.

- (i) In her book, *The Genesis of Gender*, Abigail Favale, writes,

“At last!” Listen to the delight and relief in those two words: ‘At last!’ He immediately recognizes, in the silent declaration of her body, that she is both like him—more like him than any other earthly creature—and not like him. Their difference is complementary, but asymmetrical; this is not a mirror image or polar opposite. She resembles him in their shared humanity—‘bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh’—but differs in the feminine form of her humanity. Genesis affirms a balance of sameness and difference between the sexes. This is a delicate balance that is difficult, but necessary, to maintain. Most theories of gender lose this balance, veering into extremes of uniformity (men and women are interchangeable) or polarity (men are from Mars, women are from Venus). Both extremes lose the fruitful tension expressed here in Genesis.”

- (ii) And of course the Genesis creation text ends with this beautiful defining statement—**“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”**

- (a) There is a beautiful unity in their identity, sameness, diversity, and total security. There is no pitting of difference, no dominance, no exploitation, fear, insecurity, or shame.

- (b) What is highlighted is humanity—male and female’s unity and security.
- (c) Now in talking about sameness and unity and all this, please don’t misunderstand what I’m getting at; the Scriptures recognize that there is a clear biological difference to men and women, that male and female are created complimentary halves. But outside of our biological makeup in the two sexes, as male and female, Scripture never expounds on any other differences. By and large, humanity is addressed as a single unit in Scripture. That doesn’t mean that cultural norms and practices of men and women are not present or critiqued, but that Scripture is silent on how any of this has anything to do with our ontology.
- (iii) It also must be highlighted than in the creation account, there is no difference in humanity’s commissioning and authority from YHWH. Both male and female image the invisible God and are called to rule and steward over his creation.
 - (a) Listen again, **“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.” Genesis 1:26–28**
- (iv) Oftentimes, it is pointed out that according to Genesis 2, the man was created first and therefore has authority over the woman. According to this view, men lead and women follow. Men do the important stuff and women compliment or help men in their work. The problem with this view is that the text never says so and also the commissioning of humanity is here in chapter 1 addressed to both male and female and not in chapter 2 at all. According to the text, both male and female image the invisible God and are called to rule and steward over his creation. God never says to Adam: *you’re in charge cuz you’re the man, and men are meant to be in charge, or your in charge because you’re the oldest.*
- (v) But in fact, the struggle for dominance and ruling over one another is something that is introduced into Genesis chapter 3 as a result of their sin. Now because of sin, rather than humans mirroring this ideal of unity, of celebrating our sameness and sexual differences, history is a long sad tale of pitting our differences and denying our sameness, historically expressed in male dominance, violence, and exploitation.
- (vi) Scripture is actually silent on how men are men and women are women outside of their biological makeup and physical anatomy. In the same way that Scripture is silent on how humans image God, Scripture never tells us that a man’s or woman’s identities or sexuality is in their activity and doing rather than their physical body and being.

II. Male and Female Beyond Stereotypes

- A. One of the reasons that this biblical teaching and understanding is hugely important is because the Church, along with much of Western culture, has done the very thing that the Constructionist View is pushing against. We have defined identity and sexuality around stereotypes of “hyper-masculinity” and “hyper-femininity.” We often say things like *he’s a man’s man*, as if a certain body type, way of acting, dressing, or personal interest defined someone as a man. Or *she is a girly, girl*, again, as if a certain body type, way of acting, dressing, or personal interest determines whether one is a woman or to what degree someone is a man or woman.

- B. The problem is that Church and Christian subculture has towed the line and continues to tow the line of these stereotypes. In our discipleship of men and women, we stereotype: fashion shows and teas for women, BBQs and fishing trips for men. Now nothing is wrong with women getting together for discipleship and tea or men for discipleship and BBQ, but we are making a huge mistake when we generalize that these are men or women things, that these are defining qualities of men and women. No they aren't, and honestly, Church, we could talk all day long about ways that the Church and well-meaning Christians have held up stereotypes of men and women as biblical or holy. These hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine ideals have done incredible damage to individual identity and value. The logic is, "Since I don't fit into this ideal of a man or a woman, I don't belong. Not only do I not belong, but I must not actually be a man or a woman." We tend to think that these current issues of identity, sex, and gender have been created and facilitated by a secular culture rejecting God, and to some degree that may be so, but the Church has also played its part in casting doubt upon human identity, sexuality, and belonging based upon extra-biblical criteria.
- C. Years ago, I came across an individual on social media who posted this: "*Society is not going to feminize me. Not apologizing for being a man. I shoot guns. I hunt. I like football. I drive a truck. I like action movies. I love the Lord. I will fight for my family and friends. I RESPECT women. We don't have to lose our masculinity to be good people.*" A well-known theologian replied, "Good word. Blessings to you."
- D. What is a huge hole in this definition of masculinity? If this is what masculinity looks like, how in the world did men throughout most of history establish their manhood? Did Jesus (the ideal and most whole human who ever lived) shoot guns or hunt, like football, drive a truck, or love his wife? Was Jesus masculine? Was Jesus a man?
- E. This viewpoint is not only caught by the Christian culture, this kind of manhood based on a certain level of masculinity, womanhood based on certain level femininity, is taught from the pulpit as gospel. The resounding message is this: for everyone else, measure up, get disciplined, or get out.

III. Scriptures' High and Humble View of the Body

- A. One of the results and backlashes of this kind of thinking has been the rise of neo-gnosticism in our culture and even our churches. Since we don't feel, think, and see ourselves as the stereotypical man of Western American culture—who likes guns, football, the occasional brawl, and is not comfortable with their emotions or male affection—we question a fact our genetic makeup and physical body. *I must not be a man.* We don't feel, think, and see ourselves as the stereotypical woman of Western American culture—who loves shopping (especially for pink things), getting her nails done, and is overly emotional about everything—again, we question a fact of our genetic makeup and our physical body rather than the validity of these ideas around what constitutes male and female, feminine and masculine. Do our bodies mean nothing? According to our current culture, the answer seems to be not really.
- B. This is seen in the fact that nearly every one of these hot-button issues in our current culture concerns this question of the body and whether it means something or whether it means nothing and is ours to do whatever we want with—whether in post- or trans-humanism, abortion, infanticide, sexuality, gender, and transgenderism.
- C. Sam Allberry writes,

"For some people today, the 'real me' is my soul or spirit. The body is simply the lump of matter I am connected to, the outer casing for who I really am. It is the blank canvas on which I can paint my identity once I have discovered it. It is not, in and of itself, part of that identity or a clue to it. It need not determine or constrain who I am. It is the soul that matters. That's where you find the real me. This thinking tends to prioritize the soul over the body. It

sees the body as malleable. I can shape it and mold it. I can paint it and adorn it. But what is underneath is much deeper and more immutable.”

Sam Allberry, *What God Has to Say About Our Bodies*

D. In stark contrast to our culture, the Bible cuts through with its unique perspective that gives unprecedented value and dignity to all humans. Your body is not incidental to who you are. In fact you, your physical body was made by your loving Creator; you have been fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139). AND yet, there is much more to you than how you physically appear to others.

1. Your body is not nothing. Nor is it everything. But your body is you and is intrinsic to who you are, though it is not the totality of who you are. You and I are these sacred middle creatures, not purely flesh or spirit but inhabiting and embodying both. Made from the dust, yet given life through the very breath of God. Made male and female in order to put the image and likeness of God on display to the rest of creation.

E. Again Sam Allberry writes,

“In the Bible, our body is not an accessory to who we are; it is part of who we are. We can’t properly understand who we are apart from our body. Your body is not other than you. It is not just a receptacle for you. It is you. In the Bible it’s not just that you have a body; you are a body.”

F. According to Scripture, not only are our physical bodies made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), but also the body belongs to God, and is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord (1 Cor. 6) (meaning to sexually express it in whatever way we desire, but only according to God’s intended design). The body is temple for the Spirit of God, and finally, the body is an integral part of the resurrected new creation—not discarded bodies to inherit a spirit world, but resurrected bodies to rule and reign over a renewed heaven and earth. Yet the most astounding claim of Christianity is that God himself became a human being, a man in fact, and he lived out his human existence in all righteousness, justice, and goodness. He loved God supremely and his neighbor as himself, and he did it in a physical body. He also suffered and died and was bodily raised from the dead! And now for all eternity, God himself has a human body! God has irreversibly, irrevocably tied himself to human flesh for all eternity.

G. He has done this because the problem with humanity is not our bodies, but sin which has actually separated us from our Creator. Therefore, we have confusion on what we are made for. It has separated us from our own selves; therefore, we have dysphoria and disconnect between our own body, mind, and soul; it has separated us from one another, and so we exploit and oppress. We exploit our difference rather than glory and celebrate our sameness and hallow our difference. Sin has done all this, so God himself takes a human body to himself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth in order to rescue and redeem humanity, male and female, to bring us back to God that we might know our true identity, belonging, and purpose in and through him, and one day experience the wholeness for which God created us for.

1. The Scripture has an incredibly high view of the human body, since it is a reflection and image of God and part of his eternal purposes, we do not have the right as his creatures to change and rearrange it as we see fit, to align with cultural confusion, fads, and opinions. Culture or even our own selves are not the final reference point for our lives; God is.

2. In *Issues Facing Christians Today*, John Stott writes,

“The biblical revelation reminds us that human beings are not self-explanatory. They derive their meaning from outside themselves, from God in whose image they are made. We are not autonomous individuals, creating ourselves constantly by the decisions and choices we

make. No, we are images, we are reflections. The dignity of our humanity is derivative; it comes from him whose image we bear. We are dependent beings.”

- H. In his book, *Biblical Critical Theory*, Christopher Watkin is very wise and careful about how we navigate all of this. He says:

“We do not own ourselves (1 Cor. 6:19–20), so we have no authority to remake ourselves at will, though where the constraints and boundaries lie in detail will always be a subject for careful discussion involving a deepest engagement with the broadest range of biblical principles and passages, and the most diverse possible cross-section of interested parties. To stick my neck out and pronounce on what would count as an improvement that would go beyond the bounds of our creatureliness. ... Let me just offer one quick thought here: the Christian’s thinking on this issue should be governed not by the legalistic question ‘what can we get away with?’ but by the deeply biblical question ‘how can we best glorify God, love him, and love our neighbor?’”

Conclusion: I remember that when I was in high school, I dated a girl who was from a really lovely Christian family. Being in high school in a very affluent and often skin-deep culture like Orange County, she wrestled with her own identity, sense of worth, and beauty because of cultural pressures around her. Her mother so wisely taught her the truth of her identity, value, and beauty based in her loving Creator. She told her, *Every time these thoughts arise in you, I want you to say to yourself: I am fearfully and wonderfully made*, quoting King David’s words in Psalm 139. Not only did her mother make an impression on her, she made it on me.

I hope that through this teaching, you would begin to love your body because you see and recognize that God has made you in his image, as an embodied expression of himself and that this is good and beautiful.

When you are confronted with cultural expressions which would cast doubt on that truth, come back to the truth of Scripture—that you and I are fearfully and wonderfully made. May we rest in that identity and begin to steward our bodies, whether male or female, in a way that would honor and glorify the One who made us by reflecting not only his image, but bearing his name and his character.

What do we do with this teaching as a community?

First, we build biblical culture of male and female made in the image of God (what we talked about last week). Everyone is valued, honored, and affirmed as an image bearer in the way we think, speak, and interact.

Recognize the Scripture allows for a broad spectrum of how we express ourselves as both male and female, never clearly defining for us masculinity or femininity, but instead affirms that we are male and female and points us to live out the great commandment to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (with the whole person) and to love our neighbor as ourselves in whatever situation, gifting, and stewardship that God has entrusted to us. And so we affirm that sacred image in both male and female and encourage one another toward Jesus embodied self-sacrificial life as the way to live out the image of God, as both male and female. This is in fact what Paul did when it came to addressing male and female; he always pointed to different aspects of the life of Jesus that were to be imitated and put on display (see Ephesians 5).

We must realign ourselves with the true vision of “biblical manhood” and “biblical womanhood” around the perfect human, Jesus Christ.

Second, we recognize since everyone has been made by God, and for God—created to bear his image in their sexed bodies—that when people live outside of that created purpose, they eventually experience fall-out. It doesn’t work. It doesn’t satisfy and fulfill, and this creates disillusionment and disillusionment creates seekers!

“We live in a moral wasteland where human beings are desperately seeking answers to hard questions about life and sexuality. But there is hope. In the wasteland we can cultivate a garden. We can discover a reality-based (Biblical) morality that expresses a positive,

life-affirming view of the human person—one that is more inspiring, more appealing, and more liberating than the secular worldview.”

Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*

I am praying that by God’s grace that we would live in such a way with one another, with neighbor and enemy, that would cut through all the confusion and misguided ideals about what humans are and what we are for - to a greater and deeper truth about every human being - that they are fearfully and wonderfully made by a loving creator who deeply desires to satisfy their body and soul longings, to heal all their brokenness and to make them whole.

Communion: Because of human sinfulness, there is not one of us who has lived up to the ideal of what God created us for—to love him supremely and to love our neighbor as ourselves. So as we come to the table this morning, we come as a people in need of forgiveness and in need of redemption and salvation. And that is what Jesus offer us at this table: forgiveness, redemption, and salvation. His life for our life; his righteousness for our sin.

Prayer

Most merciful God,

We confess that we have sinned against you

In thought, word, and deed,

By what we have done,

And by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,

Have mercy on us and forgive us;

That we may delight in your will,

And walk in your ways,

To the glory of your Name. Amen.