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EQUIPPING YOUNG ADULTS AT PARKWOOD BAPTIST  
CHURCH, GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA,  
THROUGH CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by  
Benjamin Addison Francis  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING YOUNG ADULTS AT PARKWOOD BAPTIST  
CHURCH, GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA,  
THROUGH CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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I dedicate this project first to my family—my wife, Tera; our sons, Eli and Haddon; and our daughter, Addison-Claire. You have endured many late nights and time away that I might complete this work. It is one of the great honors and joys of my life to be your husband, and your father.

To the people of Parkwood Baptist Church. You are people given to the glory of God. It is indeed a great and humbling honor to serve as a pastor among you.

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## PREFACE

This project was completed in large part because of the grace of the gospel in my life. I am grateful to Jesus, through Whom I am made new day by day. Pastoring His church has led me to love Him more and more.

To my wife, Tera. Your patient forbearance has proven a distinct means of grace in my life. Your constant support and partnership in ministry are invaluable to me. As my companion, supporter, best friend, and first love, you have joyfully sacrificed much time and energy for my studies. After eleven years of marriage, two handsome boys and a beautiful daughter, I would rather spend my life with no one else. You truly are my lily among the thorns.

To the people and pastors of Parkwood Baptist Church. It has been one of the great joys of my life to serve alongside each of you in the work of the ministry at Parkwood. Your love for our Lord is evident in how you faithfully live day by day. You have loved and cared for my family, and for this I am deeply grateful.

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I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Shane Parker, who was a helpful and gracious aid as I moved through the project, offering needed insight and useful critique. His time

and efforts are truly appreciated and valued. His constant encouragements and gracious spirit made this project a joy to complete.

Ben Francis

Gastonia, North Carolina

December 2018

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The mission of Parkwood Baptist Church is “to glorify God by laboring together for the growth of all believers, while going with the gospel to all people(s).” First, Parkwood seeks to glorify God by laboring together for the growth of all believers. Laboring together implies that the members of Parkwood, being faithful followers of Jesus Christ, give of themselves in word and deed to the task of encouraging one another more and more toward Christlikeness in all things. At the same time, Parkwood is committed to the Great Commission and always has an eye to the lost, both locally and globally. In the context of the Parkwood Young Adult ministry, the necessity of engaging a new and ever-shifting worldview among many young adults, especially concerning human sexuality and the nature of man, is recognized. A ministry project with this purpose has proven beneficial as faithfully equipped young adults are sent out to engage the lost with the gospel.

#### **Context**

Parkwood Baptist Church (PBC) has always had a strong student ministry.<sup>1</sup> The men who have led this ministry have been unashamed teachers of the Bible and of biblical doctrines, and have possessed an unwavering commitment to the church. While the ministry to middle and high school students has flourished throughout the years, college and young adult ministries have struggled.

Perhaps one reason for this struggle has been an inadequate adjustment to the changing cultural dynamics in which this ministry has existed. During the latter half of

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<sup>1</sup> Student ministry includes middle school, high school, and college.

the twentieth century, a substantial worldview shift began taking place.<sup>2</sup> Young men and women faced the challenge of determining the value of, and choosing an objective or subjective moral reality. The question was no longer “is this right?”; the question became, rather, “is this right for me?” David Setran writes,

Morality was defined chiefly in terms of personal happiness and the therapeutic value of self-actualization rather than self-restraint. Much of this produced a kind of expressive individualism where the ultimate value was a freedom to express and live by one’s own opinions and preferences. Detached from duty and obligation to external codes or communities, character emerged as a process of self-construction.<sup>3</sup>

Along with many churches, both locally and nationally, PBC has struggled with how to engage young adults most effectively as they entered their college and young professional years. Because of ineffective engagement, there has been a notable loss in retention between the high school and college years, extending into the young adult years. These young men and women are growing up and maturing in a time when worldviews are at war, and their college/young professional years will be a time to explore and experiment, often without restraint.

More recently, issues of human sexuality and gender identity have arisen as a primary field of battle for this clash of worldviews. This clash of worldviews is a natural end to the shift from virtue to value, from moral norm to moral preference.<sup>4</sup> The PBC young adult ministry is increasingly seeing young men and women who are engaged with the issue of gender identity, either by participation or by struggling to properly understand

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<sup>2</sup> David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-41. Setran argues that the 1960s began maturing what has been a lasting cultural shift that has effected massive change in the basic belief systems of American culture. Public discourse that once centered on moral norms, virtue, and character were replaced with discourse on values and personality. Setran writes, “The values clarification movement popularized in schools in the 1960s and 1970s emphasized commitment to personal ideals, whatever they might be, rather than adherence to a set of moral norms outside the self.” *Ibid.*, 141.

it. Culture demands compliance and acceptance, whereas the church proclaims the unwavering truths of Scripture. The gospel is at stake across the world, across the country, and with the young adults at PBC.

In order to meet this pressing need properly, it is necessary to both teach and model Christian ethics for young adults at PBC. Theologian John Frame defines Christian ethics in this way: “Ethics is theology, viewed as a means of determining which persons, acts, and attitudes receive God’s blessing and which do not.”<sup>5</sup> From this definition, a proper understanding of ethics, specifically Christian ethics, is said to be an exercise in the doctrine of God. When applied to the increasing problem of sexual confusion among students, this approach provides a framework through which the issues of gender and sexuality may be properly understood.

Specifically, PBC is seeing young adults who are attempting to harmonize the ideas of the God of the Bible and a subjective view of sexual identity. Understandably, this creates tension and discord. Therefore, it is necessary to engage young men and women through the lens of the gospel with biblical truth. Frame writes,

Human ethical responsibility is essentially to imitate God. . . . It is our nature, that which distinguishes us from all other creatures and gives us a special relationship to God. Rather than being “relational animals,” as in Aristotle, our essence is to be like God. But just as God is both a fact and a norm, so our nature as his image is both a fact and a norm.<sup>6</sup>

This biblical understanding speaks of the reality of God, man, the nature of man, and man’s response to this reality. This framework aids PBC’s young adults in understanding both the nature of God and the nature of man, which is the ultimate solution to the issue of gender identity.

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<sup>5</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

## **Rationale**

The previously mentioned factors indicate both a pressing need and a great opportunity for discipleship to take place. Three primary factors shape the focus of this project: (1) a pressing need and fruitful opportunity to disciple young adults, (2) a rapidly changing culture that the church must faithfully engage and minister to, and (3) PBC is increasingly seeing young men and women struggling with gender identity issues, both in personal struggle and with how to respond to such issues.

First, there is a pressing need and fruitful opportunity for the discipleship of our young adults. While the student ministry has always been strong, the present cultural shifts demand a differing approach and engagement with young adults. This shift presents an opportunity for intentional discipleship among the current young men and women at PBC. Christian ethics, being the discipline of appropriately applying the truths of God to everyday life, are a helpful and necessary corrective for this faltering worldview. Therefore, approaching the cultural issue of gender identity through the lens of Christian ethics engages both the gospel and the culture at the same intersection. Leading young adults to engage in ethical thought forces them to wrestle through how the truths of God affect every facet of reality, and by extension, every facet of their lives, and the lives of their peers.

A second reason to address gender identity issues is the rapidly changing culture in which the church presently finds herself. Jesus did not command the church to evangelize only those cultures who were like-minded and friendly. Rather, His instructions are to pierce the darkness of sin with the gospel of grace (Matt 10:16). Accordingly, the church must be prepared to engage cultural issues faithfully, such as gender identity, as they arise. The issue of gender, and the perceived freedom therein, is quickly becoming the face of a cultural swell that seeks dominance and control over the prevailing moral worldview. This cultural swell is not merely a new way of life, but a restructuring of reality and a new understanding of truth. The claims of this movement are in direct

contradiction to the claims of the church; therefore, the church must be proactive in its engagement with this shifting view of the moral order.

The third factor that shapes the focus of this project is that PBC is increasingly seeing this issue arise within the context of its ministry. A number of high school and college-aged students at PBC have struggled, and continue to struggle, with this issue. Furthermore, students are being challenged either to integrate their faith with these claims, or renounce their faith in favor of cultural acceptance. Therefore, it is clear that PBC must engage this issue in a number of ways. First, PBC must faithfully counsel students and young adults struggling with the issues personally, but also provide young men and women with a biblical understanding of truth, and by extension, human sexuality. Therefore, the approach must be gospel-centered as PBC seeks to faithfully minister to its young adults, continually pointing them to the holiness of God and the gospel of grace.

This project was built on the three rationales listed, and through a detailed methodological approach, disciplined young adults, teaching them to properly engage the Word of God. Second, this project extended discipleship to faithful engagement with a culture of shifting morality. Third, this project aided in properly applying gospel truths to young men and women wrestling through these issues in their personal lives.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip young adults at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia, North Carolina, to engage gender identity issues through the application of Christian ethics.

### **Goals**

The following four goals represent the necessary steps for equipping young adults at PBC to faithfully engage gender identity issues. The four goals that guided the project reflect the method through which the project was successfully implemented.

1. The first goal was to assess PBC young adults' knowledge of current gender issues and biblical foundations of gender and personhood.

2. The second goal was to develop a nine-week curriculum that equips young adults to faithfully engage gender identity issues through the discipline of Christian ethics.
3. The third goal was to increase knowledge and practice of evangelistic cultural engagement among PBC young adults by means of the curriculum.
4. The fourth goal was to revise the curriculum for continual use and equipping of young adults at PBC for effective apologetic and cultural gospel witness.

The success of these goals was evaluated using the specific research methodology outlined next.

### **Research Methodology**

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess PBC young adults' knowledge of current gender issues and biblical foundations of gender and personhood. This assessment provided an accurate overview of the current ability of students to properly think through and effectively engage the issue of gender identity through the discipline of Christian ethics. This goal was measured by administering a cultural engagement survey<sup>7</sup> to PBC young adults.<sup>8</sup> The goal was considered successfully met when a subset of this group, 20 young adults, completed the survey and the data had been analyzed, thereby giving a clear indication of their knowledge of current gender issues and biblical foundations of gender and personhood.

The second goal of this project was to develop a nine-week curriculum that equips young adults to faithfully engage gender identity issues through the discipline of Christian ethics. This curriculum used the discipline of Christian ethics to develop a theological base upon which to understand God and man, and by extension, human sexuality and gender. The goal was measured by a panel of four PBC pastors who utilized a rubric<sup>9</sup> to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>8</sup> Parkwood has a young adult population of approximately 150.

<sup>9</sup> See appendix 3.

percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the curriculum failed to meet the minimum standard it was revised until it reached the aforementioned standard.

The third goal was to increase knowledge and frequency of cultural engagement among young adults at PBC by teaching through the curriculum. A minimum of ten students who completed the cultural engagement survey were selected to complete all nine sessions of the curriculum. This goal was measured by administering the survey<sup>10</sup> to these ten students, comparing the results using a *t*-test for dependent samples. Neil Salkind explains, “A *t*-test for dependent means indicates that a single group of the same subjects is being studied under two conditions.”<sup>11</sup> The *t*-test compared the progress students made after completing the nine-week curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey. This goal was also measured by pre and post curriculum interviews<sup>12</sup> with those selected to participate.

The final goal of this project was to have the participants evaluate the process and suggest needed changes, by means of a rubric,<sup>13</sup> and to revise the curriculum for the continual use and equipping of young adults at PBC for effective apologetic and cultural gospel witness. This goal was measured by the pastoral and leadership staff,<sup>14</sup> who utilized a rubric<sup>15</sup> to evaluate the suggested changes and revisions. This goal was

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<sup>10</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>11</sup> Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 189.

<sup>12</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>13</sup> See appendix 4.

<sup>14</sup> Jeff Long, Senior Pastor; Kem Lindsay, Discipleship Pastor; Chad Pollard, Worship Pastor; and Andrew Brafford, Missions Pastor.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix 3.

considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met and exceeded the sufficiency level. If the curriculum failed to meet the minimum standard, it was revised until it reached the aforementioned standard.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

*Christian ethics.* For the purposes of this project, *Christian ethics* are the systematic study and application, both broad and specific, of the character and Word of God to the whole of life. This project relied on the Stanley Grenz's Trinitarian ethic, which states,

Our understanding that the God we know is triune forms the foundation for our Christian ethic. Insofar as God is the ultimate model and standard for humankind, the essential nature of God forms the paradigm for the life of the Christian and of the Christian community (Matt. 10:39). At the heart of the Christian understanding of God is the declaration that God is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit. This means that in his eternal essence the one God is a social reality to social Trinity. Because God is the social Trinity, a plurality in unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on solitary persons, but on persons-in-community. God intends that we reflect his nature in our lives. This is only possible, however, as we move out of our isolation and into relationships with others. The ethical life, therefore, is the life-in-relationship, or the life-in-community.<sup>16</sup>

*Complementarianism.* For the purpose of this project, *complementarianism* is the divinely ordered role of, and relation between, men and women. This further extends to the exclusive sexual relationship between a man and a woman in the confines of proper marriage. John Piper explains,

This is the way God meant it to be before there was any sin in the world: sinless man, full of love, in his tender, strong leadership in relation to woman; and sinless woman, full of love, in her joyful, responsive support for man's leadership. No belittling from the man, no groveling from the woman. Two intelligent, humble, God-entranced beings living out, in beautiful harmony, their unique and different responsibilities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 76.

<sup>17</sup> John Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 52.

*Gender-identity issues.* For the purpose this project, *gender-identity* includes issues of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism. Further, this project addressed the constructionist view of human sexuality, which Daniel Heimbach writes is “the idea that sexual identity is something we can take apart, change, and reassemble any way we choose.”<sup>18</sup>

*Worldview.* For the purposes of this project, *worldview* is the mental category through which men and women comprehend and perceive the world; the understanding of the world through which they conduct their lives. A worldview is necessarily constructed upon perceived truth claims, these being either true or false. For a truth statement, or an objective truth claim to be valid, it must correspond to facts.<sup>19</sup> It a truth claim does not correspond to fact it fails to be a properly ordered worldview.

Further, this project differentiated between knowledge and belief, knowledge being governed by objective fact that transcends perception, and belief being a personally held conviction that may or may not be true. This project evaluated the validity of worldviews through four types of knowledge: Knowledge by Acquaintance, Competence Knowledge, Propositional Knowledge,<sup>20</sup> and Objective knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel Heimbach, *Human Sexuality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 288.

<sup>19</sup> Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy: The Pursuit of Wisdom* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2006), 138.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 137. Knowledge of Acquaintance is the knowledge an individual gains through personal interaction with a person or object. This includes knowledge of pains, sensations, introspective states, loves, hates, beliefs and desires. Competence knowledge is skill knowledge, or that which is gained by participating in an action, the ability to perform a skill through practice. Competence knowledge does not require objectivity. Propositional knowledge is descriptive knowledge, meaning the proposition is a value statement that is either true or false, thus requiring objectivity.

<sup>21</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Paul D. Feinburg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 120. By objective knowledge, apodictic certainty is implied; this being knowledge that requires the necessary truth of its object and is *a priori*.

One limitation applied to this project. The accuracy of the pre and post-series surveys<sup>22</sup> was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be forthright about their knowledge and understanding of worldviews and human sexuality. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents took the survey anonymously. Each student created a private pin number known only to him or her, which would allow the pre and post-surveys to be properly compared and measured.

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project was confined to a twenty-three-week time period, which gave adequate time to prepare and teach the nine-week equipping curriculum and administer the pre and post-curriculum survey.<sup>23</sup> Second, this project was limited to training in biblical ethics concerning human sexuality, and not the development of a full systematic theology. Third, this project was limited to young adults at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia, North Carolina.

### **Conclusion**

The twenty-first century world is in desperate need of the gospel. Objective worldviews are under constant attack, and one of the primary battle fronts is human sexuality. Young men and women are growing up in a world of shifting moral plains and therefore, it is incumbent upon the church not only to interact with these issues but to answer them with strong, faithful biblical wisdom. The next chapter gives a brief, but sufficient overview of biblical gender identity as it relates both to God and to man's role in the world.

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<sup>22</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>23</sup> See appendix 1.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMPLEMENTARIAN GENDER IDENTITY

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). These opening words of the Holy Bible set the stage for all that is to follow throughout its pages. The Bible is replete with the glory of God in his creation of the world and all that is within it. He is the absolute Sovereign of the universe; all things are subservient to him. In the context of humanity, mankind holds a special place among the created order. Man bears the *imago Dei*, the image of God, which means he resembles the likeness of God in his essence as man.

The Bible explicitly teaches that God is the creator of all things, man is created in the image of God, God created man both male and female, and he created human gender complementarian in nature. It follows that man, being created and not self-willed, is an objective form and, therefore, is not able to redefine or reassign his gender identity and/or gender function. Human gender is a creation of God, is for his glory, and is for the good of mankind.

In recent days, this truth has come under attack and condemnation from cultural forces, both outside<sup>1</sup> and inside<sup>2</sup> the church. Men and women, having no regard for God or his Holy Scripture, seek to not only undermine the teaching of the Bible concerning human gender, but also seek to redefine it according to their own terms. This

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Meyers, *The Moral Defense of Homosexuality* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 49-58.

<sup>2</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “United Methodists Decide Not to Decide,” *The Briefing* (Blog), May 23, 2016, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2016/05/23/the-briefing-05-23-16/>.

new worldview seeks to undermine the idea of objective truth. However, no view of the world can exist without belief in some form of objectivity. Rather, this worldview seeks to posit a subjective view of the world upon objective claims about the nature of reality; the nature of man. At the forefront is the war of human gender and its function. This worldview posits that man is primarily a sexual being and can only realize his full potential as a human when he expresses his sexuality as he deems most satisfactory.<sup>3</sup> This attack on objective truth is an attack on the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church, and the very foundations of Christian belief.

The Bible is not silent on this issue. This chapter, therefore, seeks to examine four biblical texts that deal explicitly with the nature of man and his relation to others specifically through sexuality and sexual expression. This chapter gives a brief exegetical overview of each passage combined with theological synthesis as it relates to humanity, gender identity, and human sexuality.

### **The Creation Account: Genesis 1:26-28**

Genesis 1 is the account of the creation of the world and all that is in created existence. While the creation account is often viewed through numerous lenses, it is to be primarily understood as a theological treatise on the nature of God through the act of creation. The author of Genesis begins the account with the presupposition of God's existence: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (v. 1) There is no attempt to justify the existence of God, nor is there an argument for the God of the Bible over and above other deities. Rather, the text simply presumes the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent eternal being, who through the simple exercising of his own will, brings all things into existence.

There is theological reasoning as to why the Bible opens in this way. The presumption mentioned indicates not only that God exists as the preeminent being in all

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<sup>3</sup> Meyers, *The Moral Defense of Homosexuality*, 52

of reality, but that this being is relational and knowable. He has condescended to the level of man through this written Word in order to be known. Man does not exist in a vacuum. He exists in an objective reality that he comes to know through learning and experience. It is through this word that God invites man to know him. Mathews explains,

The Bible's first words announce how Israel's God can be known. He reveals himself in terms of the "when's" and "where's" of human life and history. Conceptually, this is how people orient themselves to their world. We locate ourselves in time in terms of our beginnings and endings. Our personal stories are also contoured by space. Thus as we see and identify ourselves by our finitude, so the Infinite One condescends by announcing his presence in the same terms—time and space. God is not merely an idea. He is Eternal Being whom we can know and experience personally. At the commencement of Scripture he invites us to learn of him. Yet the full manifestation of the Unknown One awaited the Incarnate Word, who as Son is the "exact representation of his being"<sup>4</sup>

This understanding of the opening passage of the Bible is imperative when seeking a proper biblical worldview. The Bible says of itself that it is "breathed out by God" (1 Tim 3:16). In other words, God inspired men through the work of the Holy Spirit to write the Holy Scriptures just as God so desired.<sup>5</sup> These things dictate the presuppositions of valid biblical study, namely, (1) God exists, (2) God exists independently of anything outside of his own being, (3) God created everything *ex nihilo* by the word of his power, and (4) God is knowable through his Word.

### **Genesis 1:26-28**

Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 126.

<sup>5</sup> John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 596-97.

God created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh. The sixth day of creation is the culmination of his creative acts, for on it he made man. Mathews writes, “The final day of the creation event week is the most significant of the six. More space and detail are given to its creative events than to the previous five.”<sup>6</sup> It is necessary, then, to pay close attention to the detail and order of the text.

The creation of the world and its inhabitants is not disordered or without intention. The progressive nature of the creative days culminates with the dawn of man. It should be noted, then, that man is the highest of all creatures on the earth. The text naturally leads to this conclusion. Mathews continues, “The crown of God’s handiwork is human life . . . the creation account shows the ascending order of significance with human life as the final, thus pinnacle, creative act.”<sup>7</sup> It follows that man is the highest of creatures and is set apart from the rest of creation.

There is a definitive difference between God’s creation of man and the creation of the other creatures. The text follows a particular pattern. On each successive day, the creative act begins with the phrase, “And God said” (vv. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). The creation immediately follows the command. The difference, however, is when it comes to the creation of man and woman. On the sixth day, after the creation of land animals, the text records a divine conversation within the godhead: “Then God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (v. 1:26). The usage of the word “our” comes from the Hebrew word אֱנֹכִי, which is a primary pronoun denoting a plurality and can also be translated as “we” or “ourselves.”<sup>8</sup> The plural nature of the language indicates divine conversation within the godhead, that is, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, concerning the creation and commissioning of man. In no other creative act does

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<sup>6</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 159.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>8</sup> R. L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, updated ed. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation, 1998), 587.

this occur. It is proper, therefore, to see man as a creature set over and above the rest of creation.

The nature of this setting apart is found in the words of verse 27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” In theological study, this is called the *imago Dei*, or the image of God.<sup>9</sup> No other creature in all of creation possesses the image of God, and thus man is set over and above the natural realm. God did not place his image upon any other creature. The text does not specify the exact essence of what it is to bear the image of God, nor does it locate it specifically within the body. Rather, it speaks of man as bearing the image as a part of his very nature. Grudem writes, “Both the Hebrew word for ‘image’ (*tselem*) and the Hebrew word for ‘likeness’ (*demut*) refer to something that is *similar* but not identical to the thing it represents or is an ‘image’ of.”<sup>10</sup> What can be noted is that the *imago Dei* carries with it a mandate to have lordship and dominion over the created realm. Frame explains, “The image of God consists of those qualities that equip man to be lord of the world, under God.”<sup>11</sup> Further, Mathews notes,

Although Genesis tells us who is created in the “image of God,” both man and woman (1:27; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9), it does not describe the contents of the “image.” The passage focuses on the consequence of the creative act, which is humanity’s role over the terrestrial world of life.<sup>12</sup>

This sets up the creative distinction God himself made between man and woman. The text uses the word אָדָם for mankind in verse 27, stating, “God made *man* in his own image,” but the text then differentiates between the physical man and woman. In the second half of verse 27, “male and female he created them,” different words are used. For male, זָכָר is used, whereas for female, נְקֵבָה is used. The importance of this

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 442.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

<sup>11</sup> Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 786.

<sup>12</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 164.

distinction is that אָדָם is a generic Hebrew word for “mankind” as whole and is not distinctive in its reference past denoting human life. The words זָכָר and נְקֵבָה, however, not only denote human life but differentiate on the basis of human sexuality.<sup>13</sup> Mathews states that the “Hebrew terms ‘male’ (*zakar*) and ‘female’ (*neqeba*), as opposed to man and woman, particularly express human sexuality.”<sup>14</sup> The idea of a malleable gender is becoming increasingly popular in modern society. Men and women are attempting to make differentiations between sexual preference and gender identity. John Hammett, Professor of Systematic Theology, writes,

Many today distinguish between sexuality, which they take in a narrow sense to refer only to the physical, biological manifestations of maleness and femaleness, and gender, which is used in a broader sense to refer to learned, culturally varying ideas we associate with male and female. This seems to assume that there are no real differences beyond the obvious physical, biological ones.<sup>15</sup>

The argument for a distinction between gender identity and biological sexuality is simply unfounded and is in direct contradiction to the revealed Word of God. This creation text leaves no room other than to understand man and woman as created co-equals, as image bearers of God, but different in their physical and biological makeup. This text further reveals that human gender identity cannot be separated from biological sexual identity. Any attempt to separate, redefine, or reshape one’s sexual identity or preference is an attempt to reject one’s own created nature. Jewett explains,

Sexuality permeates one’s individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one’s life as a person. As the self is always aware of itself as an “I,” so this “I” is always aware of itself as *himself* or *herself*. Our self-knowledge is indissolubly bound up not simply with our *human* being but with our *sexual* being.

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<sup>13</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 70.

<sup>14</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 164.

<sup>15</sup> John Hammett, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007), 353.

At the human level there is no “I and thou” *per se*, but only the “I” who is male or female confronting the “thou,” the “other,” who is also male or female.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, men and women are created in the image of God as co-equals in dignity and personhood, but differ in sexual orientation and gender identity. Mathews notes, “This equality of the man and woman as image bearers has priority over their differences in sexual roles, although both were crucial to realizing the intended blessing.”<sup>17</sup> God did not intend that mankind have a malleable personhood. Rather, as man is a divine image bearer, he is an objective reality. Emil Bruner comments, “Our sexuality penetrates to the deepest metaphysical ground of our personality. As a result, the physical differences between the man and the woman are psychological and spiritual differences of a more ultimate nature.”<sup>18</sup>

Verse 28 gives the reasoning behind the differentiation in gender roles. The Lord states, “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” This mandate is given to the man and the woman, to join their two equal but different natures together in the way God has so designed in order to produce offspring in their own likeness. God created the man and the woman in complementary ways in order that they may carry out his command. Had God created egalitarian humans, this creation mandate would be impossible, for two men or two women could not come together to be fruitful and multiply. Instead, God created the man and the woman equal, but different for the purpose of fruitful multiplication and for the demonstration and propagation of human society. Sexton writes, “Representing divine relationality, humanity as male and female suggests that the goal of human sexuality is relational bonding, with marriage being a

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<sup>16</sup> Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), 172.

<sup>17</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

<sup>18</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 34.

picture of the relationship God desires to have with his people.”<sup>19</sup> From this understanding of marriage, the will of God is seen in childbearing. Indeed, Psalm 127:3 states, “Behold children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of womb a reward.” Therefore, it is understood that in God’s specific creation of the man and the woman he intends for them to come together for fruitful multiplication, and in this way exercise their role as divine image bearers.

This biblical anthropology encapsulates the ultimate reality of man’s nature as a created being. There are numerous facets to man’s nature, but a core aspect of his personhood is his gender and sexual identity. God did not create man to be defined by his sexuality. Rather, God created man in his own image and to bear his likeness. Genesis 1:26-28 makes clear that sexuality is a part of man’s essential nature, and therefore cannot be changed. God created man, man did not create God, nor can man create himself. He is not a self-willed creature, and he cannot self-will a change concerning his essential nature. The Genesis 1 account makes clear that God is the ultimate reality in all of existence, and man is to live obediently in light of his self-revelation. The revealed Word of God is the ultimate standard of truth.

### **One Flesh: Genesis 2:18-24**

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

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<sup>19</sup> Jason S. Sexton, “The Imago Dei Once Again: Stanley Grenz’s Journey Toward a Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4, no. 2 (2010): 194, see also pp. 187-206.

This text is closely tied to the Genesis 1 account as it deals with the same Adam and Eve, but this text takes a closer, more intimate look at the creation of the man and woman. It is first noticed that God declares the man's "aleness" as not good. It should not be assumed that the man is totally alone, for he has communion with God and the created realm.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, when God here speaks of the man's aleness he is referring to the fact that no other creature in all of creation shares a likeness with the man, no other image bearer.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, God creates a helper, a helpmate suited for the man. This pronouncement against the man's aleness coupled with the specific creation of a suitable helper reveal God's intention for mankind. He intends that the man and woman live in community with one another as divine image bearers, sharing community together and carrying God's creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply. Mathews explains,

God has made the man and provided a beautiful environment with honorable work, a setting men may sometimes consider idyllic, but God announces that more is to be done to achieve the ideal for man. God's concern is that man is "alone." Whether the man felt his aleness at first is not stated; only the divine viewpoint is given. God has created human life to have fellowship with him but also to be a social entity, building relationships with other human beings. "[Man] will not live until he loves, giving himself away to another on his own level." Isolation is not the divine norm for human beings; community is the creation of God, The commissioning of man and woman to reign over the good land (1:28) involves procreation, and only together can they achieve their destiny.<sup>22</sup>

The man was alone in the sense that he did not have a companion of his likeness with whom he could share life. His aleness was not actual loneliness. It is important to note that God deems the man's aleness as not good. Mathews continues, "The Hebrew construction of v. 18 accentuates the negative 'not good' by placing it at the head of the sentence."<sup>23</sup> Hence, God creates the woman as a suitable helper for the man. The text draws a stark contrast between the man and the animals in verses 19-20,

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<sup>20</sup> Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 80.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

stating, “Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens . . . but for Adam no suitable helper was found.” The distinction drawn is between man and animal. God created the animals out of the land, but God himself made the man and the woman.

God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and from his rib he brought forth the woman. The text states that God intended to create a helper *suitable* or *fit* for the man. The Hebrew word is  $\text{תִּזְכֶּנֶת}$  and can be understood to mean “that which corresponds.”<sup>24</sup> The woman, therefore, unlike the beasts of the field and birds of the air, corresponds to the man in a particular and unique way. She is literally “from him.” The man and the woman share in divine image bearing and this is found nowhere else in the created realm, bestowing special privilege and honor on mankind. Mathews explains that although God has created the man and the woman different in gender and role, “the focus is on the equality of the two in terms of their essential constitution. Man and Woman share in the ‘human’ sameness that cannot be found elsewhere in creation among the beasts.”<sup>25</sup> This point gives further rise to the nature and privilege of the man/woman union that is divinely ordered from God. As seen in the Genesis 1 account, God gave the man and woman the command to be fruitful and multiply, which meant coming together in a covenantal way to produce offspring. Obedience, then, can only be achieved through the joining together of the man and the woman. No other pairing can fulfill this command.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 295.

<sup>25</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

<sup>26</sup> It may be argued that science has surpassed this limitation with the ability create life without the physical union of a man and woman. However, it should be noted that something’s being possible does not make it ethical. God’s intention is that offspring come from the man/woman union. While there are some permissible scientific methods (surgeries, pregnancy helps, etc.) the creation of life outside of the man/woman union is inherently wrong because it does not meet the divine criterion of fruitful multiplication.

The text goes on to show that the creation of the woman is a great gift to the man, for when he awakes from his sleep he is overjoyed to find his companion. “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23). No longer is he alone in the sense of not having another of his likeness. The man is now able to share community and intimacy with the woman God has created for him. The two now share a special bond found only in the man/woman union. Sarna writes,

The mystery of intimacy between husband and wife and the indispensable role that the woman ideally plays in the life of the man are symbolically described in terms of her creation out of his body. The rib taken from man’s side thus connotes physical union and signifies that she is his companion and partner, ever at his side.<sup>27</sup>

The man and the woman are the special work of God’s creative act, made for one another in specific, complementary ways in order to carry out the creation mandate of “be fruitful and multiply.”

This understanding leads to the closing portion of Genesis 2: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed” (vv. 24-25). God created them male and female, created them complementary with the purpose of carrying out the creation mandate, and created them for the covenant of marriage. Marriage is not a union of any two people that are in love. Rather, marriage is meant to be the divine union of a man and a woman for the purpose of displaying the covenant love of God through their own union, but also to carry out the divine mandate of being fruitful through multiplication. The physical act of sex is not what defines the marriage. Instead, the sexual complementarianism of the man and woman is meant to strengthen the marital bond, create a new “one flesh” union of the two, and display God’s good creative design for human society. Marriage does not exist apart from this. Mathews explains,

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<sup>27</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 22.

Marriage involves the two united in commitment; two parties are bound by stipulations, forming a new entity or relationship. The two people, although freed from their parents, are not isolated or independent; they become dependent and responsible toward one another. “One flesh” echoes the language of v. 23 which speaks of woman’s source in the man; here it depicts the consequence of their bonding, which results in one new person. Our human sexuality expresses both our individuality as gender and our oneness with another person through physical union. Sexual union implies community and requires responsible love within that union. The sexual union of the couple is, however, only symbolic of the new kinship that the couple has entered. The sexual act by itself does not exhaust the marriage; marriage entails far more.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear that God intends the marital union of the man and woman to be exclusive in nature, and this extends to the sexual union. God created sexual relations for the confines of the marital union, which serves a two-fold purpose: to create the one flesh union of the husband and wife, and to produce offspring. Any attempt to move away from this exclusive teaching is contradictory to Scripture. Heimbach notes, “The exclusivity principle in scripture starts at creation where God declares that a sexual relationship causes a man and woman to become ‘one flesh’ (Gen. 2:24).”<sup>29</sup>

It is clear from this text, therefore, that God created man and woman intentionally for one another. Man is essentially different from the rest of creation because God fashioned man in his own likeness. Whereas the other animals were produced from the earth, God produced mankind through his own special work and bestowed on him his own image. This divine image sets man apart from the rest of creation. Furthermore, God created the man and woman as co-equals in essence and value, but different in role and function. The two are complementary beings, meaning they are created for one another in every way, and yet they differ in their roles. Therefore, the special union of marriage is governed by the creation mandate of God and is not open for redefinition. God created man and woman to display his image, cultivate divine community within their special

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<sup>28</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 223.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality, Recovering Biblical Standards for A Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 158.

union, and come together as co-equals; complementary creatures ordered toward fruitful through child-bearing, to bring glory to him through their one-flesh union.

### **A Suppression of Truth: Romans 1:18-28**

In Romans 1, the apostle Paul is teaching on the realities of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. He starkly contrasts what he calls the “godly” and the “ungodly” in verses 17 and 18:

For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “the righteous shall live by faith.” For the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

This stark difference between the godly and the ungodly is expounded upon further throughout the passage, but Paul’s intent in verses 17 and 18 is to show from where the unrighteous acts of men come. Verse 17 teaches that it is through the gospel of Christ that men are made godly,<sup>30</sup> whereas unrighteous and ungodly men are made so through their own suppression of the truths of God.<sup>31</sup> God is responsible for the holiness of righteous men and women. Ungodly men and women are responsible for their own unrighteousness.

A second aspect of verse 18 is Paul’s usage of the phrase, “For the wrath of God is revealed.” There are several things to note from this particular phrase. First, Paul uses the word *ὀργή*, which means *wrath or anger*,<sup>32</sup> to speak of God’s response to this ungodliness. This word implies that God is strongly displeased and has a divine indignation toward the unrighteousness of men. The word *ἀποκαλύπτω*, *is revealed*, is a present passive indicative verb implying that this revealing of God’s wrath toward sin is

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<sup>30</sup> See John 3, 1 Cor 15:1-11; Eph 2:1-10; Phil 3:4-12.

<sup>31</sup> See Rom 8:7-8.

<sup>32</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 576.

ongoing; as Morris writes, “It is a continuing process.”<sup>33</sup> God is not passive toward sin. Sin is an offense against his holy character. The phrase, “who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” comes at the end of verse 18. The word used for suppress in the Greek is *κατεχόντων*, which means to *prevent, hinder or restrain*.<sup>34</sup> This definition reveals an important truth about the power of sin and the nature of man. Not only are men sinful, but it is through their sin that they merit the wrath the God. The unrighteousness of man leads him to suppress, prevent, and hinder the truth of God in his own life and the lives of others.

Verses 19 through 22 give an overview of the progression and effect of sin in the life of man:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.

From this text, it is clear that God created the world in specific ways to both show his power and glory in “the things that have been made.” This passage removes any argument that God is somehow hidden, or that he is there but somehow unknown to men. Rather, the text is clear that God is self-revealing, intending that man know him and know his creative designs. Hendricksen writes that it is “not as if men, acting on their own initiative, could have discovered God, but, as the passage states, *God* has made known to them whatever in the area of creation can be made known about him.”<sup>35</sup> Men are without excuse in knowing the reality of the existence of God and his creative design for the world.

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<sup>33</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 77.

<sup>34</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 674.

<sup>35</sup> William Hendricksen, *Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 69.

The text is specific as to what of God’s essence is known through the natural realm. Verse 20 states that God’s “eternal power and divine nature” are clearly perceived. The phrase “clearly perceived” in the Greek is *νοούμενα*, and can also indicate “to grasp or comprehend something on the basis of careful thought; *perceive, apprehend, understand, gain an insight into.*”<sup>36</sup> This understanding of the word *νοούμενα* gives further clarity to the exact nature of Paul’s thought in verse 20. He is not saying the man simply knows of God, but that through the exercise of his mind, reasoning capabilities, and his skill to comprehend and reflect upon the world, man may know he is a created being, living in a created world, and that this world is the work of a supreme God. Hendricksen explains,

Even without the benefit of such products of human invention as microscope and telescope, they [men] were able to reflect on the vastness of the universe, the fixed order of the heavenly bodies in the courses, the arrangement of the leaves around the stem, the cycle of the divinely created water-works (evaporation, cloud formation, distillation pool formation), the mystery of growth from seed to plant—not just any plant but the particular kind of plant from which the seed originated, the thrill of the sunrise from faint rose flush to majestic orb, the skill of birds building their “homes” without ever haven taken lessons in home building, the generous manner in which food is supplied for all creatures, the adaption of living creatures to their environment. . . . In addition to this voice of God in the works of creation there was also the voice of that same God in conscience. The evidence is overwhelming. And still no response of adoration and gratitude. Then surely their conduct is inexcusable.<sup>37</sup>

The created world leaves no room nor excuse for the dismissal of belief in the existence of God. As the biblical text makes clear, the unrighteous do dismiss the realities of God in the world and therefore become futile in their thinking. This does not mean that when a man rejects God, God then condemns him to foolishness. Instead, the progression seen in verse 21 is that rejection of God, which is a rejection of reality, leads to futile thinking. It is akin to knowing the truth of gravity and yet rejecting it for one’s own preference. Gravity does not cease to exist in this case; only the one who rejects the truth becomes futile, for indeed gravity remains. In the same way, the unrighteous who reject God become futile

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<sup>36</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 674.

<sup>37</sup> Hendricksen, *Romans*, 71.

in their thinking because they have rejected that which is true, which naturally leads to Paul's statement in verse 22: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools."

This progression from suppression of truth through unrighteousness to foolishness has a necessary effect. One cannot reject truth and maintain congruence with reality. Paul goes on to write,

Claiming to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

This passage gives further insight into how man moves from mere suppression of the truth to sinful acts of degradation against themselves. Having become futile and foolish in their thinking, the unrighteous chose to give to created things what is properly owed to God, the creator. Morris writes,

Not only was their thinking futile; it was characterized by darkness. The New Testament often sets light over against darkness and equates sin with the latter. Sin is never an enlightened procedure despite the attitude of advanced secularists. It always represents a darkening of some part of us. Foolish signifies 'unintelligent,' and this brings out another facet of sin.<sup>38</sup>

Men and women who reject the truth of God in the world submit themselves to the domain of darkness, which is the control of sin.

Paul draws a stark contrast between those who glorify the true God and those who reject this truth in the phrase "the glory of the immortal God." He contrasts the choice to honor the immortal God with the choice of honoring of images. Morris notes, "Paul sees it as stupid to make a god of one's own. It is to exchange something of real worth (the glory of God) for something of no value (an image)."<sup>39</sup> The word used for immortal is ἀφθάρτου, which means "imperviousness to corruption and death,

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<sup>38</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 84.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

*imperishable, incorruptible, immortal.*”<sup>40</sup> The contrast becomes more stark with this explanation knowing that man rejects that which is perfect, imperishable, and incorruptible for the very antithesis of these attributes—that which is imperfect, perishable, and corruptible.

Paul’s words of explanation of this progression from suppression of truth to the exchanging of worship give proper context and understanding for verses 24 through 28. Verses 24 and 25 present a detrimental truth to those who are unrighteous before holy God. On account of the ever-increasing sin that suppresses the truth of God, God gives these unrighteous ones over to their own sin. Morris explains, “It was on account of their rejection of the divine revelation and of their preferring idols to the true God that God gave them up to the results of their folly.”<sup>41</sup> The word for impurity, *ἀκαθαρσίαν*, can also be translated “uncleanness” and can reference “a state of moral corruption, immorality, or vileness (especially of sexual sins).”<sup>42</sup> The impurity that the unrighteous are given over to is the degradation of their own bodies resulting from the sinful idolatry and rejection of God. Paul seems to add the phrase “the Creator, who is blessed forever!” to underscore the folly of this exchange.<sup>43</sup>

The final three verses of this passage reveal the depths to which unrighteous men pursue their own pleasure apart from God. Verses 26 through 28 read,

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

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<sup>40</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 155.

<sup>41</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 113.

The progression that Paul has outlined from verse 18 until this point has set the stage for what this text reveals. Morris writes, “For this reason carries the argument along logically.”<sup>44</sup> In the text, Paul makes a distinction between the sexual sins of males and females. Morris continues,

He goes on to particularize with his reference to women exchanging natural relations for unnatural ones, he uses the adjectives “female” and “male” rather than the nouns “women” and “men,” possibly because he is concentrating on sexual differentiation.<sup>45</sup>

This point corresponds to the Genesis passage where the author also uses the adjectival form for male and female to signify an objective difference in the gender and function of the man and the woman. In this Romans text, Paul is developing the idea that the suppression of truth through sin has led these males and females into unclean moral corruption by causing them to desire sexual perversion over proper sexual function. Therefore, homosexuality, which is what Paul is here referring to, is contrary to the nature and design of God. It is clear from the text that homosexual desire and lust are incongruent with the will and design of God, and properly belong under the category of moral corruption and vileness. Paul’s argument is not against those whose lifestyle simply disagrees with his own. On the contrary, Paul’s argument is firmly grounded in the nature of God, and God’s creative design. Paul uses the word φύσιν, which is translated “nature,” but can also mean “condition or circumstance as determined by birth, natural endowment/condition, nature, especially as inherited from one’s ancestors, in contrast to status or characteristics that are acquired after birth.”<sup>46</sup> Paul is associating the idea of homosexuality with the perversion of God’s truth and self-revelation.

Sexual sins that are “against nature” are also, then, against God, and it is this close association that makes it probable that Paul’s appeal to nature in this verse includes appeal to God’s created order. Confirmation can be found in the context. In labeling

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<sup>44</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 91-92.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>46</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1069.

the turning from “the natural use” to “that [use] which is against nature” an “exchange,” Paul associates homosexuality with the perversion of the true knowledge of God already depicted in vv. 23 and 25. In addition, we must remember that the clause in question is a description of “sinful passions,” a phrase plainly connoting activities that are contrary to God’s will. When these factors are considered, it is clear that Paul depicts homosexual activity as a violation of God’s created order, another indication of the departure from true knowledge and worship of God.<sup>47</sup>

Verses 26 and 27 make it clear that both men and women participate in this debase unrighteousness that suppresses the truth of God through moral corruption. The end of verse 27 ties the sinful rejection of God with the penalty for that sin. Paul writes, “Receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” He is implying that it was their own choice to suppress what is evidently true for that which is evidently wrong. In doing so, they have removed themselves from the blessing of knowing and enjoying the goodness of God. Those who suppress the truth of God through vile acts of sin have no share in the Kingdom of God. Morris explains,

They had cut themselves off from all the joys of the knowledge of God. They were delivered over in consequence to the narrow, joyless existence of base minds and improper conduct. It was the only course they left open to themselves. They continually did what is not becoming, not fitting, not acceptable.<sup>48</sup>

In the closing verse of this text, the final act of God toward this vile sin of moral corruption must be noted. God gives them over to debase minds “to do what ought not be done.” This third and final handing over to sin indicates that these people have no share, nor ability to share in the grace of God through his self-revelation. Moo notes, “People who have refused to acknowledge God end up with minds that are ‘disqualified’ from being able to acknowledge and understand the will of God.”<sup>49</sup>

Following this brief exploration, it becomes clear that sexual perversion, specifically the form of homosexuality in this text, is not only not a part of God’s creative design, but rather is a perversion of that design. Men and women are not immediately

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<sup>47</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 115.

<sup>48</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 94.

<sup>49</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 118.

given over to the debase nature that leads to moral corruption. It is through a suppression of truth through the worship of idols that man finds himself morally corrupt. As a created being, man is ordered toward worship. Consequently, he worships as a part of his nature; he is a worshipping creature. When this worship is properly ordered, that being toward and for God, it fulfills and completes man. When it is misdirected from God toward an idol(s), it has just as much effect upon the creature. Man is meant to find fulfillment in God, and because he has abandoned the truth of God, the unrighteous man seeks his fulfillment in his idols. Because he does not find it, and because his idol worship has suppressed the truth of God in his life, he sinks further and further into moral corruption, thereby removing his share and participation in the reality and joy of truly knowing God.

### **A Display of the Gospel: Ephesians 5:22-33**

Ephesians 5:22-33 can be approached in a number of different ways. For the purposes of this chapter, the relationship between the husband and the wife will be examined. First, verse 22 begins with the phrase, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” The word used for wife here is *γυναῖκες*, which means woman, wife, bride, or an adult female person. In this context, Paul intends the word to be understood as “wives.” Paul instructs the wives to submit to their husbands, but this submission is not without definition. Paul follows the instruction with the phrase, “as to the Lord.” This gives the proper definition, or the proper ordering to the wives’ submission. Paul did not intend wives to be subservient to their husbands, as a slave is to a master. Rather, his instruction flows from the heart of Scripture as a depiction of the gospel.

It is right to understand from this text that the wife is both submissive to her husband and honoring to the Lord through her proper fulfilling of her marital duties. Submission within the marital context is not purposeless; God has ordered and crafted the submission of the wife to be a reflection of the relation of God within the Trinity. Grudem explains, “Just as God the Father has authority over God the Son, though the two are equal in deity, so in a marriage, the husband has authority over the wife, though they

are equal in personhood.”<sup>50</sup> Further, Paul’s argument leaves no room for the assumption that the role of helpmate, designated in this text as “wife,” can be fulfilled by anyone or anything other than a female. This is not just any female, but the woman with whom the man has covenanted through biblical marriage, his wife.

To give further definition to his teaching on submission, Paul ties the wives’ duty of submission to the relationship between Christ and the church. Verse 24 states, “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.” From this verse, it becomes clearer that the marriage between the man and the woman is to be a physical representation of the spiritual relationship between Christ and his church. Just as the church is submissive to Christ in all things as he is the proper head over the church, wives are to submit to their husbands out of obedience, not obedience to the husband, but to the Lord. Bruce notes,

The implication is that Christian wives’ submission to their husbands is one aspect of their obedience to the Lord. This is found to be more appropriate when their submission to their husbands is seen to have a counterpart in the church’s submission to Christ.<sup>51</sup>

It is therefore proper to understand that when Paul is speaking here of marriage, he is doing so under both the assumption and conviction that the wife is to fully enter into and participate in a properly ordered marital covenant before the Lord. Furthermore, Paul’s use of *γυναῖκες* explicitly shows that he assumes the wife to be a female, and not a male. As shown in Genesis 2, the role of the wife is equal to, but different from, that of the husband, and consequently, is intended for the woman. An attempt to redefine gender roles is an attempt to rewrite the Word of God, which cannot be done. In addition, a redefinition of gender roles and marriage is a disordering of God’s good and creative

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<sup>50</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 459.

<sup>51</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 384.

purposes for the man/woman marital covenant. Without this proper ordering, the marital union does not exist.<sup>52</sup>

The husband, like the wife, plays an essential role in the martial union. Just as the wife is to be a representation of the church's submission to Christ, the husband is to represent the love that Christ has for his church. Verses 25-28 read,

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

From this, the husbanding role is understood to be one of self-sacrifice and humble love. The husband is to love his bride in a particular, objective way. The qualifier of the husband's love for his wife is found in the phrase, "as Christ loved the church." A proper marital union will measure itself not by perceived feelings and emotions, but by the relationship between Christ and his church. Bruce writes,

The believing community is here compared to a maiden for whom Christ laid down his life that she might become his bride. . . . Christ's love for the church is a self-sacrificing love, and the same, it is implied, should be true of husbands' love for their wives.<sup>53</sup>

It follows that Paul's teaching on marriage is not malleable in the sense that it can be applied broadly, with liberal strokes. Instead, Paul intends that marriage be understood and practiced within these very clear confines. Marriage is to be a display of the glory of God, and the man and his wife are to be vessels for this purpose.

A second qualifier of the husband's love for his wife is the phrase, "and gave himself up for her." Not only is the husband instructed to love his wife "as Christ loved

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<sup>52</sup> This is not to say that marriage as a recognized legal union does not exist, for it certainly does. Rather, when men attempt to redefine marriage or any divinely ordered human institution, it ceases to be properly ordered and is therefore no longer a divine union.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 386-87.

the church,” but he is to love her self-sacrificially, just as Christ loves his church. Great biblical imagery is at work here, more than what this chapter allows for, but Paul is drawing from the language of Ezekiel.<sup>54</sup> The husband is to be a bearer of sanctification in the life his wife. If the marital union is disrupted, be it by marital discord sown through sin, improper marital union,<sup>55</sup> or any other factor, the husband is guilty of sin. The word used for husband here is *ἀνδρες*, and means an “adult human male, *man, husband*; in contrast to woman, *man*.”<sup>56</sup>

It is understood, therefore, that the husband is not only the physical and spiritual head of the home, that he is a male, but that he is also actively responsible for the holiness of his wife. Paul states, “having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” The husband is to lead his wife in a specific way, and that is the way of Christ. His cleansing of her is not accidental but is carried out through the ministry of holy Scripture to her. Bruce explains, “The sanctification takes place by means of cleansing ‘by the washing of the water with the word.’”<sup>57</sup> The husband is given a divinely ordered marital task of disciplining his wife toward Christ. Just as Jesus sanctified the church through the washing of the Word, so the husband is to be a means of delivery for this very same word in the life of his wife. This

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<sup>54</sup> Bruce writes, “Before the bride was presented to the bridegroom she received a cleansing bath and was then dressed in her bridal array. This provides part of the imagery in Yahweh’s account of his treatment of the founding in Ezek. 16:6-14, where he reminded her that, when she reached marriageable age, ‘I bathed you with water. . . . I clothed you also with embroidered clothes. . . . I decked you with ornaments.’ So here, the purpose of Christ’s giving himself up for the church is said to be her sanctification and cleansing with water. It is to point out that the Hebrew verb ‘to sanctify’ is used, in appropriate contexts, in the sense of betrothal (‘to take some apart for oneself as a wife’), so that the present passage might mean: ‘he gave himself up for her to betroth her to himself.’” Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 387.

<sup>55</sup> Same-sex marriage, polygamy, incest.

<sup>56</sup> Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 79, emphasis original.

<sup>57</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 387.

instruction from Paul is not without purpose of merit. The husband is working for something in the life of his wife. He is working to push her more and more to be like Christ in all things; to be sanctified through Jesus. Morris states, “The goal of Christ’s sanctifying and purifying work, and thus the ultimate purpose of his sacrificial love for the church is to present her to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish . . . that she might be holy and blameless.”<sup>58</sup>

Paul brings his teaching on marriage to a close saying,

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:28-33)

A husband’s love and care for his own self will be reflected in how he views his wife. A husband who is more concerned with his own happiness and wellbeing has a grave misunderstanding of Christ and the gospel; the meaning of marriage. The husband is to love his wife just as he does his own self. Paul is appealing to the common sense of the flesh. Men do not hate themselves—they take care of their bodies by feeding themselves, showering, clothing themselves, etc. In the same way, and more so, a husband is to love his wife. Morris writes, “The idea of husbands loving their wives as their own bodies reflects the model of Christ, whose love for the church can be seen as love for his own body.”<sup>59</sup> In the same way, a man cherishes his own body, so he will cherish the body and soul of his wife. This is the mystery Paul speaks of in the one-flesh union. He quotes Genesis 2 and further expounds upon it, showing its connection with Christ’s work in redeeming the church. Bruce explains,

So here, Genesis 2:24, which on the surface explains why a man will leave his parents’ home and live with his wife, is taken to convey a deeper, hidden meaning, a “mystery,” which could not be understood until Christ, who loved his people from

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<sup>58</sup> Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 424.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

eternity, gave himself up for them in the fullness of time. In light of his saving work, the hidden meaning of Genesis 2:24 not begins to appear: his people constitute his bride, united to him in “one body.” The formation of Eve to be Adam’s companion is seen to prefigure the creation of the church to be the bride of Christ. This seems to be the deep “mystery” contained in the text, which remains a mystery no longer to those who have received its interpretation.<sup>60</sup>

The meaning here ties the whole enterprise of marriage together. Paul is teaching about the nature and practice of the marital relationship in its properly and divinely ordered context. God gave marriage to humanity for one main purpose: to glorify him. He does not allow multiple means of glory through many different marital unions. Rather, he has so patterned marriage after the likeness and work of Christ that any deviation from it is a perversion of its intended design, and is therefore wrong.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter sought to shed light on the biblical teaching on gender and human sexuality. This biblical treatment is not exhaustive, but provides a sufficient overview of the Bible’s teaching on the subject. Man is a created being, ordered toward complementarian relationship and commanded to glorify God therein.

As argued, the Bible explicitly teaches that God is the Creator of all things, that man is created in the image of God, that God created man both male and female, and that he created human gender complementarian in nature. It follows that man, being created and not self-willed, is an objective form and, therefore, is not able to redefine or reassign gender identity and/or gender function. Human gender is a creation of God, is for his glory, and is for the good of mankind.

It is the church’s responsibility not to capitulate to the cultural whims of a people in rebellion. Instead, the church must respond to this cultural swell with gospel truth and patient, forbearing fortitude. This is a fruitful time for the gospel to go forth, to see men and women called from death to life, and for the church to continue in the Great Commission. May the Lord continue to bless his word, his church and his gospel.

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<sup>60</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 395.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE OBJECTIVE NATURE OF HUMAN SEXUAL FLOURISHING

The twenty-first century has been witness to a rebellion. This rebellion has not been primarily political, although it certainly has found its way into politics. It has not been a rebellion between kingdoms and countries. This rebellion has primarily been one of worldview and culture. It has been an attempt to throw off natural and centuries-long understandings of human nature and practice. The battles of this rebellion have taken place in the hearts and minds of men and women; and the central issue has been the nature and practice of human sexuality.

While this issue has a substantial history, there has been a growing push in the last ten to fifteen years to redefine and reorganize gender identity and gender roles. What started as subjective philosophical argument in the marketplace of ideas—the idea that homosexuality and transgenderism are not only morally permissible, but morally right—has now become hardline fact according to some. In a 2016 article, Jason S. DeRouchie, Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College and Seminary, makes this point, stating,

The American Psychological Association defines “sex” as “a person’s biological status” that “is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex” and that is identified by “sex chromosomes gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.” In contrast, the APA states that “gender refers to attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Andrew Walker, Director of Policy Studies with the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission, highlights that the meaning and usage of the word *sex*,

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<sup>1</sup> Jason S. DeRouchie, “Confronting the Transgender Storm: New Covenant Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5,” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 21, no. 1 (2016): 58-68.

as it relates to gender, has changed. He notes, “The term was previously used to distinguish between the physical identification assigned at birth (e.g. male, female, or intersex). It is now used by LGBTQ groups and their allies as synonymous with a self-chosen gender identity.”<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with this trend in the medical community, there has also been a push in favor of the redefining sexuality from within the religious community; some arguing that not only has the church been wrong on this subject for two thousand years, but the Bible itself not only does not condemn, but rather affirms an alternative view of human sexual identity and practice. Matthew Vines, one of the most outspoken proponents for making this change within the church, states,

The LGBT issue has been one of the most obvious forces behind the increasing loss of regard for Christianity in American culture at large. . . . It’s like slavery and anti-Semitism, where the tradition got it totally wrong. It’s one of the church’s profound moral failures.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear, then, that this issue is not one of moral neutrality. There is mounting pressure, both from those outside the church but also from within,<sup>4</sup> to cave to this growing moral revolution. A careful observation of the landscape is necessary. The point of this chapter is not to discuss and debate the science of sexuality, as described by the American Psychological Association. The point of this chapter is to evaluate the issue of human sexuality, and the attempt to redefine it, from a moral perspective. If Vines is correct in saying that this is one of the church’s great moral failures, the church, then, must reverse its position. But, if he is wrong, if homosexuality and transgenderism are, in fact, moral failures within themselves, the issue takes on a whole new light. Therefore,

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate* (Epson, UK: Good Book, 2017), 170.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Dias, “A Change of Heart,” *Time*, January 26, 2015, 44-48.

<sup>4</sup> See David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017). In this book, Gushee, a professor of Christian Ethics and pastor, argues for a revisionist view of biblical sexuality.

this chapter argues that true human flourishing, as it concerns human sexuality, is objective in nature and not open to redefinition.

In order to accomplish this argument, this chapter shows the objective nature of moral norms as they accord with human gender and sexual practice, arguing that the traditional one man/one woman monogamous marital relationship is the only proper place for human sexual expression. Finally, this chapter shows how the appeal to redefining gender and sexuality is an appeal to irrationality, and therefore inconsistent and unable to promote human flourishing.

### **Ethics, Sexuality and Human Flourishing**

Human sexuality is an essential part of the human experience—a human, of either male or female gender, cannot separate or disinterest themselves from the sexual component of their existence. It is what the great philosopher Aristotle would call an unchangeable aspect of human essence.<sup>5</sup> Being so, man cannot remove himself from the experience of sexuality, nor can he change his sexual identity/experience. For the purposes of this chapter then, human sexuality shall refer to the objectively fixed biological gender that determines one’s identity as either male or female, both in gender and sexuality. Furthermore, it shall be argued that true human flourishing accords with the right and proper exercise of human gender. Therefore, it follows that true human flourishing, as it concerns human sexuality, is objective in nature and not open to redefinition.

#### **Objective Moral Norms**

When engaging in discussions of ethics and moral norms, it is imperative to first establish the philosophical/theoretical foundation upon which the argument stands. Objectivism, as it regards ethical inquiry, refers to firmly fixed, unchanging norms that

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<sup>5</sup> Ayn Rand, *The Voice of Reason, Essays in Objectivist Thought*, ed. Leonard Peikoff (London: Penguin, 2010), 58.

govern the moral landscape of humanity.<sup>6</sup> This type of moral thought finds explicit support in numerous schools of ethical thought, including Divine Command Theory, Natural Law theory, and Rand’s own Objectivism. This does not mean, however, that it is not found elsewhere. While other ethical systems explicitly dismiss objectivity in ethics, they cannot help but make objective moral claims. These systems include Deontology, Utilitarianism, Existentialism and Postmodernism.<sup>7</sup> Moral objectivity is an inescapable reality in the field of ethical inquiry.<sup>8</sup>

To make an ought statement is to offer a prescriptive thought—how one *should* act. It also reveals a metaethic, which is the causal reason, or the moral objective, behind the claim that demands the prescribed behavior. In Christian ethics, this is the God of the Bible, but secular ethics have no such objective basis for their metaethic. This lack of a

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<sup>6</sup> On objectivist thought, Rand states, “Reality exists as an objective absolute—facts are facts, independent of man’s feelings, wishes, hopes or fears.” She rightly points out that mankind holds no sway over the fixed norms in which he lives. Rand, *The Voice of Reason*, 5:4.

<sup>7</sup> These topics are sufficiently covered in John Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), part 2, secs. 6-8.

<sup>8</sup> Moral objectivity is an essential component of ethical discussion. Without objective moral norms, ethical discussion breaks down. These discussions become either irrational—focused on non-truths—or reveal incomparable worldviews colliding against one another. Thus, to have any real value to mankind, ethical dialogue must have some measure of objectivity. As a discipline, ethics is concerned with right and wrong, or, how one *should* live. Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy, The Pursuit of Wisdom*, 5th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2006), 247. This means that ethical study demands that men and women make “ought” statements and truth claims about life. To make an ought statement in ethical dialogue is to prescribe a particular form of behavior or lifestyle based on moral facts; it is to reference something greater or higher than the claim itself. Famed Dutch skeptic David Hume attempts to apply the naturalistic fallacy to ethics saying it is impossible and incoherent to derive moral prescriptions (oughts) from facts (that which is). See Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 62. Frame offers a helpful critique of Hume’s fallacy: “One may deduce moral conclusions from moral facts, but not from non-moral facts. . . . The Christian claims that this argument does not commit the naturalistic fallacy, because the premise (of Christian ethics) is a moral fact. There is an ought implicit in the premise.” Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 61. Frame’s argument attempts to show that the Christian moral argument, which can also be referred to as the biblical moral argument, is perfectly in line with Hume’s argument. Because the moral objectivity of Scripture comes from a moral being (God), the moral force of a command (ought) is rightly taken from the “is” (God) of the argument.

solid metaethic can be seen in the growing cultural swell supporting the changing mores of sexual identity.

### A Case Study

In *The Moral Defense of Homosexuality*,<sup>9</sup> Chris Meyers, associate professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Southern Mississippi, argues for the moral good of homosexuality. Meyers agrees that morality is concerned with action and behavior, with discerning how one should live. He writes, “An essential part of their meaning (moral terms) is to say something about what we *ought* to do or how we should act, think or feel.”<sup>10</sup> On this point, he is right, and Christian ethics would agree. The issue arises, however, when he begins to reveal an unfounded, or floating, metaethic. He argues that for homosexuality to be proven immoral, it would have to be shown to be harmful, a violation of a person’s autonomy, unfair, or in violation of someone’s individual rights.<sup>11</sup> He attempts to justify, to offer his metaethic, in saying, “This is not to say that homosexual relationships can *never* be morally wrong. For example, if a man is married to a woman and has secret homosexual liaisons on the side, that would be morally wrong.”<sup>12</sup>

His attempt is to show that while homosexuality can certainly drift into the realm of immorality, the ethical issue is not in the homosexual act itself. In his example,

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<sup>9</sup> I have chosen to interact with an explicitly non-Christian argument for two reasons: (1) Meyers attempts to present a philosophical argument for the moral good of homosexuality, which is more in line with the purpose of this chapter than the revisionist arguments of Brownson, Vines, and Gushee; and (2) the subtitle of Meyers’ book, *The Moral Defense of Homosexuality: Why Every Argument against Gay Rights Fails*, gives evidence of his project, which again, is precisely in line with the purpose this chapter. The philosophical arguments Meyers addresses lend support to Vines and Gushee, which is why I have chosen to interact with him.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Meyers, *The Moral Defense of Homosexuality: Why Every Argument against Gay Rights Fails* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

he appeals to the violation of one's marital vows, but his point of reference is not an objective norm, such as the law-giving God of Christian ethics. Rather, his reference point is the autonomy of the violated wife. His example fails for numerous reasons. First, he is assuming that adultery is inherently wrong without offering any form of ethical reasoning. His argument only allows him to appeal to the violation of one's personal autonomy, or the unfairness or harmful nature of the act. His argument completely assumes these violations against the wife. What he fails to properly consider is that the gay man may view his marital vows as a violation of his own personal autonomy. Or, what is to say that the wife has not given her blessing upon the adulterous relationship? Because Meyers' argument is grounded in human autonomy, and therefore an insufficient metaethical, he is forced to borrow objective moral norms that he cannot justify. It is intellectually inconsistent for him to use words such as "unfair" and "adultery" for he has no rational basis for understanding them. Only those ethical systems based in objective moral norms can use such language.

Frame explains, "The non-Christian approach leads to the abandonment of ethics itself."<sup>13</sup> Frame concludes that non-theistic approaches to ethics, specifically non-Christian approaches, have already failed to understand the nature and intellectual demands of ethical inquiry. To begin such an inquiry without reference to God (objective norm) is to fail the discipline of ethics all together. This understanding is helpful in considering Meyers' approach, and it can now be properly said that Meyers has failed to truly offer any valid ethical view. Frame goes on to say, "The main ethical thinkers of the twentieth century . . . don't try to tell us how to live; rather they examine the language and reasoning of the discipline of ethics."<sup>14</sup> In effect, he is saying the major ethical thinkers of the last century have not offered any valuable prescriptive ethical system as much as they have offered their own thoughts on the nature and form of numerous

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<sup>13</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 124.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

metaethics. The issue that arises out of this practice of ethical inquiry is the absence of any real moral substance. If a man sets out to build a boat, he will first, if he is wise, evaluate different methods of building boats, discerning the strengths, weaknesses, and purposes of each. This would be the practice of metaethics. If, however, the man became so engrossed in the study of boat building that he never progresses to building his boat, or he decides to pursue a method that will not produce a boat, he will have ultimately failed at his task. The same is true for ethics. Ethical inquiry is primarily concerned with the discerning of objective moral norms in order that man live in certain ways. Metaethical inquiry, while necessary and valuable, ultimately fails if divorced from ethical prescription, or offers an incompatible or inconsistent ethical prescription.

To be sure, an ethical prescription, such as, “a man should not involve himself sexually with another man,” will rest upon certain metaethical truths. However, any system of moral thought that deals only with metaethics, or with faulty metaethics, never truly completes the intended purpose of ethical inquiry, which is determining and prescribing a proper way of life; the provision of an actual moral blueprint for life.

### **Human Sexuality and Flourishing**

Formal ethical study may also be understood to be the pursuit of human flourishing.<sup>15</sup> There are differing ideals as to the precise meaning of human flourishing, nonetheless, flourishing is the goal. It is the attempt to discern the best kind of life. Louis Pojman explains, “Ethics seeks to establish principles of right behavior that may serve as action guides for individuals and groups.”<sup>16</sup> As it has been argued thus far, human flourishing resides in the proper outworking and exercise of objective ethical norms.

As it concerns the argument of this chapter, objective moral norms flow from God Himself, through His Word, the Bible. Therefore, it may rightly be said that human

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<sup>15</sup> Pojman, *Philosophy*, 253.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

flourishing, being a fixed and objective norm, comes through obedience to God through His Word. According to Frame, an ethical person, or one who experiences true human flourishing through obedience, is one who lives in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. The Bible itself supports this point: “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3).

A potential objection arises from David Gushee, Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of The Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University. In *Changing Our Minds*, Gushee argues for a revisionist understanding of biblical sexual ethics, claiming that the Bible not only does not forbid homosexuality and transgenderism, but actually encourages such practices. Gushee would agree with Frame that an ethical person is one who lives in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. The difference shows itself in Gushee’s revisionist hermeneutic. He writes,

The fact that it is a man and a woman, and only a man and a woman, referenced in the discussions of sex and marriage in Genesis 1-2—and the fact that only a man and a woman have been able to procreate (until reproductive technology came along)—obviously has been pivotal in shaping Christian opinion on the LGBTQ issue. Christian tradition has taken these texts as prescriptive for all times and all peoples pertaining to the design and purpose of sex, marriage and family life. That has excluded those who are unable to fulfill the prescription due to their sexual orientation. But increasingly today it is noted that the core practices referred to in Genesis 1-2 . . . can and do occur among covenanted gay and lesbian couples.<sup>17</sup>

Gushee’s revisionist hermeneutic is not difficult to identify, nor does he intend it to be hidden. While he would agree with Frame on obedience to the Bible, Gushee’s hermeneutic shows that he views the Bible in a far different light. Whereas Frame would argue for the objective nature of biblical prescriptions, Gushee’s revisionism allows him to reinterpret biblical texts according to, and through the lens of, modern technologies and preferences without ever addressing the ethical permissibility of such things. Gushee does not ask, “Should gay and lesbian couples reproduce and raise children?” He simply assumes that the ability equates with moral good. Gushee’s approach is a reinterpreting of

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<sup>17</sup> Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 82.

biblical norms and prescriptions through the lens of technology, science, and emotivism, and therefore he would ultimately disagree with Frame about obedience to the Bible.

Frame notes, “So the difference between unregenerate and regenerate knowledge of God may be described as ethical.”<sup>18</sup> This distinction is helpful as it clearly shows the difference between proper and improper ethics. Improper, or immoral, ethics may be said to be those schools of thought separated from the revealed truth in God’s Word. Pressing further, it may also be rightly said that human sexuality finds its highest form of flourishing when exercised in congruence with (obedience) God’s Word, and its highest form of perversion when it is exercised in opposition.

Daniel Heimbach, Senior Professor of Ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, notes,

The traditional approach to sexual morality, based on Scripture and long believed essential to American society, holds that sex is for moral purposes beyond the experience of sex itself—moral purposes that serve to support and fulfill marriage and family duties. These are fixed purposes.<sup>19</sup>

There are several things to note in Heimbach’s statement. First, he combines the traditional view (of sex and sexuality) with the scriptural view. He also associates this idea of sexual morality with that of American society. In this way, he references one of the essential American ideas put forward by John Adams: “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”<sup>20</sup> Heimbach, in line with Adams, argues that the traditional view of sex and sexuality falls into a fixed moral norm. Furthermore, according to Heimbach and Adams, American society as it was founded, and as it has existed for much of its life, has

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<sup>18</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics, A Justification of Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015), 64.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 37.

<sup>20</sup> John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, the Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1854), 9:229.

operated under this fixed truth. A further category that emerges from Heimbach is the fixed scriptural nature of human sexuality. Because Scripture is the reference point, the objective standard, Heimbach is right in making such a claim. A fourth point Heimbach makes is to locate sexual morality in the context of marriage and family. He writes, “These are fixed norms.”<sup>21</sup>

According to both Heimbach and Frame, true human flourishing, in regard to sexual morality, is found in alignment to the revealed norms in Scripture.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, aligning oneself to Scripture in all things is the path to true human flourishing. Rod Dreher rightly argues, “A defining characteristic of the modern world is disorder.”<sup>23</sup> This statement is a fine classification for any attempt to redefine or reorder human sexuality. It is right to revisit Gushee’s argument, for this is precisely what he attempts to do. By advocating a revisionist view of biblical descriptions, he throws the entire enterprise of biblical ethics out the window. He disorders biblical revelation on the grounds of modern technology and emotion instead of allowing these modern issues to be defined and understood through biblical revelation.

Most importantly, Gushee (and those affirming a revisionist hermeneutic) finds himself out of step with Jesus. A common argument from LGBTQ proponents is that because Jesus was explicitly silent on LGBTQ issues, His silence lends support. They further argue that this puts Jesus at odds with Paul and other portions of Scripture, thereby creating a caveat for subverting biblical authority. While the task of this paper is not text criticism, Robert Gagnon does offer helpful insight about Jesus’ view on LGBTQ issues. Gagnon argues that while Jesus is explicitly silent on LGBTQ issues, He would

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<sup>21</sup> Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> This point does exclude those who are celibate or have chosen to embrace a life of singleness. For further reading, see Stephen J. Wellum, “Can a Single Person Fully Image God,” *9 Marks Journal* (Spring 2017): 9-12.

<sup>23</sup> Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Penguin Random, 2017), 54.

most certainly been opposed, holding instead to a biblical position in line with both the Old Testament Law and Paul's New Testament theology. Gagnon writes,

The silence of Jesus on the subject, combined with other factors, make Jesus' opposition to same-sex intercourse historically probable. Indeed, the word silence can only be used in a very constricted sense. Jesus made no *direct* or *explicit* comments about same-sex intercourse, just as he made no direct comments about many other important subject. In a larger sense, though, Jesus was not silent about same-sex intercourse inasmuch as the inferential data speaks loud and clear about Jesus' perspective. Four points confirm this claim. First, understood in the context of first-century Judaism, it is very unlikely that Jesus would have adopted a fundamentally different stance toward same-sex intercourse, particularly given Jesus' general approach to the Mosaic law. Second, Jesus' appeal to Gen. 1:27 and 2:24 in his discussion of divorce (Mark 10:1-12) confirms his embrace of an exclusive heterosexual model of monogamy. Third, Jesus' positions on other matters having to do with sexual ethics were generally more—not less—rigorous than those of his surrounding culture. Fourth, the ways in which Jesus integrated demands for mercy and righteous conduct in his teaching and ministry do not lend support for the view that Jesus might have taken a positive or neutral approach.<sup>24</sup>

From this quote, it is right to see Gushee, and anyone portending a revisionist hermeneutic, as out of step with Jesus, and the entire Bible.

As it has been argued, human sexuality is a fixed form and is essentially tied to right moral behavior. Therefore, any attempt to redefine a fixed norm is not only foolish and impossible, it is seeking to bring chaos to a fixed order. Therefore, as Dreher concludes, "The most fundamental act of resistance is to establish order."<sup>25</sup>

True human flourishing accords with the right and proper exercise of human gender. This is clear not only from objective moral norms, but more importantly from the truths of Scripture (the source of all moral norms). Human gender and sexuality are fixed moral norms, and it follows that true human flourishing, as it concerns human sexuality, is objective in nature and not open to redefinition.

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<sup>24</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice, Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abington, 2001), 187-88.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Marriage: The Highest Sexual Good**

Having argued for the fixed nature of human gender and sexuality, it necessarily follows that there is a proper moral order and exercising of these fixed norms. Gender and sexual identity are not merely norms, but serve an essential and satisfying purpose for humanity. The highest good, or the most proper exercise of gender roles and sexual identity, is found in Genesis 2:24, which states, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Marriage—the conjugal union of a man and a woman—is the highest expression and exercise of gender norms; marriage is the purpose of gender complementarity. The union of one man and one woman for life is the most beneficial of human sexual relationships, and thus the highest good to be pursued as it concerns gender and sexual identity.

### **Basic Human Good and Sexual Pleasure**

Pleasure is a good thing. It is wrong to think otherwise. Pleasure is often associated with words such as happiness, goodness, satisfaction, fulfillment, well-being and fun, etc. Pleasure has often been a driving force for man’s actions, his goals and pursuits. Man can indeed consume himself in the pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure has been defined in numerous ways throughout the history of ideas, but for the purposes of this chapter, pleasure shall be understood to be the pursuit of a true good; or a vehicle through which true good is obtained. D. S. Hutchinson explains that Plato, the father of classic philosophy, viewed pleasure in this way: “Plato thought that the paradigm case for pleasure is eating and drinking; the pleasure comes from noticing that we are being restored to our natural state of fullness.”<sup>26</sup> Plato thought of pleasure as a vehicle of sorts; it was the journey or process to fullness that caused or gave way to pleasure; pleasure was the means by which the good (in this case, being made full or whole) was obtained. In a

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<sup>26</sup> D. S. Hutchinson, “Ethics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 211.

similar fashion, Aristotle viewed pleasure as the awareness of something truly good.<sup>27</sup> It becomes clear from both great thinkers that pleasure is not an end, but a means to an end.

The question then arises, “what constitutes a good?” If goodness is simply a quality that can be freely assigned, then pleasure ceases to be a means to the end of good. If pleasure itself can intelligibly be deemed an intrinsic good, then it is placed above moral evaluation, and this is simply not so.<sup>28</sup> Pleasure, then, is a means to an objective good. It does not, however, prevent the misuse of pleasure or the pursuit of pleasure toward improper ends. This understanding merely provides the objective grounding upon which moral evaluations are made.

Patrick Lee and Robert George define basic human goods as “irreducible aspects of well-being and fulfillment of human persons.”<sup>29</sup> Lee and George go on to say that these goods are transcultural, meaning that they apply to all peoples, in all places and at all times: “It is true for all human beings, in all times and places, that health, knowledge, and friendship fulfill them, improve their lives, just of themselves, whereas sickness, ignorance, and alienation diminish them.”<sup>30</sup> Basic human goods, then, are those things which possess intrinsic goodness—they are valuable and desirable for what they are. Lee and George provide a list seven basic human goods: (1) life and health, (2) knowledge and truth, (3) skillful performances, (4) self-integration or integrity, (5) friendship and society, (6) religion, and (7) marriage.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hutchinson, “Ethics,” 211.

<sup>28</sup> One would not argue for the intrinsic goodness of the Nazi extermination of the Jews, or the intrinsic goodness of the deaths of war. On the contrary, one would argue against any idea of intrinsic goodness in such acts. Therefore, true goodness must be objective. Furthermore, pleasure must be a means to a true good, not a good in and of itself.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, *Conjugal Union: What Marriage Is and Why It Matters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 27.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

Within this matrix, marriage is seen to be among the basic human goods that apply to all people, in all places and at all times. It is a basic good that possesses intrinsic value. In keeping with Lee and George's argument, each of these seven goods possesses an equal and incomparable goodness. It cannot be said that knowledge and truth offer an intrinsic good of higher quality or value than friendship and society. Rather, one may properly say that knowledge and truth offer a different, yet equally good value as does friendship and society. Because these goods are irreducible in this sense, they must be pursued for their own good, not by means of one another. They may certainly contribute to the overall well-being of a person, but cannot be substituted.<sup>32</sup>

It can now be rightly said that sexual pleasure, not being a basic human good in itself, finds its place in the basic human good of marriage—it is a means of experiencing the good of marriage. Sexual pleasure, then, is a fruit of something greater. It is the product of a basic human good, and not a good in itself. Therefore, sexual pleasure is also attached to a number of other issues as it relates to marriage. Before these issues are explored, it is necessary to define marriage. Marriage is understood, according to Sherif Girgis, as “a comprehensive union of persons.”<sup>33</sup> It is a comprehensive bond that joins two people, a man and a woman, together for certain purposes and toward certain ends. It can be further explained, according to Girgis, that this comprehensive union is built upon and produces certain bonds, “a unifying activity, unifying goods, and unifying commitment.”<sup>34</sup> Marriage is not an abstract idea, or some vague good; it is a definite form that possesses certain characteristics.

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<sup>32</sup> One cannot pursue the good of knowledge and truth by means of friendship. Friendship may be a means to knowledge and truth, but does not possess it intrinsically.

<sup>33</sup> Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter, 2012), 23.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

In saying that marriage produces a unifying activity is to assign certain value to the act of coitus within marriage. The act of coitus is an act toward something greater, a greater good. This greater good is the wholesome unity of marriage. Girgis writes, “Unlike ordinary friendship . . . marriage unites people in all their basic dimensions. It involves a union of minds and wills, that unfolds in a sharing of lives and resources. But marriage also includes bodily union.”<sup>35</sup> Marriage involves a comprehensive unification of life between two people. Moreover, this comprehensive union is ordered toward something; this union is naturally ordered toward producing and raising children.

### **The Purpose of Sex in Marriage**

The act of sex is often culturally described as “love-making.” What is meant by this common cultural description is that sex is the foundation of an intimate relationship, or of marriage. The health and well-being, or the success of such a relationship is often weighed according to how intimate or satisfying the sex is. This understanding elevates the act of sex to a determinative position, essentially making it a good in itself. If the sex is bad, then, it follows that the relationship is bad. If, however, the argument that sex serves not as a good in itself, but a means to a greater good is correct, then sex cannot serve in this foundational role when it comes to relationships and marriage. Therefore, the act of sex is meant to be a private, physical union to solidify the marital union, and is further ordered toward child-bearing and child-rearing.

Saying that sex is naturally ordered toward child bearing does not mean that unmarried peoples cannot participate in the act itself,<sup>36</sup> only that its place is within the boundaries of a properly ordered marriage. In *What Is Marriage?*, Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson, and Robert George produce an argument in favor of monogamous sexual

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<sup>35</sup> Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> I would certainly argue that of sex outside of marriage is immoral. The point here is only to say that marriage is not a physical requirement for participation in the act.

relationships. First, they argue, “unlike ordinary friendship, marriage unites people in all their basic dimensions . . . marriage includes bodily union.”<sup>37</sup> This argument views the human as a dualistic being, comprised of both body and soul. If the body is nothing more than a prison for the soul, then the physical acts either committed by it, or, more importantly, done to it, are of little moral value. This idea, however, is false. It is quite wrong, they argue, to violate or vandalize the body.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, being a physical act involving the body and the soul, sex is of great consequence when considering its role. Lee and George concur on this point: “Nonmarital sexual acts involve, in one way or another, a depersonalization of the bodily, sexual person.”<sup>39</sup>

A second point, which Lee and George put forward, is that “marriage requires exclusivity with respect to sex, to a certain kind of bodily union.”<sup>40</sup> Because marriage is ordered toward a holistic life and child-bearing and child-rearing, sex plays an essential role. It is required for the reproduction of children, this is without question, but it is also necessary for the proper bonding of the marriage itself. Lee and George explain, “The two things are part of a greater whole—are one—if they act as one; and they act as one if they coordinate toward one end that encompasses them both.”<sup>41</sup> In agreement, Girgis writes, “For two individuals to unite organically, their bodies must coordinate towards a common biological end of the whole that they form together.”<sup>42</sup> Arguably, this is a natural law argument, but it is not without merit. If one of the purposes of marriage is to produce children, therefore propagating familial and social structure and function, then child-bearing and child-rearing are essential. This is not to say that child-bearing and

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<sup>37</sup> Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Lee and George, *Conjugal Union*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, 25.

rearing cannot take place outside of the conjugal union of one man and one woman, only to say that marital sex is inherently ordered toward this end; inherently ordered toward this basic human good.

The question must then be asked, “If sexual acts are not committed within the marital union, are they morally wrong?” The answer to this question is yes, non-marital sexual acts are morally wrong. Lee writes, “Deliberately chosen nonmarital sexual acts not only fail to realize the good of marriage, but inevitably violate that good.”<sup>43</sup>

Following from this argument, Lee states that for marital success to occur, not only must both spouses participate in the sexual act, but they must intend that their sexual union be a giving of themselves to the other; a representation of their personal commitment to the other. This understanding of sex is where a moral line can be drawn to say non-marital sexual acts—although physically possible—are morally wrong. Without the marital commitment of oneself to a spouse, sexual acts are inherently self-serving. Not only are non-marital sexual acts a failure to realize the good, but they are also acts of selfish, self-centeredness. It is misusing a basic human good, intended for certain purposes, for the sake of one’s own gratification. According to Lee, “A sexual act can embody or express a personal communion only if that embodiment is what is intended.”<sup>44</sup>

Sexual union, then, is right and proper as it regards the intent of marriage—a basic human good. Choosing to willfully participate in the consummating act of marriage, sexual union, while not intending to submit to marriage itself, is inherently self-serving—it is a violation of the basic good of marriage. Lee explains,

Thus, for both married and unmarried persons, a willingness to have sex with someone other than one’s spouse incapacitates one for the self-giving involved in the bodily completion (consummation) of marriage. This indicates that there is an intrinsic good consisting of the integration of sexual desires, choices, and acts with the other aspects of the person and with the genuine good that sexual acts can actualize. This need for integration applies both to sexual intercourse and to acts and

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<sup>43</sup> Lee and George, *Conjugal Union*, 69.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

desires that naturally prepare for or lead to sexual intercourse. Thus, the choice to have sex outside of marriage includes in the content of that choice a diminishing of sexual integration, a disintegration. Choices that undo that integration are contrary to the good of marriage.<sup>45</sup>

This quote shows the inherent tie between sexual acts and the good of marriage. For anyone to argue that sexual acts can be participated in outside the boundaries of marriage, is not only a disregard of the good of marriage, but is a violation of the good itself. Sexual acts flow from the inner choices a person makes concerning how they will live. In this case, whether they will respect the basic human good of marriage by respecting the proper role of sexual acts.

James Brownson, Professor of New Testament at Western Theological Seminary, pushes back against this idea:

This argument only makes sense if one also rejects the use of any form of contraception. By the same logic that shapes the argument against homosexual relations, it would also be true that married couples who have sex while the woman takes a birth-control pill also are avoiding precisely the same “form of self-giving” that is avoided in same-sex relations. Because these forms of sexual activity are not “able to transmit life” due to consciously chosen contraception, they must also be considered “essentially self-indulgent.”<sup>46</sup>

Brownson’s point is not well made, for he totally ignores the biological complementarity of the male/female union necessary for the conjugal union of marriage. Furthermore, Brownson continues his argument focusing solely on the point “able to transmit life.” While moral sexual union is inherently ordered toward reproduction, not every sexually moral act *must* produce new life, as it has been argued already.

It is right to say that the purpose of sex in marriage is to consummate the union, strengthen that union toward the desired end of joy and satisfaction, and bear children. Again, Lee explains,

In marital intercourse, husband and wife embody and express their multileveled union that is marriage. By choosing to embody their marital union in a sexual act,

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<sup>45</sup> Lee and George, *Conjugal Union*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality, Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 120.

spouses give themselves to each other, for by this act, each intends the fulfillment of the other, and intends this act as part of the sharing of himself or herself with the other. Marital intercourse between spouses consummates or renews their marital union and so is itself a participation in—not a mere sign of or extrinsic means to—a basic human good, namely, the basic human good of marriage itself.<sup>47</sup>

A potential objection could be raised by those in favor of monogamous same-sex marriage at this point. Having argued for the necessity of committed monogamy and the exclusivity of sex within marriage, a same-sex couple might say, “This is precisely why we want same-sex marriage legalized.” While this may seem convincing on the surface, the argument misses the entire point of marriage itself. Heimbach explains,

Proponents of this argument confuse a valued, though not absolutely essential, motive for mate selection with what qualifies marriage as a social institution. . . . If what qualifies marriage for social affirmation shifts from favoring procreation to satisfying private feelings, marriage will lose its structure and will soon cease to be any sort of institution at all.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, a distinction can be made that a same-sex couple, although potentially relationally attracted (private feelings) can never truly realize the intended good of marriage; true bodily union that results in child-bearing.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Heimbach notes, “If the concept of family is not abandoned altogether, then these social-sexual deconstructionists would render its meaning so radically inclusive that no relational combination could ever be excluded.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Lee and George, *Conjugal Union*, 68.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Heimbach, *Why Not Same-Sex Marriage?* (Sisters, OR: Trusted Books, 2014), 23-24.

<sup>49</sup> Again, an argument could be raised that heterosexual couples that are unable to bear children naturally can never truly be married. This, too, is false. Heterosexual couples that are unable to bear children naturally are still fully able to participate in marriage in its proper order. For more on this issue, see Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, chap. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Heimbach, *Why Not Same-Sex Marriage?*, 375.

## True Human Good

True human flourishing as it regards human sexuality is objective in nature and cannot be redefined. Further, the union of one man and one woman is the most beneficial of human sexual relationships and is therefore the highest good to be pursued as it concerns human sexuality. Upon these points, it shall be argued that redefining human gender and sexual identity is an act against human flourishing as it cannot produce true human good.<sup>51</sup>

It would be helpful at this point to discuss the nature of goodness in ethics and its relevance to the topic at hand by revisiting a point previously made. As argued, moral objectivity is an essential component of true ethical inquiry. It is impossible to engage in rational ethical discussion without some idea of objective moral norms. This further extends to the validity of the entire purpose of this chapter that certain actions are right and certain actions are wrong, based on a particular authority. If moral objectivity is itself a falsity, then the premise of this chapter is for nothing. Moreover, this entire ethical project is a foolish and empty endeavor. As it stands, it is not a waste of time and demands close attention.

In *Basic Moral Philosophy*, Robert L. Holmes, Professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy at the University of Rochester, raises the question, “Can moral language be defined and understood through non-moral facts?”<sup>52</sup> This question is certainly poignant to the present discussion as it relates to the overall meaning and application of ethical principles. Holmes argues that the defining of ethical words such as “good” and “bad” often makes circular reference within the field itself. For example, “good” is often described as “the opposite of bad,” and vice-versa. According to Holmes, this causes an issue—if ethical language is totally circular, then it is of no use, for it

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<sup>51</sup> As I have already argued for the objectivity of ethics, an objectivist view will be assumed for this section of the chapter.

<sup>52</sup> Robert L. Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Learning, 2007), 184.

merely references itself and communicates nothing. He offers this solution: “If some ethical words are basic, in the sense that they cannot be defined (or defined exhaustively) in terms of other ethical terms (even though other ethical terms may be defined in terms of them), then there need be no circularity.”<sup>53</sup>

This point offers an attractive solution for many in the field of secular ethics and deserves further attention. To make the case for the existence and relationship of moral and non-moral facts, a demonstration would be necessary.<sup>54</sup> In the end, the question must be asked, “Are there such things as moral and non-moral facts, and what relation do they bear towards one another?”

### **The Relationship between Fact and Norm**

The attempt to discern true good in any regard—but specifically as it concerns human gender and sexual identity—makes necessary the identification of moral authority. There are many schools of ethical thought, many with overlapping principles and facts. The difference becomes clear when evaluating the appeal to authority. To what authority can an ethic appeal? What suffices as proper grounding for objectivist ethics? Is there such thing as a non-moral fact that lends meaning and value to moral norms and judgments?

Two primary schools of ethical thought seek objective grounding for their claims: Rationalism and Evangelical Ethics (sometimes called Divine Command Theory). Each argues for objective moral norms, but each differs when it comes to the appeal to authority.

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<sup>53</sup> Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy*, 184.

<sup>54</sup> Holmes offers this example: “If ‘good’ were definable as ‘pleasure,’ it would be definable in terms of a non-ethical word.” *Ibid.*, 111. By referring to pleasure as a non-ethical word, Holmes implies that pleasure is merely a brute fact without any intrinsic ethical value. He is placing the word, or the idea of *pleasure* in a non-moral, or amoral category to which ethical values can be applied. This move is what Frame calls the Rationalist approach to ethical thought; a point that is expanded in the next section.

## Rationalism

Rationalism is the philosophical system that elevates human reason as the supreme authority.<sup>55</sup> The rationalist's chief concern is certainty, and on this point, both schools agree. Without the ability to be certain—certain of reality, of feeling and emotion, certain of sense-experience—knowledge itself would be subjective, and language would fail to truly communicate. It follows, then, that certainty is a worthy prize. However, to what authority can certainty appeal? Frame notes, "For everyone who rejects divine authority must accept some other authority. Reasoning cannot be reasoning without some standard of truth and falsehood."<sup>56</sup>

Frame's point is well made, even in rationalist circles. To reason means to evaluate, or make judgments based on authority; it is to decide, for example, that A is right and B is wrong in light of some authoritative truth. Though, to what authority does the rationalist appeal? The human capacity for reason.<sup>57</sup>

The rationalist, then, can only rely on deductive reasoning to gain true and objective knowledge. Rationalism seeks to build or *discover* a body of knowledge free from sense-experience. The rationalist does not permit emotion, experience, feel, taste, touch, etc., to influence his understanding of reality—or at least seeks to be free of these sense emotions. He therefore must understand and evaluate any sense-experience by

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<sup>55</sup> Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy*, 111.

<sup>56</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 45.

<sup>57</sup> This appeal is based on a presupposition that certain criterion objectively exists. Plato, a forerunner to rationalism, argued for something similar to this idea of preexisting criterion that he called the realm of the forms. Plato "concluded from such evidence that there was a whole world of perfect objects (forms) that serve as criteria for the objects of our knowledge." John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 111. The rationalist, like Plato, believes that these objectively existing criteria provide *a priori* knowledge, thus informing humanity's ability to reason and make informed judgments. It holds that this criterion plays an essential role in the very "fabric of human knowledge."

means of *a priori* knowledge.<sup>58</sup> In this way, the rationalist seeks to make moral judgments based on non-moral facts.

This school of thought seems to offer much to the proponents of gender fluidity.<sup>59</sup> If Rationalism can be proven true, then gender issues can rightly be shown to be fluid and thus open to change. The rationalist's approach says that human reason, being the highest authority, must make sense of preexisting criterion, and judge sense-experiences based on *a priori* knowledge. Applying this line of reasoning to the human gender conversation, it may be said that human beings are (1) creatures; (2) creatures with one of two distinct sexual organs;<sup>60</sup> (3) creatures with genders, either male or female. Based on the *a priori* criterion, following rationalist thought, what cannot be said is how these creatures are to relate to one another, what types of relationships are permissible and what kinds are not, and whether or not sexuality and gender must coincide.

It seems permissible for the rationalist to say that homosexuality and heterosexuality are different, yet equal expressions of true human love and sexuality. It seems permissible to say that transgenderism—the claim that one's physical, biological sex and gender do not match—is a valid human condition. It seems permissible to say gender-identity and human sexuality are fluid (defined by man) issues.

In a 2016 article published in the *Vermont Law Review*, Wake Forest Law professor Shannon Gilreath and Arley Ward makes just such an argument. In the article, which deals with same-sex marriage and its relation to racial discrimination laws,

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<sup>58</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 112.

<sup>59</sup> Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 167, writes, "Gender fluidity is a term used for people who prefer to be flexible about their gender identity. They may fluctuate between genders (a man one minute, a woman the next, a third sex later in the day) or express multiple gender identities at the same time."

<sup>60</sup> This point does not exclude those born with both sets of human genitalia; it is only to say that the overwhelming majority of humans are born with one distinct sex.

Gilreath claims that laws against same-sex marriage are not only immoral, but are acts of violence against the LGBTQ community: “The law enforces and encourages patterns and practices of oppression; these practices perpetuate old prejudices and create new ones. But more than this . . . the law *can be* violence. When the law does violence, creates it, the law is violence.”<sup>61</sup>

The article is scholarly work, well-researched and well-articulated. It would not be hard to come away from the article agreeing with Gilreath’s position. The issue comes when the authors’ presuppositions are called into question. Throughout the article, Gilreath and Ward attempt to equate the racial discrimination against black Americans during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—encapsulated in the Jim Crow laws—with the discrimination faced by same-sex couples today. Quoting the American Civil Rights Union, Gilreath writes,

Segregation targeted activity, not personhood, *per se*, so that Jim Crow’s web of regulations controlled behavior: riding, swimming, drinking, eating, marrying etc. Naturally, the consequence of regulating the activities based on racial animus was to diminish the human dignity of the group whose equal citizenship was targeted by the restrictions.<sup>62</sup>

To be fair, Gilreath rightly points out the nature of Jim Crow era laws that were intended not only to regulate the freedoms of black Americans, but also to degrade their sense of personhood<sup>63</sup>; to make them feel second class, and this was a terrible injustice. However, this abuse of the law does not mean that law should not regulate behavior; and for the law to regulate behavior, it must be based on some moral foundation or grounding. Charles J. Reid, Professor of Law and the University of St. Thomas—and one of the men Gilreath’s

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<sup>61</sup> Shannon Gilreath and Andy Ward, “Same-Sex Marriage, Religious Accommodation and the Race Analogy,” *Vermont Law Review* 41, no. 2 (2016): 239.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>63</sup> Pojman, *Philosophy*, 199, defines personhood as “our ability to reason and make moral choices.”

article is directed against—states, “As a matter of jurisprudence, the law teaches values through the behaviors it sanctions and those it prohibits.”<sup>64</sup>

Gilreath attempts to equate the injustices of the Jim Crow laws with laws regulating same-sex marriages, without ever questioning the validity—or lack thereof—of its moral grounding: “While a thief is a thief only situationally (not as a matter of socially inscribed identity), by contrast, homosexuality and biases against it are analogous to race.”<sup>65</sup> Gilreath and Ward’s project is now clearer. In making the claim that racial discrimination is analogous to same-sex marriage discrimination, Gilreath is associating sexuality and its exercises with one’s essential personhood.

One’s racial identity is directly tied to one’s essential personhood. True racism is not targeted at specific actions, cultural practices, or other activities (although it can include these things). Racism is the degradation of one’s essential personhood on the grounds of one’s objective racial identity. It is impossible for a man to simply stop being of a certain race. For one to make such a claim would put him outside of the rational bounds of reality (although this is precisely what the Jim Crow laws implied).<sup>66</sup>

To equate sexual identity and orientation with one’s race is to elevate sexuality to a position it does not belong. Human sexuality, while being tied to personhood, is simply an exercise of that personhood and not an essential component. A man of a certain race cannot cease to be a member of that race, even by choice. On the other hand, the same man can choose to stop performing certain actions, of which sexual actions would be included. On this point, Ryan Anderson notes three problems:

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<sup>64</sup> Charles J. Reid, Jr., “Marriage: Its Relationship to Religion, Law, and the State,” in *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty, Emerging Conflicts*, ed. Douglas Laycock, Anthony R. Picarello, Jr., and Robin Fretwell Wilson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 157.

<sup>65</sup> Gilreath and Ward, “Same-Sex Marriage, Religious Accommodation and the Race Analogy,” 247.

<sup>66</sup> The Jim Crowe segregation laws were intended to raise awareness of the racial divide, thereby driving home the supposed lesser value of the black community.

“[First], sexual orientation and gender identity are linked to actions, which are a proper subject matter for moral evaluation, and race is not. Second, race manifests itself readily, whereas sexual orientation and gender identity are ambiguous, subjective and variable traits. Third, special privileges based on sexual orientation and gender identity undermine common good by weakening a marriage culture, while protections against racism do not.”<sup>67</sup>

The purpose of his article is to show how those opposed to same-sex marriage are no better and no different than the Jim Crow era politicians who committed terrible acts of injustice against black Americans. However, to do so, Gilreath would need to show that those opposed to same-sex marriage are seeking to degrade the personhood of those who would be affected, and this is simply not the case. On the contrary, those against whom he argues do not view human sexuality as analogous with personhood, they see it as an exercise of personhood that can, and should be controlled. Reid notes, “This group of closely-related Biblical texts (the gospels of Matthew and Mark) exerted wide influence in judicial thought regarding marriage and divorce for the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries.”<sup>68</sup> In making this point, Reid shows the moral grounding for opposing same-sex marriage which, upon further investigation, shows that marriage is meant for a man and a woman, sexuality is an exercise of one’s humanity and one’s complete essence, and sexuality should be controlled<sup>69</sup> and kept within certain bounds.

Gilreath’s argument rests not on the solid moral grounding, but on the unfounded presupposition that the free expression of human sexuality is essential to personhood, and must be recognized through legal same-sex marriage. Though, in order to make such a claim, he has to borrow the entire enterprise of marriage, for which he offers no argument, and fails to explain why the overwhelming majority of human history

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<sup>67</sup> Ryan T. Anderson, *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2015), 140.

<sup>68</sup> Reid, “Marriage,” 171.

<sup>69</sup> Controlling one’s sexuality is true for both heterosexual, homosexual, and transgendered peoples.

stands against same-sex unions.<sup>70</sup> Gilreath's argument perfectly demonstrates the rationalist approach, for it makes no sense for Gilreath to borrow the concept of marriage, which has historically been defined in a very specific way, only to redefine it in a way as to make it something it was never meant to be. Cornelius Van Til offers helpful remarks on this point:

Human thought seeks to relate "unity" to "plurality" in the world. It seeks to unify the particulars by finding patterns among them that helps us to understand them. Thus philosophers (especially rationalists) have often sought abstract rationale concepts that are broad enough to include many particulars under their scope. *Bear*, for example, includes all the bears in the world; *tree* includes all the trees; *living thing* includes all trees, bears and much more; and *being* includes everything. The more abstract our concepts become, the less they tell us about particular things. *Dog* includes more animals than *Welsh Corgi*, but it is less descriptive of the animals it designates. *Being* includes everything but says almost nothing about anything. Rationalism seeks the most abstract knowledge possible, but in doing that it finds it can make no specific claims about the world.<sup>71</sup>

Van Til, a premier presuppositional apologist of the twentieth century, identifies several important points. He notes that the rationalist attempts to define categories as broadly as possible, for in doing so, much more is made permissible. Looking to his own reasoning capabilities as the supreme authority, the rationalist will ultimately find himself dealing in broad abstractions in effort to understand his own worldview. This is true of Gilreath's own argument. Not only does Gilreath take the category of marriage and attempt to remold it for the sake of his own argument. He has to make the concept of marriage so malleable that it loses all the distinctive marks of its original design. Thus, to fit marriage into his argument, he has to create an entirely new category, which he then conveniently, and incorrectly calls "same-sex marriage."

To make such a jump, Gilreath has to lend himself the authority to assume the validity of his own presuppositions without offering any kind of justification or rationale. However, this is without substantial grounding, for Reid notes, "Historically, going as far

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<sup>70</sup> See previous section on "Basic Human Good and Sexual Pleasure."

<sup>71</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 114.

back in time as the twelfth century, marriage was defined in terms of legal categories that were shaped fundamentally by Christian theological insight.”<sup>72</sup> The only thing Gilreath can point to in his attempt is the 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges Supreme Court case in which the court “found” or “discovered” the right for same-sex couples to legally marry in the fourteenth amendment. Without attempting to explain his position, nor offer any suitable rebuttal to the long-standing Judeo-Christian ethic of marriage enshrined in the pre-Obergefell law, Gilreath simply assumes history is wrong.

Rationalists do not seek true human good, for indeed, they cannot. A rationalist approach to ethics, being based on human reason, must be open to change and interpretation. As Gilreath demonstrates, something that was affirmed in the past as essential to human good may soon be called an act of violence against the very same thing. It cannot logically be both. Therefore, Rationalism cannot produce true human good for it does not understand true human good.

### **Evangelical Ethics**

In similar manner, evangelical ethics also affirms the existence of *a priori* objective truths, but relies upon an entirely different source of authority. Evangelical ethics appeals not to human reason, but to the infallible Word of God, the Bible. Evangelical ethics may be understood as theology, and viewed as a means of determining which persons, acts, and attitudes receive God’s blessing and which do not.<sup>73</sup>

Evangelical ethics grounds itself in the study of God by means of His Word, which is what Frame means in stating, “Ethics is theology.” It is also right to say that ethics is the practice of godliness, or God-likeness. This definition does not mean that ethics is an attempt to be God; rather, ethics is the discipline of living rightly in light of who God is.

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<sup>72</sup> Reid, “Marriage,” 171.

<sup>73</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 10.

Whereas the rationalist's ethic finds its objectivity in the subjectivity of the individual,<sup>74</sup> evangelical ethics finds its objectivity in the eternal reality of the God of the Bible. The *a priori* knowledge of evangelical ethics finds its foundation in the Creator God, through whom all things find their origin and existence (John 1:1; Col 1:15-17).

Frame argues that for humans to have any objective knowledge, three things must be considered: "Knowledge always involved a subject (the knower), an object (the known), and a norm (the standard or criterion)."<sup>75</sup> In this way, evangelical ethics and the rationalist's approach are similar. Both affirm all three categories, but the evangelical ethicist argues for God as the criterion, setting himself apart from the rationalist. Evangelical ethics, then, does not *establish* ethical grounding (as the rationalist attempts to do), but rather *recognizes* the already existing ethical grounding of God's Word. It follows that evangelical ethics is not only superior to Rationalism, but is far more suited to offer objective moral grounding for understanding true human good.

### **The Bible: God's Means of Lordship**

Evangelical ethics appeals to the Bible as its source of objective authority. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him" (2 Pet 1:3). "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). These biblical passages establish the place of God's Word in the lives of His people: the center. J. I. Packer notes that the Bible is Jesus' means of Lordship in the lives His people.<sup>76</sup>

Frame's three components of knowledge perfectly complement this understanding of the role of the Bible in evangelical ethics. First, through the Bible, man

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<sup>74</sup> This subjectivity is what Frame means in saying Rationalism begets irrationalism.

<sup>75</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 349.

<sup>76</sup> J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), xi.

*knows* God. Man is the knower. Second, he knows *God*. Thus, through Scripture, man gains knowledge of God and of His world. Finally, through the Bible, man gains the knowledge of how he *ought* to live, providing the necessary norm or criterion. In this way, evangelical ethics provides a truly objective, holistic way of living that no other approach to ethics can. The Bible, then, is necessary, which is reflected in the Scriptures preciously quoted, and in this statement from Kevin DeYoung: “The doctrine of the necessity of Scripture reminds us of our predicament: the One we need the most cannot be discovered on our own. And it assures us of a solution: this same ineffable One who has made himself known through the word.”<sup>77</sup>

Evangelical ethics, then, addresses mankind in a way that no other ethical system does. It reveals who man is, how he ought and ought not live. It informs man of the meaning of ultimate reality, and gives an understanding that puts his own life into perspective. Applying this to the topic at hand, evangelical ethics provides mankind with a right understanding of human sexuality; what it is; how it is to be used; the purposes for which God gave it. Evangelical ethics is able to reveal and teach how restricting one’s abilities is the path to true joy and freedom. It helps men and women see that marriage is a truly good institution that is objective in its nature with multiple levels of benefit. It also shows the ultimate purpose and reality of marriage. John Piper states, “Marriage is created and defined by God in the Scriptures as the sexual and covenantal union of a man and a woman in lifelong allegiance to each other alone, as husband and wife, with a view to displaying Christ’s covenant relationship to his blood-bought church.”<sup>78</sup>

Evangelical ethics also differs from all other ethical systems in that it provides a definitive understanding of personhood apart from one’s sexuality. The Bible teaches that mankind’s sexuality can and should be controlled (Eph 5:3-20). A further aspect of

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<sup>77</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 86.

<sup>78</sup> John Piper, “What Does the Gospel Say?,” in *The Gospel and Same-Sex Marriage*, ed. Russell Moore and Andrew Walker (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 28.

evangelical ethics is that it values the single, the celibate, and those unable to bear children. Because these aspects of personhood are not tied to the exercise of sexuality (as they are in other systems), evangelical ethics is able to maintain a holistic view of personhood.

### **What Evangelical Ethics Says to the Gay and Transgendered Community**

It may be tempting for opponents of evangelical ethics to think that the Bible cannot truly honor personhood because the Bible explicitly restricts the practice of human sexual freedom.<sup>79</sup> Like Gilreath, opponents argue that by restricting a man or woman's sexual freedom, the Bible is somehow limiting that person's ability to fully accept and express their personhood. Evangelical ethics, on the contrary, does not inhibit one's personhood; it both encourages and enhances personhood; it leads mankind to see what is truly real, what is truly good, and ultimately what is truly desirable. Sam Allberry, a celibate, same-sex attracted pastor, deals with the implications of the gospel for someone who deals with immoral sexual desires. Of the hope of the gospel he writes, "Change in this life is possible, but not promised."<sup>80</sup> His point is not hopelessness, but a greater hope than the world can offer. Embracing one's immoral sexual desire can only provide immediate gratification, but the gospel provides and produces a lasting hope that far outweighs the gratification of sexual freedom. Allberry continues, "God is glorified as we learn to rejoice in Him even when affliction remains and change seems to be very slow—or when it feels as if we are going backwards."<sup>81</sup> He closes his book with an encouragement from one who struggles with same-sex attraction but who chooses to embrace the hope of the gospel:

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<sup>79</sup> See chap. 2 of this project.

<sup>80</sup> Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* (Epsom, UK: Good Book, 2015), 50.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

This [the life of faith and obedience to God] is, ultimately, the promise of the gospel. The great gift Jesus gives is himself. He is not the means to some other end. It is not that the bread of life is something else, and Jesus happens to be the one who dispenses it. He himself is the bread. It is Jesus who satisfies our deepest emotional and spiritual needs. He is the prize—for all of us, irrespective of issues and complexities. Anyone who comes to him will find fullness of life.<sup>82</sup>

### **Conclusion: God and True Human Good**

As stated at the outset of this chapter, human sexuality is an essential part of the human experience; a human, of either male or female gender, cannot separate or disinterest themselves from the sexual component of their existence. The topic of human sexuality has come to dominate modern conversation in the public square. It has become common to question the identity and definition of human gender and sexuality; it has also become common to see militaristic assaults against long-standing views of human gender and sexuality.<sup>83</sup>

No longer are homosexuality and transgenderism—the two most prominent issues of the modern human sexuality conversation—viewed as wrong and immoral. On the contrary, they have become the new battle cry of the republic, as seen in Vines’ comparing this issue to slavery and anti-Semitism. Rather than identifying these issues as the moral failures they are, the public has by and large accepted them; not so much as morally good, but as morally neutral. The issue is that sexuality is never morally neutral.

As this chapter has attempted to show, true human flourishing accords with the right and proper exercise of human gender and sexuality. Therefore, true human flourishing, as it concerns human sexuality, is objective in nature and not open to redefinition. Both sides of the argument can agree that human flourishing is at the heart of the issue, but both sides cannot be right in their ultimate conclusions. Advocates for unrestricted sexual freedom have a faulty foundation for their arguments and will

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<sup>82</sup> Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?*, 89.

<sup>83</sup> Gilreath and Ward, “Same-Sex Marriage, Religious Accommodation and the Race Analogy,” 237-78.

ultimately lead those who follow them not only into moral chaos, but into moral decay and collapse. It is only in conforming oneself to the revealed moral norms of God through His revealed Word that men and women can find true sexual flourishing.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project was designed to be taught over a nine-week period, with an eleven-week preparation and a three-week follow-up, totaling twenty-three weeks. The project began on November 5, 2017, and was completed on April 8, 2018. The elements of the project consisted of a pre-course and post-course survey, the nine-week course, an evaluation of the course material by the pastoral panel, and a personal interview with participants following the completion of the course itself. These elements were based on the project's four goals: (1) assess PBC young adults' knowledge of current gender issues and biblical foundations of personhood; (2) develop a nine-week curriculum that equips young adults to faithfully engage gender identity issues through the discipline of Christian ethics; (3) increase the knowledge and practice of evangelistic cultural engagement among PBC young adults by means of the curriculum; and (4) make necessary revisions to the curriculum for continual use and equipping of PBC young adults for effective apologetic and cultural gospel witness.

#### **The Pre-Curriculum Survey**

The pre-curriculum survey was distributed to a selected group of ten PBC young adults ranging in age between 18-26.<sup>1</sup>The survey was designed to assess the current understanding, feelings, and convictions of the young adults concerning gender identity issues. The survey covered biblical views of manhood and womanhood, thoughts about sexual orientation and personhood, how often the individual engaged in evangelism, and how often the individual engaged in cultural discussions of gender identity issues.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

Each young adult was given instructions to complete the survey anonymously, assigning only a four-digit code of their choosing to the survey, which could be matched to the post-curriculum survey for comparison and measurement. The survey was distributed during week 1 of the project and the last of the twenty of surveys was collected on week 10 of the project.

After evaluating the pre-course surveys, it became clear that the PBC young adults who took the survey seemed confident in their abilities concerning the understanding of human sexuality and its permissible uses, as well as their own abilities as it concerned understanding and responding to the issues of homosexuality and transgenderism.

### **The Pre-Course Evaluation**

The course curriculum was submitted to the five-pastor panel for review prior to the teaching of the course. The panel used the curriculum evaluation rubric to assess and evaluate the curriculum, making suggestions for need changes.<sup>2</sup> This review proved helpful as the pastors made suggestions concerning the teachability and practicability of certain portions of the curriculum. After taking the assessments and suggestions of the pastoral panel under advisement, I made the needed changes and corrections to the curriculum.

### **An Overview of the Curriculum**

The purpose of the project was to equip PBC young adults to engage gender identity issues through Christian ethics. The curriculum explored a variety of topics, each of which lays a foundation for Christian ethics and explores various topics based on that foundation. The curriculum is divided into two sections—section 1 dealing with establishing the objective basis of Christian ethics, and section 2 dealing with the application of Christian ethics to gender relates issues.

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 3.

### **Lesson 1: Introduction to the Issue**

I wrote lesson 1 during week 1 of the project and taught lesson 1 on week 12 of the project. Lesson 1 served as the introduction and overview to the issue at hand. The purpose was to expose the young adults to the topic from a variety of viewpoints, these being evangelical, liberal religion and secular views. The lesson explored the concept of worldview and ethics, and begins an introduction to the discipline of Christian ethics by offering helpful definitions and a Christian ethical methodology. The lesson also briefly overviews secular approaches to ethics. As a helpful appendix, this lesson includes a list of helpful definitions as it concerns sexual ethics, specifically LGBTQ definitions. The purpose of this lesson was to give the PBC young adults an introduction to the ethical issues that have risen due to the LGBTQ movement, and to begin introducing Christian ethics and its methodology.

### **Lesson 2: The Doctrine of Scripture**

I wrote lesson 2 during week 2 of the project and taught lesson 2 during week 13 of the project. Lesson 2 focused on establishing the Bible as the authoritative foundation for Christian ethics. This lesson covered seven components of the doctrine of Scripture: revelation; inerrancy; infallibility; authority; clarity; necessity; and sufficiency. Furthermore, the lesson overviewed John MacArthur's "Obligations to Scripture,"<sup>3</sup> which demonstrate the tie between the authority of the Bible and Christian ethics. The purpose of this lesson was to help the young adults see the necessity of building an ethical framework on an authoritative basis, and to further establish the Bible as that foundation for Christian ethics.

### **Lesson 3: What We Know and How We Use it, Part 1**

I wrote session 3 during week 3 of the project and taught lesson 3 during week 14. Lesson 3 focused on epistemology and encouraged the young adults to grapple not

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<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 135.

only with what they presently knew, but also with how they had acquired that knowledge. The first half of the lesson defined and explained epistemology, specifically dealing with the necessity of objectivity in knowledge. It covered the four types of knowledge defined in chapter 1 and applied them to moral judgments and worldview.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the lesson utilized John Jefferson Davis’ “Dimensions of Decision Making” to illustrate the relationship of epistemology and ethics.<sup>5</sup> This lesson established objectivity in knowledge—specifically moral knowledge—and demonstrated how it is applied in Christian ethical methodology.

#### **Lesson 4: What We Know and How We Use it, Part 2**

I wrote lesson 4 during week 4 of the project, and taught lesson 4 during week 15. Lesson 4 was the second part of “What We Know and How We Use it.” Having laid the foundation for objective epistemology and its necessity for ethics, lesson 4 utilized John Frame’s “The New Life as Source for Ethical Decision Making” to further expand and demonstrate both the role of Scripture and objective knowledge in ethics.<sup>6</sup> The lesson followed Frame’s line of reasoning and focused on how ethical knowledge is a product of sanctification, growing, and maturing as the Christian walks with Jesus. Specifically, it focused on three attributes: (1) wisdom; (2) truth; and (3) doctrine. The second part of the lesson focused on the individual as an ethical agent. Again, following Frame’s method, the lesson detailed the components of ethical decision making and how the individual participates in the ethical process, which are (1) heart; (2) conscience; (3) reason; (4) will; and (5) emotions. The purpose of this lesson was to help the PBC young

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<sup>4</sup> See chap. 1n19.

<sup>5</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics, Issues Facing the Church Today*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 13-26.

<sup>6</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 349-82.

adults see how ethical decision making is an act of faith and doctrine—an extension of and participation in religious belief—and not merely preference.

### **Lesson 5: Biblical Sexuality**

I wrote lesson 5 during week 5 and taught during week 16 of the project. Lesson 5 built on the previous four and sought to establish a Christian ethical view of biblical sexuality. It sought to answer the question, “What does the Bible say about sex and sexuality?” The primary portion of the lesson focused on examining six Bible passages dealing with this issue: (1) Genesis 1:26-28; (2) Genesis 2:18-24; (3) Genesis 19; (4) Leviticus 19; (5) Romans 1:18-28; and (6) Ephesians 5:22-33.<sup>7</sup> As these biblical passages were examined, I led the PBC young adults to see how the Bible establishes the categories of manhood and womanhood, which is an essential component of Christian ethics.

After these biblical passages had been examined and studied, the lesson covered a brief history of the church’s position of human sexuality. The lesson examined five perspectives: (1) Augustine of Hippo (Patristic era); (2) St. Thomas Aquinas (Medieval/Scholastic era); (3) Martin Luther (Reformation Era); (4) The Puritans (Great Awakening); and (5) Modern evangelical perspectives. Finally, the lesson concluded by outlining a Christian ethical methodology offering four components: (1) Bible; (2) biblical theology; (3) systematic theology; and (4) ethics. The lesson also offered a recommended reading/resource list for the PBC young adults to consult. The purpose of this lesson was for the PBC young adults to interact with specific biblical texts dealing with the ethics of human sexuality, and to hear from history how the church has reasoned to this and similar issues throughout her history.

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<sup>7</sup> I have given significant exegetical attention to Gen 1:26-28; Gen 2:18-24; Rom 1:18-28; and Eph 5:22-33 in chap. 2 of this project.

## **Lesson 6: A Brief History of Ethics and Human Sexuality**

I wrote lesson 6 during week 6 of the project and taught lesson 6 during week 17 of the project. This lesson focused on a brief historical overview of the issue of human sexuality and how different societies and ethical systems have handled the issue throughout history, including (1) the Jewish people; (2) the Greeks; (3) the Romans; (4) Catholics; (5) existentialism; and (6) postmodernism.

Having established different religious and secular approaches, the second portion of lesson 6 focused on a modern timeline of LGBTQ issues. The timeline spans the years of 1905 to present day.

The purpose of lesson 6 was to introduce PBC young adults to a historical view of human sexuality from a non-evangelical viewpoint, seeing how other religions and secular systems have dealt with and handled these issues. A further point was to show, by means of the timeline, how these issues have progressed in American society and to highlight the rapid increase in the last ten to fifteen years.

## **Lesson 7: The Ethics of Homosexuality**

I wrote lesson 7 during week 7 of the project and taught the lesson on week 18 of the project. Lesson 7 focused directly on the issue of homosexuality, evaluating both secular and religious arguments in favor of homosexual practice. Specifically, the lesson caused the PBC young adults to interact with Chris Meyers, professor of philosophy at the University of Southern Mississippi.<sup>8</sup> Meyers presents a four-step *modus ponens* argument in favor of homosexuality and the lesson led the PBC young adults to interact with and evaluate Meyers' argument.

A second position evaluated was that of Matthew Vines, founder of The Reformation Project.<sup>9</sup> In evaluating Vines' arguments, the PBC students interacted with a

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<sup>8</sup> I dealt with Meyers' argument in chap. 3 of this project, pp. 40-42.

<sup>9</sup> More information may be found at The Reformation Project, accessed March 15, 2018, <https://www.reformationproject.org/>.

religious argument in favor of homosexuality. Vines argues for the ethical validity of homosexual marriage, even offering an extensive biblical/textual argument.

The third portion of lesson 7 applied the Christian ethical methodology established in lessons 1 through 5 to both Meyers and Vines positions. We made use of Frame's three perspectives on ethics, applying the normative, situational, and existential aspects. The PBC young adults were able to genuinely understand and critique Meyers' and Vines' arguments based on what was covered in previous lessons.

Finally, lesson 7 concluded with "What does the gospel say to the Homosexual?" The lesson not only critiqued secular approaches to homosexuality through Christian ethics, but it also aided the PBC young adults in seeing both the value of Christian ethical methodology and the genuine hope the gospel offers, which was the ultimate purpose of lesson 7. This portion helped the PBC young adults connect the Christian ethical critique of homosexuality with real-life gospel evangelism and application.

### **Lesson 8: The Ethics of Transgenderism**

I wrote lesson 8 during week 8 of the project and taught lesson 8 during week 19. Lesson 8 focused directly on the issue of transgenderism, evaluating secular arguments in favor of transgenderism. Specifically, lesson 8 led PBC young adults to interact with some of the most recent medical data being produced concerning the issue of transgenderism and sex change procedures.

The first portion of the lesson highlighted the rising presence of transgenderism among adolescents by covering the increasing number of pediatric gender clinics across the United States (45 as of 2017).<sup>10</sup> This portion makes use of Ryan Anderson's *When*

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<sup>10</sup> Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 2.

*Harry Became Sally* to highlight inconsistencies in this medical practice, which recommends gender dysphoria treatment for children who have not yet begun puberty.

Second, the lesson covered secular arguments in favor of transgenderism. The PBC young adults were led to interact with claims concerning “sex assigned at birth” arguments for The Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ activist group. This portion provided an overview of their argumentation for subjects such as “How does one know and identify as transgender?”

Third, PBC young adults were introduced to secular arguments coming from the medical and scientific fields. The lesson provides extensive details from the American Psychological Association and its recent writings on the topic of transgenderism. Specifically, the lesson led PBC young adults to consider what secular science is saying about this issue as it affects real people. Finally, this portion highlighted the work of geneticist Elof Carlson and his work in identifying seven or more human genders. The purpose of this section was to give PBC young adults an introduction to what the medical and scientific communities are saying about transgenderism.

The fourth portion of lesson 8 applied the Christian ethical methodology established in lessons 1 through 5 to the issue of transgenderism and the secular arguments being leveraged in favor of its acceptance. We made use of Frame’s three perspectives on ethics, applying the normative, situational, and existential aspects. The PBC young adults were able to think about the issue of transgenderism in the context of personhood and Scripture, applying a genuine critique to the idea itself.

Finally, lesson 8 concluded by asking, “What does the gospel say to the transgendered person?” This portion highlighted the promises of restoration in the gospel and the true hope and identity found only in Jesus Christ. The purpose of this portion was to aid the PBC young adults in applying the Christian critique of transgenderism with gospel love to real people in real situations.

## **Lesson 9: The Ethics of Gender Identity and Other Related Issues**

I wrote lesson 9 during week 9 of the project and taught lesson 9 during week 20. Lesson 9 served to synthesize all that was covered in the project; its purpose was to help the PBC young adults make sense of the overall topic and see how the application of Christian ethical methodology brings clarity and provides avenues for evangelism and discipleship.

The first portion of lesson 9 reviewed the material covered in lesson 2, which established the authority of the Bible as the foundation for Christian ethics. After reviewing the Doctrine of Scripture (revelation, inerrancy, infallibility, authority, clarity, necessity, sufficiency), the PBC young adults were led to consider the ethical demands this doctrine places upon every Christian.

The second portion of lesson 9 reviewed lessons 3 and 4, which dealt with John J. Davis' dimensions of ethical decision making, and John Frame's organs of ethical knowledge. By reviewing these lessons, the PBC young adults were reminded of the necessity of being ethical as a way of life and that ethics is the operation of the whole person; it is a part of the Christian's sanctification.

The third portion of lesson 9 reviewed lessons 5 and 6, which presented both the biblical view of sexuality through the history of the church (lesson 5), and the history of secular approaches to sexuality (lesson 6). By considering these short histories, the PBC young adults were given a context in which to process and understand present cultural issues of human sexuality. A further benefit of these lessons is evidence of how the church and the secular culture have responded throughout history.

The fourth portion of lesson 9 reviewed lessons 7 and 8, specifically focusing on the response of the Christian to the issues of homosexuality and transgenderism. Specifically, we reviewed the application of Frame's three perspectives and the clarity this brought to the topic.

Lesson 9 closed by considering how the modern church can and should respond to these issues of human sexuality. The PBC young adults discussed the gospel implications of effective evangelism in the lives of those struggling with such issues. The PBC young adults also offered insight into their own lives and ongoing situations they were presently dealing with. They also offered insight as to how the class has helped and encouraged them in these situations.

### **Post-Course Survey and Evaluation**

Having taught through the course curriculum, I distributed the post-course survey<sup>11</sup> and Evaluation Rubric<sup>12</sup> to the ten PBC young adults who completed the course. Using a *t*-test for dependent samples, the survey showed a statistically positive increase in the 10 participants. Having indicated a positive increase, the data from the post-course survey is evidence of the overall success of the curriculum. Although changes and edits are needed, the curriculum accomplished the overall purpose of the project, which was to equip young adults to faithfully engage gender identity issues through the discipline of Christian ethics and to increase the knowledge and practice of evangelistic cultural engagement among PBC young adults by means of the curriculum.

### **The Post-Course Interview**

The post-course interview revealed the same information as the post-course survey. On the front end of the course, many PBC young adults felt confident in their abilities to both understand and respond to the issues of human sexuality from a biblical point of view. While their assumptions about their abilities were not wrongly placed, most were exposed to a deeper, more nuanced view and understanding of the issues of gender and human sexuality from a Christian ethical perspective. The *t*-test demonstrated the positive statistical effect of the course material.

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<sup>11</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>12</sup> See appendix 3.

## **Curriculum Revisions**

Based on the feedback from the pastoral panel and the course participants, there were no major revisions suggested for the course material. While I will consider condensing the material for future use, I sought only to include what was genuinely relevant to the topic of the course.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip young adults at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia, North Carolina, to engage gender identity issues through the application of Christian ethics. Overall, the project successfully accomplished its stated purpose. Through the curriculum, along with the follow-up interviews and post-course measurement tools, the project proved successful.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

Four goals guided the preparation and implementation of this project. The project's first goal was to assess PBC young adults' knowledge of current gender issues and biblical foundations of gender and personhood. This goal was measured by administering a cultural engagement survey to the PBC young adults selected to participate in the project.<sup>1</sup> The pre-course survey was distributed prior to the course and received back in a timely manner. The survey provided helpful and needed insight into the PBC young adults' knowledge of current gender issues and biblical foundations of gender and personhood. Therefore, the project successfully accomplished the first goal.

The project's second goal was to develop a nine-week curriculum that equips young adults to faithfully engage gender identity issues through the discipline of Christian ethics. To evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum, it was submitted to a pastoral panel for evaluation using the curriculum evaluation rubric. The goal was

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

measured by a panel of four pastors<sup>2</sup> who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.<sup>3</sup> This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met and exceeded the sufficient level. Therefore, the project successfully accomplished the second goal.

The project's third goal was to increase knowledge and frequency of cultural engagement among young adults at PBC by teaching through the curriculum. Ten students who completed the cultural engagement survey were selected to complete all nine sessions of the curriculum. This goal was measured by administering the survey<sup>4</sup> to these ten students, comparing the results using a *t*-test for dependent samples. This goal was successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey. This goal was also measured by pre and post curriculum interviews with those selected to participate.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the project accomplished the third goal.

The project's fourth and final goal was to have the participants evaluate the process and suggest needed changes, by means of a rubric,<sup>6</sup> and to revise the curriculum for the continual use and equipping of young adults at PBC for effective apologetic and cultural gospel witness. This goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met and exceeded the sufficiency level. Therefore, the project accomplished the fourth goal.

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<sup>2</sup> Marc A. Francis, Nathan Neufang, Jason Palmer, and Jeff Long.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 4.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The project had several notable strengths. First, the project dealt with a current cultural issue that many of the PBC young adults found interesting and of value. This correlation between interest and subject matter allowed me to gain a large interest in the project as I prepared to begin and taught the curriculum. As more PBC young adults found out about the project, more asked to participate, or at least to receive copies of the lectures.

Second, the project was based on a biblical and systematic theological approach to the Bible and evangelical ethics. This approach allowed me to cover the topic of the reliability of the Bible while also focusing on how a right understanding of the Bible leads to right obedience unto God. I found it encouraging that although many PBC young adults felt they were well equipped to deal with gender identity issues prior to the course, these same individuals found themselves stretched and challenged by the content and methodology. Therefore, by means of the curriculum, I was able to introduce the PBC young adults to evangelical ethical methodology.

A third strength of the project was that it fairly and accurately described the positions of those who oppose evangelical viewpoints and convictions. Throughout the curriculum, I not only introduced the participants to opposing positions, but made the effort to give a fair explanation to those positions. This exposure allowed the PBC young adults to interact with some of the most prevalent contemporary secular arguments, both cultural and medical, that are being leveraged against the church while being in a safe environment.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

First, a notable weakness of the project was the day and time that the meetings took place. The nine lessons were taught on Sunday mornings from 8-9:30 a.m. on the campus of PBC. While this time slot offered a convenient and out-of-the-way option for all involved, it also put an extra burden on the PBC young adults, many of whom were

not in the habit of rising early on Sunday mornings, which led to noticeable absences for many who initially started the course.

A second weakness to note was the targeted age group. While the issue of gender identity is mainly confined to the younger generations, it would have been helpful for our church context to open the project up to the entire church. I had many middle-aged parents and adults approach me throughout the project informing me of their desire to receive biblical teaching and guidance in the area of Christian ethics and human sexuality. In the future, this weakness will be addressed by running the curriculum again for a wider audience.

A third weakness was the subject matter itself and the time in which I designed it to be taught. While the four goals of the project were successfully met, it would have been beneficial to extend the curriculum over a few more weeks to give needed time to some of the more complex issues, such as lessons 3 and 4 and the development of a Christian ethical methodology.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

The first element of the project I would do differently would be to run the course on a different day or at a different time. As noted previously, the day and time (the combination of the two) proved itself to be a weakness of the project. Therefore, to overcome that weakness, I would choose to run the project at a different time. One option might be to run the project on selected Saturday mornings, combining some of the sessions and teaching them over the course of two or three weeks.

A second option would be to simply change the time of day on Sunday. Sunday is a preferable day as many of the PBC young adults are already attending Parkwood and would not have to change that aspect of their schedule. I could simply change the time to later in the morning, thereby alleviating for participants the stress of getting up earlier than desired. This course could take place between Parkwood's three Sunday services or occur on Sunday afternoon/evening.

A second element I would change would be to rework certain portions of the pre-and post-curriculum survey to more accurately reflect the substance of the project.<sup>7</sup> As I taught through the nine-week curriculum,<sup>8</sup> I noticed several aspects of inquiry I could have included in the survey to give a more accurate picture of both the pre-course capabilities of the PBC young adults and the true nature of their growth in the subject post-course.

A third element I would change would be the format of lesson 6. Lesson 6 is valuable to the overall goal of the project, but because it is primarily information based, it did not produce as much discussion and questions within the course itself. Therefore, I would change the way I presented the material. Instead of having lesson 6 primarily be informational and historical, I would revise it by adding in my own interpretation of the timelines and facts and offer some conclusions that can be drawn from the data. In doing so, I think the participants would be more likely to engage with the material and see it as relevant to their personal lives.

Finally, having taught the course, I would not have limited it to PBC young adults. During the implementation period of the project, word spread throughout Parkwood about the project and many middle and mature aged adults approached me about the course. Having so many other church members approach me about the curriculum allowed me to see not only the genuine interest in the subject matter among older generations but also how deeply impacted some of the older families in Parkwood are by the issues of human gender and sexuality.

### **Theological Reflections**

The nature of a Doctor of Ministry project is such that deep interaction with the Word of God is necessary. The doctrine of the sufficiency of the Word, then, becomes

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<sup>7</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 5.

paramount to any ministry project. I certainly found this to be the case with my own project and was reminded of the beauty and depth of this doctrine in several ways.

First, the Bible is the foundation for all that I do and will do as a pastor and shepherd of God's people. This was a point I would certainly have stated and agreed to before the project, but one I have been keenly reminded of throughout the planning and implementation of this project.

As I noted in the project, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, as described by Grudem, means that "Scripture contained all the words of God He intended for His people to have at each stage of redemptive history and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly."<sup>9</sup> The primary thing I wish to note from this definition as it pertains to my point is the foundational nature of God's Word; it is all that the church needs for salvation and sanctification. My task as a pastor, then, is to always be giving God's people God's Word, and trusting that God is using His Word for the good of His people.

Second, the Bible is sufficient for God's people to accomplish all that He has commanded. Speaking broadly, the Bible makes many ethical demands on the church. These are not legalistic commands of obedience for the sake of salvation. Rather, these are commands of grace, born out of a gospel of grace, and carried out for the good of the community of faith, and the wider world. When the Bible makes an ethical demand, it assumes the Christian's ability to carry out such commands; it does not make impractical demands upon God's people.

Third, the Bible is sufficient in the area of evangelical sexual ethics. Due to the nature of my project and its topic, this is a particular application I have come away with. The present world seems truly bent on not only undoing the moral teaching of the Bible but to also deem them inherently immoral. Further, many within the church wonder

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 127.

whether the Bible, as an ancient document, is sufficient to deal with ever-changing sexual mores and standards.

Throughout this project, I have been continually reminded not only of the sufficiency of Scripture in broad terms, but particularly of the Bible's sufficiency regarding sexual ethics. While the Bible is an ancient book, it is God's ancient book that He gave to the church for all time. Thus, its teachings on gender, sexuality, and sexual practice, while ancient, are rooted in the unchanging truth of God. Therefore, the Bible is sufficient in evangelical sexual ethics and completely true.

A second theological reflection I have come away with is a renewed reminder of the purpose of mankind's sexual differences in God's creative design. This project forced me to consider both the biblical foundations for human sexuality and how these differences are intended by God to be used in His world. This focus has been particularly helpful as I am currently dealing with multiple issues in this area with members of my church.

Particular to the project, I have been reminded not only of the distinction between the sexes, but also of the purpose behind that distinction as I noted in chapter 2. God created Adam as male and Eve as female in order to rightly carry out His creation mandate. In reflecting on this, I have been reminded of both the ethical and theological implications of gender roles. Men and women have the ethical demand to image forth God's glory by exercising their gender roles in line with His Word. This is part of God's creative design and is for the ultimate good and flourishing of mankind.

A third theological reflection I have come away with is the need for Christian ethics in the local church. In my own experience, the word *ethics* tends not to attract people, especially those within the church. Average church members often want to know about theological topics, or at least want to know how to respond to certain issues of the day; at a minimum, they want to know who can respond to such issues. While I have no expectation that the average church member will study formal Christian ethics, I am more

convinced than ever of the need for Christian ethical thinking on the context of the local church.

Christian ethics is a means of rightly understanding God's Word and rightly applying it to everyday life. Understanding Christian ethics in this way shows the need for the discipline for every Christian. Every Christian should be concerned with Christian ethics, perhaps not formally, but as it pertains to one's own life as he seeks to live faithfully unto the Lord. Furthermore, I have come away from this project recognizing the need for the average local church member to at least be aware of high level Christian ethical methodology. This is not to say that the average member must master ethical methodology, but members should be aware of the existence of such theology.

Finally, I have come to see the necessity of the church in the counseling and healing of those dealing with sexual sins. The church often finds herself at the center of this controversy, especially in the current media and popular culture. Unfortunately, the church has become known as much for what she is against as what she is for. Even so, the Lord Jesus intends for His church to be the primary vehicle through which the gospel is born to the world. The men and women who make up local churches must see and savor the gospel in their lives, they must treasure it in their hearts and the overflow from this type of love for God is love for neighbor.

Many in today's world are affected by issues of sexual sin and gender identity, whether it be an individual who struggles personally, or someone's friend or family member. The church must be ready to both understand these issues as sins of the heart and stand ready to embrace these broken individuals with the gospel and build them up into the body of Christ.

### **Personal Reflections**

I have learned much throughout this process. I have been stretched both intellectually and emotionally and have come out a better man and hopefully a better pastor. My prayer is that the Lord has used this formative time in my life as preparation

for a life spent serving His bride. As I have considered the numerous ways in which this project has affected me, I want to note four reflections of particular importance.

First, I have been reminded of the necessity of God's Word for God's people. This statement may seem overly simplistic, but in a time when so many—both inside and outside of the church—seek authority and guidelines from sources other than Scripture, I must stake my life on proclaiming its authority and sufficiency. As this project has focused on human sexuality and gender identity I am reminded of the sufficiency of God's Word for dealing with these issues. Men and women must never look to themselves, to others, or to culture to understand who they are and how they understand themselves and their sexuality. Rather, the Bible is sufficient to answer these questions and extensive in showing how to lead a holy life of joy and satisfaction. Thus, the Word of God is necessary for the people of God.

Second I have a renewed conviction of the need for ongoing equipping, both my own personal equipping and the equipping of the church. As Paul notes in Ephesians 4:12, my role as a pastor includes the equipping of “the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” I recognize my need for ongoing growth in the Word, for ongoing training and study in order that I might fulfill my pastoral duties to the Lord's church. As I have moved through this project I have been reminded of just how much information is available and how many resources are being produced on an ongoing basis. Thus, I must commit myself to study in order to be a faithful practitioner of the Word for the people of God. In addition, I have been reminded of the church's need for ongoing equipping. Hearing one lecture on a subject or reading a book once is not enough to gain competence with that subject. Just as I noted earlier that the people of God need the Word of God, I must be faithful to give them the Word. I must teach the church to love the Word; to cherish and treasure it. I must also lead them to think deeply upon it, to apply it and call others to live in light of its statutes. Seeing God's people loving and

treasuring God's Word will not happen if I am not faithfully committed to equipping the saints and building up the body into Christ.

Third, I am reminded of the value and necessity of education and personal study. While this program is not the most rigorous of academic programs, it has certainly brought its own substantial challenges and tasks. While completing the project I have also been serving full-time in pastoral ministry and raising a young family; time is not scarce, but it is valuable. Education is of tremendous value to a pastor, and I have found this to be true in my own life. As I moved through this project and degree, I found my readings and research to be almost immediately applicable to real-life situations that I deal with in pastoral ministry. Instances have also arisen in ministry that have driven me back to my studies in order to find answers or to further think through issues and situations.

As a pastor, I have been called by God to care for His people, and I am primarily called to accomplish this mandate through teaching and administering God's Word. Therefore, it is imperative that I commit myself to lifelong personal study that I might present myself an approved worker unto the Lord. While I may or may not pursue further formal education, I will always commit myself to learning and study for the sake of Christ's church.

Finally, I am reminded that the issues of human sexuality and gender identity will require long-suffering with people. These issues are often deeply seated in the hearts and lives and those who struggle with them, and if I am going to come alongside of these people, it will often require much prayer, time, and effort on my part. I am reminded of my need for a shepherd's heart patterned after the Lord's. As David writes, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ps 103:8).

The Lord is so very merciful with His people. He is a good and loving Father, and He walks believers unto righteousness through His Spirit because of His Son. For this reason, I, as one of His under-shepherds, must take up this very attitude and practice it as my own. As people deal with sin in their lives, they will often not respond as quickly

as I might like or think they should. There may be times when God's children never fully overcome certain sins, or the effects of certain sins in their lives, and because God mercifully deals with believers through the gospel, I know that I can mercifully deal with God's people. Pastoral ministry requires much suffering and grace with the people of God, and by His grace, I will do so for His glory and the building up of His church into Christ.

### **Conclusion**

As this project comes to a close, I want to offer my gratitude and praise to the Lord for his good and steadfast mercy. This project has been an exercise in endurance and I could not have done so apart from His grace. His work in my life through the gospel of His Son, applied by the Holy Spirit, has caused me to walk in His ways and to cherish His Word and His people. For these things, I am eternally grateful.

To interact with Christian ethics, at any level, is a gift of God's grace. To interact with Christian ethics in the academy and in the church has proven a distinct blessing in my life as I have sought to both rightly understand Christian ethics as both theory and practice, and to apply those things to average, everyday church members. It has sharpened me and caused me to be a better pastor. I am eternally grateful for having gone through this process.

## APPENDIX 1

### CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

This survey provided an accurate overview of the current ability of PBC young adults to properly think through and effectively engage the issues of gender and sexual identity through the discipline of Christian ethics.

## CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of gender and sexual identity issues of PBC young adults. This research is being conducted by Benjamin A. Francis for purposes of a doctoral ministry project. In this research, you answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Four Digit Code** \_\_\_\_\_

(Please choose a code for yourself that you will remember when taking the post-course survey.)

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

### **Part 1**

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
2. Do you believe faith in Jesus Christ is the only way man can be saved?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
3. Do you believe God made humanity male and female?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
4. Do you feel that you are well equipped to engage gender identity issues?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
5. Do you feel that you have a strong understanding of human gender and sexuality?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No
6. Do you feel that you have a strong understanding of what the Bible says about human gender and sexuality?  
 A. Yes  
 B. No

**Part 2**

Directions: Respond to the following statements by circling your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat,  
AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree;

- |     |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|-----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 7.  | I am well informed on the cultural issues of gender and sexual identity.                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8.  | I am effective in my application of the gospel as it concerns gender and sexual identity.      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9.  | I have a strong understanding of human gender and sexual identity.                             | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. | The gospel is at stake in the conversation on gender and sexual identity.                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. | The Bible forms my worldview concerning gender and sexual identity.                            | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. | My understanding of Scripture directly affects my thinking on gender and sexuality.            | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. | A person's belief about God is directly tied to one's belief about gender and sexual identity. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Directions: Answer the following questions by placing a check by your response

14. I evangelize (check only one)
- A. more than once per day
  - B. once per day
  - C. several times per week
  - D. once per week
  - E. several times per month
  - F. once per month
  - G. several times per year
  - H. not at all

15. I read Scripture (check only one)
- A. more than once per day
  - B. once per day
  - C. several times per week
  - D. once per week
  - E. several times per month
  - F. once per month
  - G. several times per year
  - H. not at all
16. I engage in cultural conversations (check only one)
- A. more than once per day
  - B. once per day
  - C. several times per week
  - D. once per week
  - E. several times per month
  - F. once per month
  - G. several times per year
  - H. not at all
17. I am concerned over the issues of gender and sexual identity as it pertains to the gospel.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
18. Homosexuality is a choice.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
19. Transgenderism is a real, and not merely perceived, sexual-identity issue.
- A. Yes
  - B. No
20. I engage my peers in discussions of gender and sexual identity (check only one)
- A. often
  - B. occasionally
  - C. as it arises
  - D. I am not comfortable with that discussion

### Part 3—Scripture Knowledge

21. The Bible condemns homosexuality.      SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
22. Transgenderism is a true struggle for some people.      SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
23. The Bible is more concerned with love than with gender.      SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
24. The Bible teaches that homosexuality is not a sin.      SD    D    DS    AS    A    SA
25. I feel \_\_\_\_\_ equipped to deal with gender and sexual identity based on my knowledge of Scripture (check only one).  
\_\_\_ A. very  
\_\_\_ B. somewhat  
\_\_\_ C. not very  
\_\_\_ D. minimally
26. I discuss spiritual matters with non-believers as it pertains to gender and sexual identity (check only one).  
\_\_\_ A. rarely  
\_\_\_ B. occasionally  
\_\_\_ C. several times per week  
\_\_\_ D. when it arises  
\_\_\_ E. I avoid it
27. I am quick to respond with the gospel in conversations on gender and sexual identity.  
\_\_\_ A. Yes  
\_\_\_ B. No
28. The passage of Scripture that most directly speaks to complementarianism between man and woman is \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_ A. Ephesians 5:21-33  
\_\_\_ B. 1 Peter 3:1-7  
\_\_\_ C. Genesis 2:18-25
29. The passage of Scripture that most directly speaks to purpose of marriage is \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_ A. Ephesians 5:21-33  
\_\_\_ B. 1 Peter 3:1-7  
\_\_\_ C. Genesis 2:18-25
30. The passage of Scripture that most directly speaks to the role of the wife in marriage is \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_ A. Ephesians 5:21-33  
\_\_\_ B. 1 Peter 3:1-7  
\_\_\_ C. Genesis 2:18-25

## APPENDIX 2

### PRE/POST-COURSE INTERVIEW

This pre/post interview were conducted with those selected to participate in the course. The results were compared using a *t*-test for dependent samples.

## PRE/POST COURSE INTERVIEW

1. Do you feel you are well equipped to engage your peers on issues of gender and sexual identity?
  - A. What obstacles prevent you from doing so?
  - B. What would it take for you to feel equipped?
2. How issues of gender and sexual identity affect you personally?
  - A. How do they affect your friends?
  - B. Your generation?
3. Do you see the issues of gender and sexual identity as being substantial cultural issues in the years to come?
  - A. If yes, how so?
  - B. If no, why not?
4. Should the church speak into the cultural issues of gender and sexual identity?
  - A. If yes, how so?
  - B. If no, why not?
  - C. What is the role of the church in these things?
5. What is the most effective way to engage gender and sexual identity issues with the gospel?
  - A. What does the Bible say about these issues?

## APPENDIX 3

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was sent to the expert panel. This team evaluated the curriculum for equipping young adults to engage gender identity issues through Christian ethics.

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Biblical Gender Identity Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>Lesson One Evaluation</b>					
<b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issues of gender and sexual identity.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on gender and sexual identity.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The material contains points of practical application.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					

**Further comments:**

APPENDIX 4  
POST-COURSE EVALUATION

The following post-course evaluation was completed by all participants who completed the course. They evaluated whether the course was biblically faithful, sufficiently thorough, and practically applicable.

POST-COURSE EVALUATION

<b>Biblical Gender Identity Curriculum Evaluation</b>					
<b>Four Digit Code:</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound.					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the biblical teaching on gender and sexual identity.					
The curriculum sufficiently addresses evangelistic practices as it pertains to gender and sexual identity.					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, discussion, case studies, etc.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to effectively engage gender and sexual identity issues biblically.					

**Further Comments:**

APPENDIX 5  
LESSON OUTLINES

**Lesson 1: Into the Fray...**

**Introduction to the Issue**

- Worldview: A Comprehensive view of the world.<sup>1</sup>
- What is human sexuality, and why is it a cultural issue?
  - Biblical/Religious perspective.
    - Broad overview of landscape (Articles; books; videos...)
    - Historical stance of the Church
  - Secular Perspective
    - Broad overview of landscape (Articles; books; videos...)
    - Supreme Court Ruling (Obergefell vs. Hodges, 2015)

Videos from differing perspectives...

- Evangelical/Christian: Dr. John McArthur<sup>2</sup> (stop at 3:05 mark)
- Liberal Religion: Matthew Vines<sup>3</sup> (Reformation Project)
- Pro-Transgender: CBS on Gender, “The Space between.”<sup>4</sup>

**Ethics and the Issue**

What is Ethics? And what does it have to offer this ongoing cultural struggle?

- John Feinberg: To act ethically or morally means to act in accord with accepted rules of conduct that cover moral (as opposed to non-moral) matters. To have ethics or a morality is to hold a set of beliefs about *what is good and evil*, commanded and forbidden.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Frame, *Apologetics, A Justification of Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2015), 31.

<sup>2</sup>John McArthur, “There Is No Such Thing as Transgender,” accessed August, 20, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-HzZmvrzVE>.

<sup>3</sup>The Reformation Project, “God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships,” accessed August, 20, 2017. <https://www.reformationproject.org/videos/>.

<sup>4</sup>CBS, “Non-Binary: The Gender Beyond He or She,” accessed August, 20, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0ahBHJbyCg>.

<sup>5</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

## Christian Ethics

- John Frame: Ethics is theology, viewed as a means of determining which persons, acts, and attitudes receive God's blessing and which do not.<sup>6</sup>
- Stanley Grenz: Our understanding that the God we know is triune forms the foundation for our Christian ethic. Insofar as God is the ultimate model and standard for humankind, the essential nature of God forms the paradigm for the life of the Christian and of the Christian community (Matt. 10:39). At the heart of the Christian understanding of God is the declaration that God is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit. This means that in his eternal essence the one God is a social reality, the social Trinity. Because God is the social Trinity, a plurality in unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on solitary persons, but on persons-in-community. God intends that we reflect his nature in our lives. This is only possible, however, as we move out of our isolation and into relationships with others. The ethical life, therefore, is the life-in-relationship, or the life-in-community.<sup>7</sup>

## Secular Ethics

- Louis Pojman: Ethics seeks to establish principles of right behavior that may serve as action guides for individuals and groups.<sup>8</sup>

## **Part I. The Christian Approach: Biblical Ethics** **Definitions**<sup>9</sup>

- Moral/Ethical: Descriptively, meaning “pertaining to the discipline of ethics.” Normatively, meaning “conforming to ethical norms.”
- Immoral: A normative term used to criticize a person, act, or attitude as ethically bad.
- Moralistic: (a) trite or provincial in ethical attitude, (b) self-righteous, (c) putting too much emphasis on morality, (d) legalistic, putting works in the role that Scripture reserves for grace, (e) failing to note or sufficiently explain the redemptive-historical purpose of a biblical text.
- Value: A quality or worth or merit.
- Fact: States of affairs. A proposition (statement of fact) is a claim to assert what actually is the case.

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(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 21.

<sup>6</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 10.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 76.

<sup>8</sup>Louis Pojman, *Philosophy, The Pursuit of Wisdom*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2006), 247.

<sup>9</sup>Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 12-18.

- Norm: Rule or standard that determines the ethical rightness or wrongness; the goodness or badness, or any person, action, or attitude. In biblical ethics, the ultimate norm is God's revelation.
- Virtue: Grounds of praise for someone or something.
- Good: Most general adjective of commendation.
  - Teleological Good: To be useful for something else (ex: Hammer)
  - Morally Good: Morally good actions are those that promote teleological goodness.
- Right: Synonymous with moral goodness.
- Obligation/Duty/Ought: Actions that we are required to do, commanded to do by an ethical norm.
- Permission: Permitted actions are good actions; actions that are good, but not obligatory.
- Justice: That which is morally right.

### **The Method<sup>10</sup>**

- Command Ethics: Emphasizes the authority of God's moral law. (Ex. 20)
- Narrative Ethics: Emphasizes the history of redemption. (Biblical Theological Approach)
- Virtue Ethics: Discusses the inner character of the regenerate person. Holiness; righteousness; Christ-likeness (Rom 5:1-5; Gal 5:22-23; Col 3:12-17).

### **Attributes of God Necessary for Biblical Ethics<sup>11</sup>**

- Control: God controls the forces of nature, human history, and free human decisions (including sinful ones). It is He Who gives faith to some and withholds it from others, so that He is completely sovereign over human salvation.
  - Lam. 3:37-38; Rm. 8:28, 11:33-36; Eph. 1:11
- Authority: God's *right* to tell His creatures what they must do and what they are forbidden from doing.
  - Deut. 6:4-6; John 14:15; cf. vv. 21, 23; 1 John 5:3.
- Covenant Presence: God's steady and unwavering presence with His people.
  - Gen. 26:3; Num. 6:27; Jer. 7:23; Mt. 1:23; Jn. 1:14.

### **John Frame's Three Perspectives on Christian Ethics<sup>12</sup>**

- Normative: Direct focus on Scripture to determine duty, ethical norm(s) and obligations.
  - (Christian Deontological Ethic)
- Situational: What are the best means of accomplishing God's purposes? It explores the consequences of actions.
- Existential: Focuses on the ethical agent; what is the person/agent to do? Examines the inward situation; relation to God.

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<sup>10</sup>Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 31.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 21-23.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 33-35.

## **Part II. Secular Approaches the Ethics**

**Existential Ethics:** Focus on ethics as a phenomenon of the inner life; existential principles tend to become the absolute; human subjectivity becomes the test of all moral truth.

- The Sophists: Relativism; truth is what is convenient at present.
- Hume and Rousseau: Skepticism
- Karl Marx: Socialism/Communism (Communist Manifesto)
- Friedrich Nietzsche: Will to Power (God is dead...)
- Jean Paul Sartre: Existentialism (Existence precedes essence; atheism)
- Michel Foucault: Postmodernism; deconstruction (History of Madness)

**Teleological Ethics:** From the Greek words “telos” meaning “goal” or “purpose.”

- Situational
- Understands ethics as a selection of goals as a means to other/higher goals.
- A good act is one that maximizes or achieves the happiness of creatures.
- Teleological ethics tend to seek/prefer objective grounding; not abstractions.
- Teleology is often woven into the arguments of other traditions.

**Deontological Ethics:** From the Greek word “*deō*” meaning “owe, ought or must.”

- Normative
- Concerned primarily with duty; obligation.
- Less concerned with teleological and existentialist arguments.

## **Part III. Conclusion**

- Ethics is the pursuit of the good; the pursuit of human flourishing.
- Evangelical/Biblical ethics is the only school of thought that considers all necessary components of ethical inquiry.
  - Normative
  - Situational
  - Existential
- It is the only fully coherent ethical system that offers a true understanding of humanity, and is therefore able to truly speak to human flourishing.

### **Helpful Definitions**<sup>13</sup>

**Agender:** A term for people who consider themselves to be without gender. Sometimes referred to as genderless, genderfree, non-gendered or ungendered.

**Bigender:** A person who has two gender identities or expressions, either at the same time, at different times, or in different social situations.

**Binary:** A term for people who associate with typical male or female behaviors. The opposite of non-binary or queergender. (See also cisgender)

**Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally.

**Cisgender:** A term used to refer to people who have a match between their gender

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<sup>13</sup>Taken from Andrew Walker’s, *God and the Transgender Debate* (Epsom, UK: Good Book, 2017), 165-71, unless otherwise noted.

assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity.

Complementarianism: The divinely ordered role of, and relation between, men and women.

Constructionist View of Human Sexuality: The idea that sexual identity is something we can take apart, change, and reassemble any way we choose.<sup>14</sup>

Gay: Currently, the term is used to refer to men attracted to people who identify as men, though it is also used as an umbrella term to include all LGBTQ people.

Gender Expression: The external representation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through feminine or masculine behaviors and signals such as clothing, hair, movement, voice or body characteristics.<sup>15</sup>

Gender Identity: A term used to refer to an individual's personal sense of identity as masculine or feminine, or some combination of each.

Genderfluid: A term used for people who prefer to be flexible with their gender identity.

Genderqueer: Umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine.

Intergender: A term for people who have a gender identity in the middle between binary genders of female and male.

Intersex: A general term for a variety of physical conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female and male. (In the past, such a person has been called a "hermaphrodite," but this term is now considered outdated and offensive).

Lesbian: Term used to describe sexual and romantic attraction between people who identify as females.

LGBTQ: An initialism that collectively refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities.

Non-Binary: See *Genderqueer*.

Queer: Umbrella term used for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual, heteronormative, or gender-binary.

Sex: The term previously used to distinguish between the physical identification assigned at birth. The LGBTQ community now uses it synonymously with a self-chosen gender identity.

Transgenderism: An umbrella term for the state or condition of identifying or expressing a gender identity that does not match a person's physical/genetic sex. Transgender is independent of sexual orientation, and those who self-identify as transgender may consider themselves to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, or asexual. Approximately 700,000 individuals in the United States identify as transgender.

Trans Man: A transgender person who was born a female but claims the gender identity of a male. (Biological female who identifies as male).

Trans Woman: A transgender person who was born a male but who claims the gender identity of a woman.

Trigender: A term for non-binary gender identity in which one shifts between or among the behaviors of three genders.

Worldview: The mental category through which men and women comprehend and perceive the world; the understanding of the world through which they conduct their lives.

Ze: A gender-neutral pronoun used to replace he/she.

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<sup>14</sup>Daniel Heimbach, *Human Sexuality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 288.

<sup>15</sup>Nichols M. Teich, *Transgender 101* (New York: Columbia University, 2012), 6.

## Lesson 2: The Bible—The Doctrine of Scripture

### Doctrine of Scripture

- **Revelation:** General and Special
- General: God’s witness of Himself through the creation to His creatures.<sup>16</sup> “General revelation is not sufficient”<sup>17</sup> for salvation.
- Special: God’s direct revelation of Himself in greater detail through (1) direct acts, (2) dreams and visions, (3) Christ’s incarnation, and (4) Scripture.<sup>18</sup> Of the effect of special revelation, Bavinck notes, “When Christians confess their faith in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth—that is the Christian faith in the full sense of the term.”<sup>19</sup>
  - Berkhof: The Bible testifies to a twofold revelation of God: A revelation in nature round about us, in human consciousness, and in the providential government of the world; and a revelation embodied in the Bible as the Word of God.<sup>20</sup>
- **Inerrancy**
- Definition: Without error; the Bible is without error in the original copies. It is therefore free, when properly interpreted, from affirming anything that is untrue or contrary to fact.<sup>21</sup>
- It is not merely because we want to assert that documents don’t err but, more importantly, so that we don’t err. In preserving the Bible from error, God is loving us.<sup>22</sup> (Notice the ethical implications of this...)
  - There are no errors in the Bible.
- **Infallibility**
- Definition: The Bible is unable to mislead or fail in accomplishing the divinely inspired purpose.<sup>23</sup>
- “Jesus believed the Holy Spirit was at work guiding the writers of the Scripture and that this included not just the parts where God is quoted directly but the other

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<sup>16</sup>John MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 72.

<sup>17</sup>Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:312.

<sup>18</sup>MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine*, 74.

<sup>19</sup>Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 321.

<sup>20</sup>Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 2012), 36.

<sup>21</sup>MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine*, 109.

<sup>22</sup>John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 104.

<sup>23</sup>MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine*, 109.

- narrative and poetic parts as well, and that this implies that in the mind of Jesus, these Scriptures, therefore cannot be broken—the cannot be wrong.”<sup>24</sup>
- There cannot be errors in the Bible; it is impossible for the Bible to err.
  - **Authority**
  - Biblical Evidence: Ps. 19; John 10:35; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17
  - Power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; right to command or give a final decision.<sup>25</sup>
  - Grudem notes, “The authority of Scripture means that all the words of Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scriptures is to disbelieve or disobey God.”<sup>26</sup>
  - Westminster Confession of Faith (1645): The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees and councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence, we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.<sup>27</sup>
    - “We affirm that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.”<sup>28</sup>
  - **Clarity**
  - Biblical Evidence: Ps. 19:7; 119:130; Mt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:39; 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 4:16
  - The character of the Scripture is said to be such that even the “simple” can understand it rightly and be made wise by it.<sup>29</sup> (Psalm 19:7)
    - “The whole Bible, properly understood, has this divine purpose: to communicate or display the glory of God.”<sup>30</sup>
  - **Necessity**
  - Biblical Evidence: Jer. 17:9; Mt. 4:4; Rm. 10:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Titus 1:15; Heb. 11:13

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<sup>24</sup>Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, 103.

<sup>25</sup>MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine*, 100.

<sup>26</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 73.

<sup>27</sup>Derek W. H. Thomas, “The Authority of Scripture,” in *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible*, ed. Don Kistler (Lake Mary, FL: Trust Publishing, 2009), 59.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 106.

<sup>30</sup>Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, 195.

- Grudem: The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God’s character and moral laws.<sup>31</sup>
- Frame: Scripture is necessary to our spiritual lives, in that without trusting in Scripture, we have no spiritual life.<sup>32</sup>
- **Sufficiency**
- Biblical Evidence: Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Jn. 20:30; 21:25; 2 Pt. 1:3, 19; Rev. 22:18-19.
- Has to do Scripture as the supreme authority in all spiritual matters.
- “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended for His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.”<sup>33</sup>
- John Murray: Scripture in its total extent, according to the conception entertained by our Lord and His apostles, is the only revelation of the mind and will of God available to us.<sup>34</sup>
  - “All truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture.”<sup>35</sup>
  - Frame: The Word is sufficient in that if we have trusted Scripture, we have spiritual life.<sup>36</sup>

#### MacArthur’s: Obligations to Scripture<sup>37</sup>

- Notice the ethical implications...
- Receive (1 Thess. 2:13)
- Pray (Ps. 119:18)
- Feed (Job 23:12)
- Obey (Num. 14:22-24)

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<sup>31</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 116.

<sup>32</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 210.

<sup>33</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

<sup>34</sup>John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 1, *The Claims of Truth* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 19.

<sup>35</sup>John MacArthur, “The Sufficiency of the Written Word,” in Kistler, *Sola Scriptura*, 79.

<sup>36</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 210.

<sup>37</sup>MacArthur, *Bible Doctrine*, 135.

- Honor (Neh. 8:5-6)
- Study (Ezra 7:10)
- Preach/Teach (Matt. 4:23)
- Compel (Acts 18:24-28)
- Disciple (2 Tim. 2:2)
- Tremble (Isa. 6:1-13)

### Lesson 3: What We Know and How We Use It, Part I

A pilot came over the intercom of his plane saying, “Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. We are flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet and the speed is 500 miles an hour. We have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that we are lost. The good news is that we are making great time.

**Epistemology:** This is the branch of Philosophy concerned with the justification of knowledge. It is concerned with *how* we know what we know.

- How does one know what exists, and how can someone know what is there? The way people answer these philosophical questions shapes and is shaped by their worldview.<sup>38</sup>

Why is certainty in knowledge important?

- Why is it important to the discussion of ethics?
- Careful oversight of our intellectual lives is imperative if we are to think well, and thinking well is an indispensable ingredient to living well.<sup>39</sup>
- If people will explain how they know what exists, and how they arrive at their conclusions, the explanation will provide insight into the kind of worldview they have<sup>40</sup>....and by extension, their view of ethics and morality.

Types of Knowledge

- **Knowledge by Acquaintance:** The knowledge an individual gains through personal interaction with a person or object. This includes knowledge of pains, sensations, introspective states, loves, hates, beliefs and desires.
- **Competence Knowledge:** Competence knowledge is skill knowledge, or that which is gained by participating in an action, the ability to perform a skill through practice. Competence knowledge does not require objectivity.
- **Propositional Knowledge:** Propositional knowledge is descriptive knowledge, meaning the proposition is a value statement that is either true or false, thus requiring objectivity.
- **Objective knowledge:** By objective knowledge, apodictic certainty is implied. This being knowledge that requires the necessary truth of its object, and is *a priori*.

Moral Judgments and Worldview

- We don't want to get caught in thinking that epistemology (the what and the how) is the end of the conversation.
- We ultimately want to arrive at justified belief.
- Rationalism: Recognizes the need for criteria.

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<sup>38</sup>L. Russ Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 71.

<sup>39</sup>W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology, Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998) 17.

<sup>40</sup>Bush, *A Handbook for Christian Philosophy*, 71.

- Empiricism: Recognizes the need for objective, knowable truths/facts.
- Skepticism: Recognizes the need our beliefs to meet our own criteria.
  - The world tends to focus on only one of the three; adopting it wholesale.
- Presuppositions: A belief over which no other takes precedence; a basic commitment of the heart.<sup>41</sup>
  - Presuppositions control epistemological commitments.
  - Many people choose their presuppositions arbitrarily, or at least on insufficient grounds.<sup>42</sup>
- Frame's Triperspectival Justification of Knowledge<sup>43</sup> - How do we establish our beliefs?
  - Normative: The Bible as Norm for justified beliefs.
  - Situational: Knowledge accords with facts.
  - Existential: Living faithful to norms and facts.

### **Dimensions of decision making (John J. Davis)<sup>44</sup>**

#### The Bible as Normative

- The commands of God have to be worked out in the stuff of daily life.
  - We make decisions every day. The question is, on what basis?
- The teachings of Scripture are the final court of appeal for ethics.
- Informed ethical reflection will carefully weigh the various words of men, both past and present, but the Word of God must cast the deciding vote.
- The Bible functions normatively in evangelical ethics through its specific commands and precepts, general principles, various precedents, and overall worldview.
- By teaching foundational truths concerning God, man, good and evil, and the meaning and destiny of human life, the Bible provides a basic worldview within which the various data of the human sciences can be understood.
- Evangelical ethics is best understood as prescriptive and deontological.
- Evangelical ethics is less concerned with preferences and feelings; it is concerned with obligations that command the conscience.

#### Empirical and Deliberative Elements

- Bible as *revelational-normative* dimension of Christian ethics; human wisdom applying the biblical norms to the *concrete situation* in light of the specific data at hand, represents the *empirical-deliberative* dimension.
  - Example: What does the Bible say about human gender and sexuality? What does it not say? How are we to use this information in daily life?

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<sup>41</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1987), 125.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 123-68.

<sup>44</sup>John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics, Issues Facing the Church Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 13-26.

- Good principles and good facts are both necessary for sound decision making.
- Human reason has a legitimate role in extending the general principles of Scripture to analogous circumstances not explicitly addressed in Scripture.
- While human reason plays an essential role, it does not play an autonomous one; it does not operate independent of authority.
- Human reason works through the *revelational-normative* dimension of Scripture

#### Cases of Conflicting Obligation

- **Situational Ethics:** The highest duty is always love for one's neighbor; what is the most loving course of action when faced with two poor choices?
  - Example: Harboring innocent fugitives who will be put to death.
  - Situational ethics says there is true conflict; yield to what is most loving.
- The fundamental difficulty with situational ethics *alone* is the absence of definite criterion for what constitutes a "loving" course of action in any situation.
- Apart from the abiding norm of Scripture, the person is left to preference; which can constantly change with the times; spirit of the age. (Eph. 2:1-3)
- The serious reader of Scripture is confronted by the statement of Jesus that authentic love for God is demonstrated by keeping His commandments (Jn. 14:21).
- **Contextual Absolutism:** There are many moral absolutes, not just one absolute of love.
  - In each and every ethical situation, no matter how extreme, there is a course of action that is morally right and free of sin.
- Charles Hodge: Occasionally, a higher obligation suspends a lower one.
  - Ex. 1:15-17 – Hebrew midwives refused to obey command to kill infants, and God blessed their courage.
  - Joshua 2:1-7 – Rahab lies to protect God's men (spies)
  - Daniel 3:17-18 – Daniel and his friends refuse idol worship. Acts 5:29 – Apostles refuse to obey Jewish authorities to refrain from preaching.

#### Christian Ethics and Law in a Pluralistic Society

- An examination of American legal and constitutional documents before and after the enactment of the first amendment in 1791 makes it clear that the framers *never intended to exclude Christian values from law and public policy.*
- Supreme court rulings prior to 1947...
  - *Vidal vs. Girard's Executors* (1843); "the Christian religion is part of the common law."
  - *Church of LDS vs. U.S.* (1890); "polygamy...contrary to the spirit of Christianity"
  - *The Church of Holy Trinity vs. U.S.*; "This is a Christian nation..."
  - *United States vs. Macintosh* (1931); "we are a Christian people, according to one another the equal right of religious freedom and acknowledge with reverence the duty of obedience to the will of God."
- God reveals His moral will for mankind not only through the special revelation of the Bible, but also through the general revelation of nature and conscience. (Rm. 1:18-32)

- A person does not have to know the Bible to understand the immoral nature of theft, lying and murder.
- “Societies that adopted more permissive sexual practices entered into periods of decline in art, science, religion and military power.”
- Where Scripture indicates that all people, Christian and non-Christian alike can have a moral awareness of a given issue, then it is appropriate for Christians to press for legislation in these areas.
- The ability to enforce any law depends on a community of consensus regarding its justice and wisdom.

## Lesson 4: What We Know and How We Use It, Part 2

What is it to know something?

- What authority are we referencing when we make moral choices?

**As we have discussed so far...**

- A worldview is our comprehensive view of the world...
- Ethics is the discipline of determining how we are to live in accordance with our worldview.
- Therefore, as we make moral choices, we are making them *in reference to* our actual worldview.

### **Part I. The new life as source for ethical decision making (John Frame)<sup>45</sup>**

- Knowledge always involves three parts: A subject (the knower), an object (that which is known), and a norm (the standard or criterion).
  1. Normative: Direct focus on Scripture to determine duty, ethical norm(s) and obligation.
  2. Situational: What are the best means of accomplishing God's purposes? It explores the consequences of actions.
  3. Existential: Focuses on the ethical agent; what is the person/agent to do? Examines the inward situation; relation to God.
- In this lesson, we will focus on the existential perspective; the role and activities of the individual person in evaluating and making ethical decisions.

#### **1 - Ethical Knowledge is a product of Sanctification**

- There is a difference between *knowing* God, and knowing *about* God. "Since God is a person, to know Him is to enter a personal relationship with Him." (350)
  - Obedience, then, is an integral part of knowing Him. (Jer. 22:6; Hos. 6:6)
  - "We come to know God more as we become more obedient to Him. Knowing God, therefore, is not merely an intellectual process, but an ethical one as well." (351)
- **Wisdom**
- A form of knowledge that penetrates to the deeper significance of things and therefore enables us to apply that knowledge to practical situations.
- Wisdom is the ability/action of doing the right thing in difficult situations. (351)
  - (Lk. 21:14-15; Acts 6:10; 1 Cor. 2:6; Col. 1:28)
- **Truth**
- Metaphysical Truth: It is the absolute contrasted with the relative, the ultimate as contrasted with the derived, the eternal as contrasted with the temporal, the

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<sup>45</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, chap. 20, 349-82.

- permanent as contrasted with the temporary, the complete in contrast to the partial, the substantial in contrast to the shadowy. (352)
- (John 1:9, 17; 17:3; 1 Jn. 5:20)
  - Epistemological Truth: Statements that neither err or deceive.
    - (Jn. 5:31-32; 8:13-14, 16-17)
  - Ethical Truth: Truth that is something we can walk in.
    - (1 Kgs. 2:4; Ps. 86:11)
  - Doctrine
  - The teaching of the Word that leads to spiritual health.
    - (1 Tim. 1:10; 4:6; 6:3)

## 2 – Moral Discernment

- Applying God’s Word to everyday life (Ethics) requires a moral vision. It requires the individual to see the circumstances *in the light of* biblical principles.
- Although Scripture is sufficient as a source of God’s Word concerning our ethical life, it does not speak *directly* to every situation, especially situations that are distinctive to modern life. (356)
- Using analogies as application of biblical principles.
- Ethical discourse is never merely a matter of setting forth facts from biblical passages. It is also a matter of wise counseling, of dealing with the subjective issues that stand in the way of moral insight.
- Scripture, then, teaches ethics through a multitude of ways...
  - Laws and narrative, proverbs, psalms, songs and personal addresses, NT Letters, and eschatological promises.

## Part II. The Organs of Ethical Knowledge<sup>46</sup>

- “It is scriptural to say that the whole person is the one who makes ethical decisions, and that the ethical faculties are ways of describing the person as he makes those decisions.” (361)
- **The Heart**: We often think of the heart as the center, or the essential essence of man’s being. What we are most fundamentally. “God judges the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:7)
  - The heart is either committed to God (Deut. 6:4-5) or is hardened against Him (Ex. 4:21; 1 Sam. 6:6; Ps. 95:8; Rm. 9:18)
  - Whatever our heart is committed to is what ultimately governs our lives.
  - “God writes His Word upon the hearts of the regenerate...not only do we know God’s Word, but our deepest desires, through the gospel, becomes obedience to it.
  - The heart, then, is the chief organ of moral knowledge.

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<sup>46</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, chap. 21, 361-82

- **The Conscience:** Conscience is our God-given ability to discern good and evil. (362)
  - It convicts of sin (Jn. 8:9); commends good works (Rm. 2:15); approves good behavior (Acts 23:1).
  - It is our source of ethical knowledge, often in what Frame calls the existential perspective.
  - Conscience can be perverted (1 Tim. 4:2).
  - When people refuse again and again to follow God, indulging in worse and worse sin, their ability to reason morally becomes corrupted (Rm. 1:18-22).
  - The perversion of Conscience leads to ethical problems.
  - We must recognize that our consciences are affected by sin.
  - We must train ourselves by the Word of God. Judge by the Word.
  
- **The Reason (Intellect):** The capacity to make logical inferences; to judge the logical consistency of ideas and behavior. (366)
  - Areas where the reason is active in ethics: (1) Formulating and evaluating ethical conclusions or syllogism; (2) determining relations between means and ends; (3) exegeting and applying Scripture; (4) analyzing situations to which Scripture applies; and (5) understanding metaethics, the nature and methods of ethics.
- We use reason both in determining the logical value of ideas, as well as, in evaluating our sense experiences and emotions.
  
- **The Will:** Our capacity for making decisions. (368)
- We do not make decisions (the will) without first thinking through what will happen (intellect).
- If our will has not been purified through the grace and forgiveness of Christ, we will not act in accordance with God's ethical demands.
- Living in accordance with God's Word—exercising our will in obedience to His Word—is a mark of the regenerating power of God.
  
- **The Emotions:** How I feel regarding certain things.
- Like our minds, our emotions are fallen and in need of the redeeming power of the gospel. Unregenerate emotions are quite different than regenerate ones. (371)
- Being followers of Jesus does not make us less emotional, just as it does not make us less intellectual. Just like intellect, emotion is a function of the whole person.
- When God regenerates us, He gives us new emotional dispositions, and He commands us to develop them in the course of sanctification.
  - Whereas it is common to say, "I can't change how I feel," the Bible teaches the opposite. It commands us to feel, respond emotionally, in certain ways.
  - Phil. 4:4-6
- Scripture assumes that in many cases we can play a part in changing our emotions.
- Emotions are ultimately good things. They are an essential part of the human experience; they help us experience the world, make decision, relate to people...

- They are a part of our religious experience...
  - The sacraments, fellowship, worship, and prayer are all affected by emotions.
- “The process of reasoning is a dialogue between thoughts and emotions. Evaluation begins with feelings about a certain subject matter. Rational analysis may lead to more adequate emotions, and those more adequate emotions may lead to better analysis.” (373)
- “The task is over when we have a sense of conviction within ourselves, and, at least in some cases, when we feel we can defend the conclusion to others.” (374)
  - Notice the presence of the reason, the intellect and the emotions in that statement.
- “When we warn young people against fornication, we often tell them not to follow their feelings, for obvious reasons. But their problem is not just a problem of emotion. It is also a problem of reasoning. They are tempted to act according to unsanctified emotions, but also according to unsanctified reasoning. If they reasoned properly, they would put a higher priority on glorifying God and a lower priority on their present gratification. So they are wrong, not only in following their misguided emotions, but also in following their misguided reasoning. The remedy is not (as Plato thought) to bring emotions under the rule of reason, but to bring emotion and reason under the rule of God.” (374).

## Lesson 5: Biblical Sexuality

### Biblical Sexuality

- Relevant Scripture examined
  - Genesis 1:26-28 (Ch. 2)
  - Genesis 2:18-24 (Ch. 2)
  - Genesis 19
  - Leviticus 19
  - Romans 1:18-28 (Ch. 2)
  - Ephesians 5:22-33 (Ch. 2)
  
- Man and Woman – Biblical/theological/ethical categories
  
- **Historical perspectives**
- Augustine of Hippo (Patristic)
  - Having been sexually open and active in his younger years, Augustine adopted an ascetic lifestyle post-conversion. He was very dogmatic against desire and the role it played when unrestricted by the gospel.<sup>47</sup>
  
- St. Thomas Aquinas (Medieval)
  - In the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas deals with a number of sexual sins, ranked in his order of greatest to least. He called these *contra naturam* (contrary to nature). He noted: Bestiality, sodomy, masturbation, incest, rape, sacrilege (intercourse with a priest or nun), adultery, fornication.<sup>48</sup>
  
- Martin Luther (Reformation)
  - While Luther did not produce a dedicated body of work addressing human sexuality, he does deal with the subject throughout his writings. Luther rejected Catholic teaching that sexual abstinence is a virtue, but viewed sexual desire as necessarily controlled by God-given parameters (marriage). He also viewed the proper correction to sexual sin in the doctrine of justification.<sup>49</sup>
  
- Puritans
  - The puritans viewed sex within marriage as a gift from God. They are often attributed with establishing the romantic view of love and sex within

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<sup>47</sup>For more reading on Augustine's views see his *Confessions*.

<sup>48</sup>Howard Kainz, "Human Sexuality and Aquinas' Taxonomy of Sexual Sins," accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/human-nature-and-aquinas-taxonomy-of-sexual-sins>,.

<sup>49</sup>Jennifer H. Dragseth, "Martin Luther's Views on The Body, Desire and Sexuality," accessed November 11, 2017, <http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-354>,.

marriage. An often-criticized puritan view was that sex without intention to procreate was sinful.<sup>50</sup>

- Modern Evangelicals
  - Paul Jewett: Sexuality permeates one's individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one's life as a person. As the self is always aware of itself as an "I," so this "I" is always aware of itself as himself or herself. Our self-knowledge is indissolubly bound up not simply with our human being but with our sexual being.<sup>51</sup>
  
- Christian ethical methodology
  - Bible: What does the Bible say? (Normative)
  - Biblical Theology – How does sexuality fit into the biblical story? (Normative, Situational)
  - Systematic – What are the clear biblical teaching on sex? (Normative, Existential)
  - Ethics – How am I called to live in accordance with the Bible. (What are the rights and wrongs?) (Situational, Existential)

For further reading see...

Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?*

Rosaria Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, and *Openness Unhindered*.

Daniel Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*

Russell Moore, *Kingdom Ethics*

John Piper and Don Carson, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*

Vaughn Roberts, *Transgendered*

Andrew Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*

Denny Burk and Heath Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality*

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<sup>50</sup>Nathan Bingham, "The Puritans View of Sex in Marriage," accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/sex-in-marriage/>.

<sup>51</sup>John Piper, quoting Paul Jewett, "A Vision for Biblical Complementarity," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 34.

## Lesson 6: A Brief History of the Ethics of Human Sexuality

### Historical Perspectives on Sexuality

- The Jews – Never allowed/tolerated (Does not mean never practiced).
  - Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.
  - Sibylline Oracles, “Homosex is depicted as impure, unholy, shameless and ungodly behavior; a transgression of the holy law of the immortal God.”<sup>52</sup>
  - The Book of Enoch: “These persons, who are sodomite fornicators, will be convicted by God.”<sup>53</sup>
  - Philo: “For Philo, the love of boys...is a wicked practice and a sin, and his judgement on the passive partners in the act of homosex is quite severe.”<sup>54</sup>
  
- The Greeks – Homosexual relations viewed a virtuous between lovers; pederasty.
  - Pederasty is a combination of two Greek words which translates to “love of boys.”<sup>55</sup> It refers to the ancient Greek custom of erotic relations between an adult man...and an adolescent boy or youth.
  - It was an important part of Greek life and culture and is reflected in much of their art.
  - Herodotus, the famed Greek historian, records, “Their luxurious practices are of all kinds, and all borrowed; the Greeks taught them (Persians) unnatural vices...”<sup>56</sup>
    - The phrase “unnatural vices” also translates “love for boys.”
  - Same-sex relations were common among Greek men.
  - “In conversing with Critobulus, Xenophon encourages him to pursue a relationship with a gentleman, especially one who will return his love...Although Xenophon calls this kind of relationship a ‘friendship,’ it is clear that these kinds of ‘friendships’ consisted of a sexual relationship between lovers.”<sup>57</sup>
  - In his *Symposium*, Plato affirms both the practice of pederasty and same-sex relations.

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<sup>52</sup>Sibylline, as quoted in Ernst Van Eck, “Created in the Image of God and Sexuality in the Early-Jewish Writing,” *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 3.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Andrew Lear, “Ancient Pederasty: An Introduction,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, ed. Thomas K. Hubbard (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2014), 102.

<sup>56</sup>Eck, “Created in the Image of God,” 2.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

- The Romans – Homosexual relations viewed as immoral between two Roman citizens, but permissible and encouraged with slaves, servants and young boys.
  - “...men normally experience desire for both female and male bodies, and that any given man might act out those desires with persons of one or the other sex...”<sup>58</sup>
  - “Sex with adolescent males was among the socially approved sexual options for a Roman man. On the whole, however, a Roman man’s sexual relations with adolescent males was restricted to slaves and prostitutes. Sex with a free-born Roman youth, like sex with a freeborn Roman woman other than one’s wife, would have constituted the crime of *stuprum*—a broad category of forbidden sexual behavior. As a result, pederastic relations of the kind idealized by the Greeks, involving a mentoring relationship between males of similar social levels, had not place in Romans sexual-social ethics.”<sup>59</sup>
  - The first recorded evidence of pederasty being treated as a crime dates to 528-529 under the rule of Roman Emperor Justinian 1.
    - “...Under Justinian’s explicitly Christian laws two bishops were punished by being deposed, castrated, and paraded through Constantinople for being pederasts.”<sup>60</sup>
    - This marks the symbolic end of accepted pederasty, and the identifying of the practice with the broader male-male sexual relations that was judged criminal.
    - This change can be argued to stem from the success of Christian morality through the influence of the Catholic Church.
  
- Catholics
  - Early influence of Christianity on Rome beginning with Constantine.
  - Thomas Aquinas, arguably the greatest Catholic theologian and philosopher in history, dealt with the subject of homosexuality at length.
  - “Aquinas considered same-sex relations to be a vice against nature...”<sup>61</sup> He viewed same-sex relations are morally deficient acts.
  - One scholar identifies four reasons that Aquinas disapproves of same-sex relations: 1) It instantiates the vices of injustice and ingratitude; 2) it violates natural law; 3) It contravenes the word of Scripture; and 4) It overturns the judgments of the wise.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Eck, “Created in the Image of God,” 2. See also Andrew Lear, “Ancient Sex: New Essays,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 136 (2016): 256-57.

<sup>59</sup>Lear, “Ancient Pederasty,” 117.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>61</sup>Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., “Aquinas on Natural Law and the Virtues in Biblical Context: Homosexuality as a Test Case,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27, no. 1 (1999): 29.

<sup>62</sup>Rogers, “Aquinas on Natural Law and the Virtues in Biblical Context,” 31.

- National Catholic Bioethics Center: “The claim that it is possible to change one’s sex, or that sexual identity is fluid, contradicts scientific evidence, reason, the nature of the human person, and key tenets of the Catholic faith.”<sup>63</sup>
- The Existentialists
  - Sigmund Freud: Freud wrote extensively on the subject of human sexuality. He lived 1856-1939.
  - He differentiated between the *sexual object* and *sexual aim*. He describes sexual objects as “a kind of reflection of the subject’s own bisexual nature.”<sup>64</sup>
  - He describes sexual aim as sexual intercourse, or the satisfying of sexual desire.<sup>65</sup>
  - On issues that did not fit into heterosexual categories, Freud referred to such things as inversions, but not in the way we tend to think of the word inversion. His use of the word was not a condemnation, just a recognition of the difference with heterosexuality.
- The Postmodernists
  - Building on the existentialists, postmodernists have continued arguing for LGBTQ rights, and have become intolerant of opposing/detracting viewpoints.
  - Gilreath and Ward Article<sup>66</sup>: Same-sex marriage discrimination is equivalent to Jim Crowe race laws.
  - Matthew Vines and David Gushee: Revisionist views of Scripture and biblical sexuality.<sup>67</sup>
  - Transgender Rights: Panel discussion at Gaston College, 11/8/2017.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>“Brief Statement on Transgenderism,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 599-603.

<sup>64</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theories of Human Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 10.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>66</sup>Shannon Gilreath and Andy Ward, “Same-Sex Marriage, Religious Accommodation and the Race Analogy,” *Vermont Law Review* 41, no. 2 (2016): 237-78.

<sup>67</sup>See chap. 3 of project.

<sup>68</sup>Mary Costner, “That Was Me Coming Out to Myself” (public address, Gaston Community College, November 8, 2017).

## LGBTQ – A Modern Historical Timeline<sup>69</sup>

- 1905 – Sigmund Freud publishes *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.
- 1906 – German homosexual emancipationists begin visiting the United States.
- 1908 – E.P. Stevenson publishes *The Intersexes*, an early American defense of homosexuality.
- 1914 – The British Society for the study of Sex Psychology founded.
- 1923 – Magnus Hirschfeld introduces the term “transsexual.”
- 1926 – *The Captive* opens on Broadway, a play with lesbian content.
- 1930 – Hollywood Production Code bans references to homosexuality in movies.
- 1935 – The Committee for the Study of Sex Variants found in NYC.
- 1945 – Veterans Benevolent Association for gay/lesbian veterans founded in NYC (ends 1954).
- 1947 – Institute for Sex Research founded at Indiana Univ.
- 1950 – “Lavender Scare.” 91 homosexuals fired from State Dept. as “security risks.”
- 1951 – *The Homosexual in America*, by Donald W. Cory, is published.
- 1952 – APA lists homosexuality as “sociopathic personality disturbance.”
- 1952 – George William Jorgenson Jr., an American WWII veteran, travels to Denmark for sex-reassignment surgery.
- 1953 – Under the name Christine, Jorgenson returns to the United States; celebrity’s welcome.
- 1953 – Executive Order 10450 makes homosexuality grounds for dismissal from federal employment.
- 1956 – Evelyn Hooker begins studies of nonpatient homosexuals, paving the way for homosexuality ceasing to be classified as a mental disorder.
- 1964 – Council on Religion and the Homosexual formed in San Francisco.
- 1964 – *Life* magazine publishes story, “Homosexuality in America.”
- 1964 – Randy Wicker becomes first openly gay guest on TV Talk show.
- 1966 – A riot erupts Gene Compton’s cafeteria in San Francisco as police attempt to arrest rowdy drag queens. The event is the beginning of the transgender rights movement.
- 1967 – CBS airs a special report entitled, “The Homosexuals.”
- 1968 – APA revises classification of homosexuality to “non-psychotic mental disorder.”
- 1969 – Gay Activists Alliance founded.
- 1969 – Stonewall Riot; considered the birth of the gay rights movement.
- 1969 – Virginia Prince coins the word “transgenderal.” It will be shortened to “transgender” in the 1980’s.
- 1972 – Democratic National Convention includes 2 openly gay/lesbian speakers.
- 1972 – First Gay studies program, California State Univ. at Sacramento.
- 1972 – First gay synagogue opens in LA.
- 1972 – Title 9 of the Education Amendments bans sexual discrimination in publicly funded education.
- 1972 – United Church of Christ ordains first openly gay minister in any major Christian denomination.
- 1972 – Sweden becomes first country to allow unmarried transsexual citizens to legally change their sex.
- 1973 – APA removes homosexuality from list of mental disorders.
- 1973 – National Gay Task Force founded in NYC.
- 1975 – Minneapolis becomes first U.S. city to offer legal protections for transgender people.
- 1976 – Gay Rights National Lobby founded.

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<sup>69</sup>Timeline compiled from Vicki L. Eaklor, *Queer America: A People’s GLBT History of the United States* (New York: The New York Press, 2008), xvi-xxx; and Ryan Wenzel, “A Transgender History,” *The Advocate*, no. 999 (2007): 40-46.

1978 – Disneyland holds its first “Gay Day.”  
1978 – NAMBLA founded.  
1979 – National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian rights.  
1987 – National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian rights.  
1989 – Drag performer RuPaul comes onto the scene.  
1988 – National coming out day established, Oct. 11.  
1994 – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Stonewall.  
1996 – Defense of Marriage Act Passed  
1999 – First Transgender Day of Remembrance observed.  
1999 – President Bill Clinton declares first Gay and Lesbian Pride Month (June).  
2001 – San Francisco becomes first U.S. city to offer its employees’ health coverage for transgender-related medical needs. The city will fund sex-reassignment surgery and related treatments up to \$75,000.  
2003 – Ellen DeGeneres show launch.  
2005 – *Broke-back Mountain*, a movie about gay cowboys, opens in theaters.  
2005 – Connecticut legalizes civil-union for same-sex couples.  
2006 – New Jersey legalizes civil-union for same-sex couples.  
2007 – New Hampshire legalizes civil-union for same-sex couples.  
2008 – Connecticut and Massachusetts legalizes same-sex marriage.  
2008 – New York recognizes same-sex marriage performed in other states.  
2012 – NC passes Amendment 1, prohibiting the state from recognizing same-sex marriages.  
2012 – The day after Amendment 1 passes, President Obama condemns Amendment 1, announcing his support for same-sex marriage.  
2014 – U.S. Federal Court of Appeals for the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit finds Amendments 1 unconstitutional.  
2015 – Supreme Court Obergefell decision legalizes right to marry for same-sex couples.

## Lesson 7: The Ethics of Homosexuality

### Part I: Understanding Homosexuality

#### Pro-Homosexuality Arguments

##### Secular Argument

- Chris Meyers, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Southern Mississippi.
  - A – For an action or practice to be morally wrong, it must have some wrong-making feature.
  - B – Wrong-making features include the following: The action or practice i) causes harm or ii) violates some competent person’s autonomy or iii) is unfair or iv) violates someone’s individual rights or v) etc.
  - C – Homosexual relations between two consenting adults do not have any of these features. In other words, i) it is not harmful, ii) it does not violate one’s autonomy, iii) it is not unfair, iv) it does not violate anyone’s individual rights, v) etc.
  - D – Therefore, homosexual relations between two mutually consenting adults is not morally wrong.<sup>70</sup>

##### Liberal Religious Argument(s)

- Matthew Vines/Reformation Project<sup>71</sup>
- 1. **Condemning same-sex relationships is harmful to LGBT people.** Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that good trees bear good fruit (Matthew 7:15-20), but the church’s rejection of same-sex relationships has caused tremendous, needless suffering to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.
- 2. **Sexual orientation is a new concept, one the Christian tradition hasn’t addressed.** Many Christians draw on our faith’s traditions to shape our beliefs, but the concept of sexual orientation is new. Before recent decades, same-sex behavior was understood along the lines of gluttony or drunkenness—as a vice of excess anyone might be prone to—not as the expression of a sexual orientation. The Christian tradition hasn’t spoken to the modern issue of LGBT people and their relationships.
- 3. **Celibacy is a gift, not a mandate.** The Bible honors celibacy as a good way of living—Jesus was celibate, after all—but it also makes clear that celibacy must be a voluntary choice made by those who have the gift of celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7-9, Matthew 19:11). Requiring that all gay people remain celibate because their sexuality is “broken” is at odds with the Bible’s teachings on celibacy.

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<sup>70</sup>Chris Meyers, *The Moral Defense of Homosexuality* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 17.

<sup>71</sup>The Reformation Project, “A Brief Biblical Case for LGBTQ Inclusion,” accessed November 20, 2017, <https://www.reformationproject.org/biblical-case/>.

4. **Sodom and Gomorrah involved an attempted gang rape, not a loving relationship.** The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is commonly assumed to have been the result of God’s wrath against homosexuality, but the only form of same-sex behavior described in the story is an attempted gang rape (Genesis 19:5)—nothing like the loving, committed relationships that are widespread today. The Bible explicitly condemns Sodom for its arrogance, inhospitality, and apathy toward the poor, but never for same-sex behavior.
5. **The prohibitions in Leviticus don’t apply to Christians.** Leviticus condemns male same-sex intercourse (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13), but the entire Old Testament law code has never applied to Christians in light of Christ’s death. Leviticus also condemns eating pork, rabbit, or shellfish, cutting hair at the sides of one’s head, and having sex during a woman’s menstrual period—none of which Christians continue to observe.
6. **Paul condemns same-sex lust, not love.** Like other ancient writers, Paul described same-sex behavior as the result of excessive sexual desire on the part of people who could be content with opposite-sex relationships (Romans 1:26-27). He doesn’t have long-term, loving same-sex relationships in view. And while he describes same-sex behavior as “unnatural,” he also says men having long hair goes against nature (1 Corinthians 11:14), and most Christians read that as a reference to cultural conventions.
7. **The term “homosexual” didn’t exist until 1892.** Some modern Bible translations say that “homosexuals” will not inherit the kingdom of God (depending on the translation of 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10), but neither the concept nor the word for people with exclusive same-sex attraction existed before the late 19th century. While the Bible rejects lustful same-sex behavior, that isn’t close to a condemnation of all gay people and relationships.
8. **Marriage is about commitment.** Marriage often involves procreation, but according to the New Testament, it’s based on something deeper: a lifelong commitment to a partner. Marriage is even compared to the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:21-33), and while the language used is opposite-sex, the core principles apply just as well to same-sex couples.
9. **Human beings are relational.** From the beginning of Genesis, human beings are described as having a need for relationship, just as God himself is relational (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18). Sexuality is a core part of what it means to be a relational person, and to condemn LGBT people’s sexuality outright damages their ability to be in relationship with all people—and with God.
10. **Faithful Christians are already embracing LGBTQ members of the church.** From denominations like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (USA) to increasing numbers of evangelical churches across the country, Christians across the country are already putting their commitment to LGBT equality in action. They’re showing their fellow believers what it looks like to be a faithful Christian who fully affirms LGBT Christians.

- David Gushee, Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University.
  - On Genesis 1-2: “The fact that it is a man and a woman, and only a man and a woman, referenced in the discussion of sex and marriage in Genesis 1-2—and the fact that only a man and a woman have been able to procreate (until reproductive technology came along)—obviously has been pivotal in shaping traditional Christian opinion on the LGBTQ issue. Christian tradition has taken these texts as prescriptive for all times and all peoples pertaining to the design and purpose of sex, marriage and family life. That has excluded those who are unable to fulfill that prescription due to their sexual orientation. But increasingly today it is noted that core practices referred to in Genesis 1-2, including mutual care for children, helper-partner companionship, and total self-giving, can and do occur in covenanted gay and lesbian couples.”<sup>72</sup>
- James V. Brownson, Professor of New Testament at Western Theological Seminary.
  - The one-flesh union in Genesis 2 focuses more on a kinship bond than on sexual complementarity.<sup>73</sup>
  - “The procreative meaning of marriage should, in fact, be subordinated to its more essential unitive purpose.”<sup>74</sup>

## **Part 2: How Should Christians think about and respond to those claiming or struggling with Homosexuality?**

### **Applying a Biblical Perspective (Frame)**

- Normative: Direct focus on Scripture to determine duty, ethical norm(s) and obligation.
- Situational: What are the best means of accomplishing God’s purposes? It explores the consequences of actions.
- Existential: Focuses on the ethical agent; what is the person/agent to do? Examines the inward situation; relation to God.
  - Scriptural/Normative: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24 19; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rm. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:22-33; Jude 7.
  - Situational: Marriage/singleness. Holiness/righteous living. Discipleship.
    - Frame notes, “The homosexual community is highly promiscuous and homosexuals are prone to violence, suicide, and depression. Gays in Western nations are disproportionately affected by

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<sup>72</sup>David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Minds*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017), 82.

<sup>73</sup>James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender and Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 37-38.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

sexually transmitted diseases, especially life-destroying and currently incurable HIV-AIDS.”<sup>75</sup>

- Existential: Salvation. Obedience. Hope. Prayer.

What does the Gospel say to the Homosexual?

- The hope and promise of true identity; true sense of personhood (Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 1:16-17)
- Ethical Implications: Ephesians 5 (Imitators of God; filled with the Spirit).
- A true understanding of satisfaction and fulfillment. (Rm. 8:32)
- Hospitality and belonging. (The church)
- A hope more than behavior modification.
- True gratitude in the midst of suffering. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)
- A coming hope of rightly ordered desires.
- Why did Jesus have to die for the Homosexual person?

### **Resources and Additional Readings**

*Designed for Joy*. Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan (eds.)

*Is God Anti-Gay*. Sam Allberry

*One Man and One Woman*. Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley.

*Same-Sex Attraction and the Church*. Ed Shaw

*Transforming Homosexuality*. Denny Burk and Heath Lambert

*What the Bible Actually says about Homosexuality*. Kevin DeYoung

*Why Not Same-Sex Marriage*, Daniel Heimbach

### **Articles**

Matt Champlin, “A Biblical Theology of Blessing in Genesis” from *Themelios*, Vol. 42.1, pgs. 63-73 (2017).

Jason DeRouchie, “

Trent Hunter, “Did God Actually Say? Hearing God’s Voice on Homosexuality from the Storyline of Scripture.” From *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pgs. 22-28 (Spring 2014).

David Schrock, “Gender Specific Blessings: Bolstering a Biblical Theology of Gender Roles” in *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pgs. (Spring 2016)

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<sup>75</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 759.

## Lesson 8: The Ethics of Transgenderism

### Part I: Understanding Transgenderism

Transgenderism is defined: An umbrella term for the state or condition of identifying or expressing a gender identity that does not match a person's physical/genetic sex. Transgender is independent of sexual orientation, and those who self-identify as transgender may consider themselves to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, or asexual. Approximately 700,000 individuals in the United States identify as transgender.<sup>76</sup>

In 2007, Boston Children's Hospital became the first major program in the U.S. to focus on transgender children and adolescents.<sup>77</sup>

- As of 2017 (a span of 10 years), there are more than 45 pediatric gender clinics in the United States.
  - Duke University School of Medicine in Durham, NC has "The Duke Center for Child and Adolescent Gender Care" (Opened 2015).
  - "It is counter to medical science to use chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, external genitalia, or secondary sex characteristics to override gender identity for the purposes of classifying someone as male or female."<sup>78</sup> (Dr. Deanna Adkins, Director of Duke Center for Child and Adolescent Gender Care)
- The best studies are showing that 80-95% who express some form of gender-dysphoria will eventually come to identify with their biological sex.
- Those who have sex-change surgery become 19 times more likely to commit suicide.

In 2002, not one fortune 500 company offered "transgender inclusive" healthcare. By 2016, 511 has made the shift.

### Secular Arguments

- Sex assignment at birth
  - A common phrase to hear in favor of Transgenderism is "The sex assigned at birth" or "the sex I was assigned at birth..."
  - There are multiple genders recognized, somewhere between 7-30.
  - Transgender defined from Trans Equality Website: "When we're born, a doctor usually says that we're male or female based on what our bodies look like. Most people who were labeled male at birth turn out to actually identify as men, and most people who were labeled female at birth grow up to be women. But some people's gender identity – their innate

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<sup>76</sup>Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, 170.

<sup>77</sup>Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally, Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 2.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 30.

knowledge of who they are – is different from what was initially expected when they were born. Most of these people describe themselves as **transgender**.”<sup>79</sup>

- How does one know or identify as Transgender?
  - It is essentially one’s own self-realization process.
  - “People can realize that they’re transgender at any age. Some people can trace their awareness back to their earlier memories – they just knew. Others may need more time to realize that they are transgender. Some people may spend years feeling like they don’t fit in without really understanding why... Trying to repress or change one’s gender identity doesn’t work; in fact, it can be very painful and damaging to one’s emotional and mental health. As transgender people become more visible ... more transgender people are able to name and understand their own experiences and may feel safer and more comfortable sharing it with others.”<sup>80</sup>

The differences between Transgenderism, Homosexuality, Non-Binary/Genderqueer, Gender-nonconforming, Intersex...

### What is the Medical Field Saying?

- February 2018: New Medical Study published in the medical journal *Pediatrics* finds many more teens than previously thought say they are transgender or identify themselves using other nontraditional gender terms.
  - The report states that teens and young people are 329 percent more likely than adults to identify as transgender; and that there are nearly as many transgender teens as adultery men and women identifying as gay or lesbian.
  - Other notables from the Report.<sup>81</sup>
- The American Psychological Association: Sex is assigned at birth, refers to one’s biological status as either male or female, and is associated primarily with physical attributes such as chromosomes, hormone prevalence, and external and internal anatomy. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors,

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<sup>79</sup>“Frequently Asked Questions about Transgendered People,” *Trans Equality*, July 9, 2016, accessed December 14, 2017, <https://transequality.org/issues/resources/frequently-asked-questions-about-transgender-people>.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>G. Nicole Rider, Barbara J. McMorris, Amy L. Gower, Eli Coleman, and Marla E. Eisenberg, “Health and Care Utilization of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth: A Population-Based Study,” *Pediatrics* 141, no. 3 (2018), accessed March 6, 2018. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2018/02/01/peds.2017-1683>.

activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women. These influence the ways that people act, interact, and feel about themselves. While aspects of biological sex are similar across different cultures, aspects of gender may differ.<sup>82</sup>

- A.P.A: Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Sexual orientation refers to an individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person, whereas gender identity refers to one's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual, just as nontransgender people can be. Some recent research has shown that a change or a new exploration period in partner attraction may occur during the process of transition. However, transgender people usually remain as attached to loved ones after transition as they were before transition. Transgender people usually label their sexual orientation using their gender as a reference. For example, a transgender woman, or a person who is assigned male at birth and transitions to female, who is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian or gay woman. Likewise, a transgender man, or a person who is assigned female at birth and transitions to male, who is attracted to other men would be identified as a gay man.<sup>83</sup>
- APA on Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. Research over several decades has demonstrated that sexual orientation ranges along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the other sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex. However, sexual orientation is usually discussed in terms of three categories: heterosexual (having emotional, romantic or sexual attractions to members of the other sex), gay/lesbian (having emotional, romantic or sexual attractions to members of one's own sex) and bisexual (having emotional, romantic or sexual attractions to both men and women). This range of behaviors and attractions has been described in various cultures and nations throughout the world. Many cultures use identity labels to describe people who express these attractions. In the United States the most frequent labels are lesbians (women attracted to women), gay men (men attracted to men), and bisexual people (men or women attracted to both sexes). However, some people may use different labels or none at all.

Sexual orientation is distinct from other components of sex and gender, including biological sex (the anatomical, physiological and genetic characteristics associated with being male or female), gender identity (the psychological sense of being male or female)\* and social gender role (the cultural norms that define

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<sup>82</sup>“Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression,” *American Psychological Association*, accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender.aspx>.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

feminine and masculine behavior).

Sexual orientation is commonly discussed as if it were solely a characteristic of an individual, like biological sex, gender identity or age. This perspective is incomplete because sexual orientation is defined in terms of relationships with others. People express their sexual orientation through behaviors with others, including such simple actions as holding hands or kissing. Thus, sexual orientation is closely tied to the intimate personal relationships that meet deeply felt needs for love, attachment and intimacy. In addition to sexual behaviors, these bonds include nonsexual physical affection between partners, shared goals and values, mutual support, and ongoing commitment. Therefore, sexual orientation is not merely a personal characteristic within an individual. Rather, one's sexual orientation defines the group of people in which one is likely to find the satisfying and fulfilling romantic relationships that are an essential component of personal identity for many people.<sup>84</sup>

#### Geneticist Elof Axel Carlson...

- In his book, *The Seven Human Sexes*, Carlson argues for sex determination free of gender. He writes, “Is it possible to use a non-pejorative, socially neutral vocabulary to describe reproductive differences in animals, plants and humans—one that applies to all living things?”<sup>85</sup>
- “Social scientists cannot explain the causes of intersexes or sex reversals unless they rely on the biology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But, both can come to the same conclusion that an essentialist theory of sex—being intrinsically male or intrinsically female—is false.”<sup>86</sup>

## **Part 2: How should Christians think about and respond to people claiming or struggling with Transgenderism?**

### **Overview of Biblical Passages from lesson 5**

- A point we must understand is that Transgenderism is a denial of personhood; it is a rejection of basic ontology; it is a break with reality.
  - This is, in my opinion, why there are no secular/liberal religious arguments being put forward in favor of transgenderism. It undoes everything objective.

### **Applying a Biblical Perspective (Frame)**

- Normative: Direct focus on Scripture to determine duty, ethical norm(s) and obligation.

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<sup>84</sup>“Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality,” *The American Psychological Association*, accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.aspx>.

<sup>85</sup>Elof Axel Carlson, *The Seven Human Sexes, Biology of Sex Determination* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 161.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 166.

- Situational: What are the best means of accomplishing God’s purposes? It explores the consequences of actions.
- Existential: Focuses on the ethical agent; what is the person/agent to do? Examines the inward situation; relation to God.
  - What does Scripture say? The Normative perspective
    - Genesis 1:27-29; 2:18-24 19; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rm. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:22-33.
  - Situational: Marriage/singleness. Holiness/righteous living. Discipleship.
    - Frame notes, “The homosexual community is highly promiscuous and homosexuals are prone to violence, suicide, and depression. Gays in Western nations are disproportionately affected by sexually transmitted diseases, especially life-destroying and currently incurable HIV-AIDS.”<sup>87</sup>
  - Existential: Salvation. Obedience. Hope. Prayer.
- We must insist on objective Criterion: We must evaluate the issue and situation *based* on some authority.
  - What does it mean to be a person?
    - The issue at stake is the fundamentally the same as the abortion debate.
  - What is our source of authority?
  - What does the Bible say about personhood?
    - “As evangelicals, we appeal to Scripture for our understanding on human personhood.”<sup>88</sup>
    - The Bible that teaches all humans are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), and that no other creatures possesses this quality. Therefore, anyone who is made in God’s image possesses the fullness of personhood.
    - God declared those created in His image to be “very good.” There is a completeness or a fixedness assumed in this language.
  - What does the Bible say about gender and sexual identity?
  - Do these views correspond with reality?
- Should Christians use a transgendered person’s preferred pronouns?
  - <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/he-she-ze-zir-navigating-pronouns-while-loving-your-transgender-neighbor>

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<sup>87</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 759.

<sup>88</sup>Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 87.

### What does the Gospel say to the Transgendered?

- God created the world and all that it contains (Genesis 1). This includes man and woman; therefore, God is the authority in all matters of humanity, including sexuality.
- Through the fall (Genesis 3), mankind rejected God and became enslaved to sin. Bruce Ashford, Provost at SEBTS, writes, “At the bottom of our rejection of God is our false belief that we will not be satisfied unless we act on our heart’s desires. That rejection is now part of the warp and woof of our society, which is actively encouraging the next generation to “look within” for true meaning, to “follow your heart” and “be true to yourself” in order to find freedom. It sounds appealing, but it’s the same lie Adam and Eve bought into in the Garden.”<sup>89</sup>
- Finally, the gospel offers true hope through salvation from sin and restoration unto God. For the person experiencing transgendered feelings, or struggling with gender dysphoria, the gospel offers a new heart with which to love God. It offers them the ability to live in line with God’s Word. It offers them the ultimate hope of a fully restored humanity in the life to come. The gospel promises that Jesus will set the world, and all of its sin aright.
- David Powlison, noted biblical counselor, offers helpful points when thinking about this issue.<sup>90</sup>
  - Christian faith revels in sexual fidelity.
  - Christian faith is candid about sexual wrongs.
  - Christian faith brings genuine transformation.
- Why did Jesus have to die for the Transgendered person?

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<sup>89</sup>Bruce Ashford, “An Evangelical Guide to Transgenderism (3), The Bible and Gender Identity,” October 10, 2017, accessed December 13, 2017, <http://bruceashford.net/2017/an-evangelical-guide-to-transgenderism-3-the-bible-and-gender-identity/>.

<sup>90</sup>David Powlison, “What the Bible Teaches about Sexuality: A Threefold View,” *The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission*, December 1, 2017, accessed December 13, 2017, <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/what-the-bible-teaches-about-sexuality-a-threefold-vision>.

## **Lesson 9: Thinking Holistically— Putting it All Together**

Letting the Bible shape and inform our ethics...

Lesson Two: Doctrine of Scripture (Revelation, Inerrancy, Infallibility, Authority, Clarity, Necessity, Sufficiency).

- Genesis 1:26-28
- Genesis 2:18-24
- Genesis 19
- Leviticus 19
- Romans 1:18-28
- Ephesians 5:22-33

Christians have an ethical duty not just to follow Scripture, but to believe Scripture and let it form the foundation of their thinking.

Lessons Three and Four: What we Know and How we Use It

- Epistemology: Types and knowledge and Worldview
- Review Davis' Dimensions of Ethical Decision Making
  - Should Christians legislate morality?
  - The Role of Government in moral matters.
  - Review Davis' Dimensions of Ethical Decision Making.
- John Frame's "New Life as Source of Ethical Decision Making."
  - Product of Sanctification
  - Organ's of Ethical Knowledge (Participation of the Entire Person)

Lesson Five: Biblical Sexuality

- Survey of Biblical Texts
- Historical Perspectives from Church History

Lesson Six: LGBT History

- Historical Perspectives
- Timeline

Lessons Seven and Eight: How should Christians Respond?

- Applying Frame's Three Perspectives (Normative, Situational, Existential)
- What does the Gospel say to the Homosexual?
  - The hope and promise of true identity; true sense of personhood (Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 1:16-17)
  - Ethical Implications: Ephesians 5 (Imitators of God; filled with the Spirit).
  - A true understanding of satisfaction and fulfillment. (Rm. 8:32)
  - Hospitality and belonging. (The church)
  - A hope more than behavior modification.
  - True gratitude in the midst of suffering. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)
  - A coming hope of rightly ordered desires.
  - Why did Jesus have to die for the Homosexual person?

- What does the Gospel say to the Transgendered?
  - God created the world and all that it contains (Genesis 1). This includes man and woman; therefore, God is the authority in all matters of humanity, including sexuality.
  - Through the fall (Genesis 3), mankind rejected God and became enslaved to sin. Bruce Ashford, Provost at SEBTS, writes, “At the bottom of our rejection of God is our false belief that we will not be satisfied unless we act on our heart’s desires. That rejection is now part of the warp and woof of our society, which is actively encouraging the next generation to “look within” for true meaning, to “follow your heart” and “be true to yourself” in order to find freedom. It sounds appealing, but it’s the same lie Adam and Eve bought into in the Garden.”<sup>91</sup>
  - Finally, the gospel offers true hope through salvation from sin and restoration unto God. For the person experiencing transgendered feelings, or struggling with gender dysphoria, the gospel offers a new heart with which to love God. It offers them the ability to live in line with God’s Word. It offers them the ultimate hope of a fully restored humanity in the life to come. The gospel promises that Jesus will set the world, and all of its sin aright.
  - David Powlison, noted biblical counselor, offers helpful points when thinking about this issue.<sup>92</sup>
    - Christian faith revels in sexual fidelity.
    - Christian faith is candid about sexual wrongs.
    - Christian faith brings genuine transformation.

#### Final Thoughts and Questions going forward...

- Neighbor care (how do we care for such people?)
  - Beginning conversations
  - Interacting with family in these situations
- How does the Church Engage/Respond?

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<sup>91</sup>Ashford, “An Evangelical Guide to Transgenderism (3).”

<sup>92</sup>Powlison, “What the Bible Teaches about Sexuality.”

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING YOUNG ADULTS AT PARKWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA, THROUGH CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Benjamin Addison Francis, D.Ed.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Phillip R. Bethancourt

This project is for the equipping of young adults at Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia, North Carolina, to engage gender identity issues through the discipline of Christian ethics. Chapter 1 provides a brief history and ministry context at Parkwood while also outlining the goals and methodology. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological foundation for the project through the exegesis of four biblical texts (Gen 1:26-28; Gen 2:18-25; Rom 1:18-27; Eph 5:21-33). Chapter 3 overviews human flourishing through properly ordered human gender and sexual identity. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, overviews teaching methodology and specific course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the stated goals. Ultimately, this project seeks to equip young men and women to both love the Lord Jesus and to faithfully engage the world through a biblically ordered view of gender and human sexuality

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