

Alderwood Community Church
November 13, 2016

See the World through Christ
 Colossians 2:8-10

Big Idea: A Biblical, Christ centered world view makes the most sense of this world.

Intro: While our country is divided along political and ideological positions, and while our religious liberties are being challenged and while our country is plunging into a deeper, publically acceptable moral darkness this is actually a great time to be living as a Christian.

You see, God has not called us to live comfortable lives and to protect our personal interests. God has called his children to live as Children of Light, to live as change agents. We are not called to simply hang on and endure to the end.

Jesus said, *“I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”* This is an offensive statement. It does not mean that the gates of the church will withstand the evil of our day. It means that the gates of hell will not be able to withstand the offensive of the church. The gates of hell are defenseless against the power of the gospel, and we the church are to confidently and courageously proclaim the gospel of light into the darkness and be part of God’s prison break, rescuing people trapped in darkness by showing them the way into the light.

Two weeks ago, as we wrapped up our sermon series, *A Church of Every Day Followers of Jesus*, we talked about Jesus’ description of you and me, His followers. He said we are *“the salt of the earth and the light of the world.”*

I want to remind you in the midst of the political and moral corruption of our world, that *The darker the night, the brighter the light.* (repeat)

As light, we are called to live the Gospel and proclaim the Gospel. We are to live lives balanced with both truth and grace. Even our attitude affects our ability to shine as lights.

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.” Philippians 2:14-15

Our Mission: *To live and lead others to live as every day followers of Jesus.*

Our Values: Live a Life of Worship
 Live a Life in Community
 Live a Life of Service
 Live a Life of Influence

If you were not here for all 4 of these sermons, please take the time to go to our website and watch, listen or read these sermons. They are foundational and directional for our church.

When we spoke about Living a Life of Worship on Sunday, Oct. 2, I spoke about our Sunday Morning Worship services and why we made changes to the style of musical worship in the 10:00 am and 11:30 am worship services. Bottom line is that we want to create worship services that will provide meaningful worship for both senior adults and young adults. What both have in common is our desire to come into the presence of the Lord and give him the praise and honor he deserves by choosing songs that have lyrics that magnify God and exalt Jesus Christ. The primary differences being style of music and volume. If you missed this sermon on Oct. 2 please go back and catch it.

But I do want you to know, regarding the volume in the 10:00 am and 11:30 am services, we have done our homework and carefully to monitor the volumes. While some have said it has hurt their ears, and we don't take that lightly, we are well below OSHA standards and are not anywhere close to damaging people's ears. We care deeply about people's spiritual as well as physical health. We have a brochure created to show you the OSHA standards and our research on the volume in our church, it is located on the sound booth. If the volume bothers you or your friends, please know that there are a few things to consider. The volume in the 8:30 am service as well as the song selection is designed with a more traditional/ blended format that is quieter than the 10:00 or 11:30 am service. If the 10:00 am or the 11:30 am is the only time that works for you to attend worship services here at ACC, you need to know that we have taken careful volume measurements, and as many buildings, there are hot spots and quieter spots. If you sit in the upper balcony it is 4db's quieter and if you sit under the balcony it is 6db's quieter. If you sit in the front right and left sections it is actually 3db's louder than the volume on the rest of the main floor. There are also ear plugs available for you at the sound booth as well.

In addition to our worship on Sunday mornings, I challenged you to commit to daily Bible reading and worship Christ in our obedience to his Word.

When we spoke about Living a Life in Community, we talked about the importance and role Life Groups and our upcoming Life Paths play in your spiritual growth. Some of you who are currently participating in a Life Group and you have the ability to lead, need to step up. If you are not involved in one, please make it a priority in your life and sign up and join a Life Group in January.

When we spoke about Living a Life of Service, I showed you how God has created each of us uniquely and shaped our lives differently. We all need to discover our SHAPE and begin serving others in the church and/or outside the church with the SHAPE God has given to us.

When We spoke about Living a Life of Influence, we looked at Jesus' description of each of his followers whom he called "*the salt of the earth and the light of the world*". We spend a good portion of our time explaining the use of the "*Influencing Your Relational World*" card. I've

filled my card out along with many of you. If you haven't filled it out, please do and begin praying and planning how God will use you to influence those he has sovereignly placed in your world.

*Now this morning, we will be returning to our sermon series in Colossians, where we learn that Jesus Christ is Supreme, above and beyond all others and is Sufficient for our every need.

The church in Colosse was a growing church that was founded by a man named Epaphras, probably during Paul's three year stay in Ephesus. Later, when Paul was under house arrest in Rome, Epaphras came to him with a report that a dangerous new teaching was spreading through the church. At stake was the core doctrine of the Christian Faith – the Person of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote Colossians to put a stop to the heresy before it spread out of control. This heresy, or false teaching seemed to be the beginning of what later (in the 2nd Century) developed into Gnosticism.

This error mixed Christianity with Jewish legalism and pagan mythology, the false teachers of Colosse had concocted an odd blend of religions. They taught that faith in Christ wasn't enough. True salvation came through knowledge gained by spiritual enlightenment. Jewish dietary laws, festivals, and rituals (2:16), along with asceticism, astrology, 'worship of angels,' and mystical 'visions' (2:18) were among the many rungs on the ladder to enlightenment. A snobbish mentality seeped into the church, dividing the congregation between the spiritual haves and have nots.

Perhaps this was their attempt to introduce Jesus into the intellectual discussions of the day, to make Christianity more palatable, to be 'contemporary' – but its effect was essentially to dethrone Christ. As commentator Curtis Vaughn has said, "*It gave Christ a place, but not the supreme place.*"

Combining beliefs in this way is called *syncretism*, and it wasn't just a first-century problem. Christians in every generation have been tempted to season their theology to the taste of the current culture. The problem is Christ can't be mixed with the philosophies of the world. He stands alone.

***Read: Colossians 2:1-10**

Big Idea: A Biblical, Christ centered world view makes the most sense of this world.

1. Don't Be Deceived! (2:8) *See to it that no one takes you captive...*

A. Be discerning

This word *captive* - literally means "to kidnap," or "to carry off as booty, or spoil of war." To Paul, it was unthinkable that those who had been ransomed and set free through the blood of Christ should be vulnerable by ignorance and become prisoners of spiritual war.

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:3

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Five problems with this philosophy that the Colossians were facing:

1. Hollow – empty, it is without content, without any basis, without truth and without power
2. Deceptive - means “a deceit, fraud, or trick.” This philosophy of the false teachers was not what it appeared to be. It sounded good and seduced the minds of those deceived by it, but it was a rapid illusion, it couldn’t deliver on its promises.
3. Based on human tradition - Basically, this teaching represented man’s attempts to arrive at the truth, relying on speculation and reason rather than revelation from God to attempt to solve ultimate questions of life.
4. Based on basic principles of this world – there are two possible meanings. (1) the word literally means “things in a row” and was used to describe the basic elements of the world: earth, fire, wind and water and later was used as the basic elements of words, the alphabet. Paul might be describing the false belief system of the Colossian errorists as rudimentary, too simplistic for mature spiritual adults. To accept their teaching would be to descend, to regress from the mature teaching of Scripture to the infantile teachings of an immature religion, based not on advanced thinking and wisdom but on silly and childish thoughts.

(2) In Jewish circles, the term “elements” often applied to supernatural beings who ruled over people. Some considered them demons. Paul may have be referring to angelic powers, which were incorrectly perceived as being in authority over the world. Whatever the specific interpretation, the elements were inferior. Christianity brought a higher and better system of worship to its believers.
5. Not based on Christ - Perhaps more than the other evaluations, this one points to the heart of the danger. The philosophy was not “according to Christ.” It was incompatible with Christ and contrary to the work he did on the cross. This reason alone would be enough to invalidate the teaching, but collectively these descriptions decisively expose the nature of the philosophy.

Christ is the one in whom God exclusively is to be found, the one through whom the world was created and through whom it is redeemed, and the one who has decisively defeated all the hostile

powers. Any teaching that in any way detracts from Christ's exclusive role is by definition both wrong and ineffective. The teachers themselves are probably not denying that Christ was central to God's saving purposes. They seem rather to be arguing that certain practices must be added on in order to achieve true spiritual fulfillment. But, for Paul, in this case, addition means subtraction: one cannot "add" to Christ without, in effect, subtracting from his exclusive place in creation and in salvation history. (Douglas Moo)

B. Knowing what you believe and why you believe it is the best defense against false teachings and philosophies.

"But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." Hebrews 5:14

It is important that you develop and understand a Biblical/Christ-centered worldview. A worldview comprises one's collection of presuppositions, convictions and values from which a person tries to understand and make sense of the world and life.

How does a person form their worldview? Every worldview starts with presuppositions – which are beliefs that one presumes to be true without supporting independent evidence from other sources or systems.

What are the presuppositions of a Christian worldview? Ron Nash summarizes this well, *"Human beings and the universe in which they reside are the creation of God who has revealed himself in Scripture."*

So the two major presuppositions of a Christian worldview: 1. We believe in the eternal existence of the personal, transcendent, triune God who created humans and the universe. 2. This God has revealed himself (his character, purposes and will) in the infallible and inerrant pages of his special revelation, the Bible, which is superior to any other source of revelation or human reason alone.

It is important that we apply our Christian worldview to the present day philosophies which we face.

C. Taking a look at a few of the present day philosophies: (Transgenderism, Homosexuality and so-called Same Sex Marriage)

What does the Bible say about Transgenderism? Kevin DeYoung, The Gospel Coalition, September 8, 2016 (To read the actual blog with access to its links, click the link below.)

<https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2016/09/08/what-does-the-bible-say-about-transgenderism/>

Some would argue that the Bible says nothing about the explosion of the transgender phenomenon in the Western world. After all, there is no verse that says, “Thou shalt not transition from a man to a woman.” But neither are there any verses that talk explicitly about gun violence, anorexia, waterboarding, fossil fuels, vaccines, GMOs, HMOs, or Pokemon Go. We should not expect the Bible to speak in 21st century terms to every 21st-century eventuality.

But that hardly means the Bible provides no guidance for Christians trying to make sense of our transgender moment. In fact, when it comes to transgenderism (and may I add homosexuality and marriage) the Bible actually has a lot to say—not by a proof-text here or there but by a rich and pervasive understanding of gender and sexual identity.

Obviously, transgenderism, as a cultural trend, is massively complex, touching on fields as disparate as genetics, fashion, medicine, law, education, entertainment, athletics, and religious liberty. We need Christians thinking through, and talking to, all of these issues. We also need Christians patiently loving, counseling, and befriending those who feel that their psychological identity as male or female contradicts their “assigned” biological sex. In asking the question, “What does the Bible say about transgenderism?” we are asking a question that can take us in a dozen different directions.

I want to focus on just one of those directions. If we are people of the Book—people who believe, like Jesus, that the Scripture cannot be broken ([John 10:35](#))—then the transgender question, if it is to yield fruitful responses in any of these areas, must start with a biblical understanding of male and female.

And what is that understanding?

In short, the Bible teaches that God made us male or female, and no matter our own feelings or confusion, we should act in accordance with the biological reality of God’s good design. Transgenderism falls short of the glory of God and is not the way to walk in obedience to Christ.

There are three big Scriptural building blocks that leads to this conclusion:

1. Gender Binary

The Bible knows no other gender categories besides male and female. While men and women may express their masculinity and femininity in a wonderful diversity of ways, Scripture still operates with the binary categories of men and women. You are one or the other. The anomaly of intersex individuals does not undermine the creational design, but rather gives another example that we live in a fallen world because of the original sin in Genesis 3. Likewise, the eunuchs in Matthew 19 do not refer to sexless persons, but to men who were born without the ability to procreate or who were castrated, likely for a royal court (for more on the challenge of intersex, and the question of eunuchs, see Denny Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?*, 169-183).

The biblical understanding of male and female is more than just an assumption writ large on the pages of Scripture. We know from Genesis 1 and 2 that the categories of male and female are a part of God’s design for humanity. Indeed, when God created the first human pair in his image,

he created them male and female (Gen. 1:27). He made the woman to be a complement and help to the man (Gen. 2:18-22). Far from being a mere cultural construct, God depicts the existence of a man and a woman as essential to his creational plan. The two are neither identical nor interchangeable. But when the woman, who was taken out of man, joins again with the man in sexual union, the two become one flesh (Gen. 1:23-24). Dividing the human race into two genders, male and female—one or the other, not both, and not one then the other—is not the invention of Victorian prudes or patriarchal oafs. It was God’s idea.

2. Gender Identity

Someone with respect for Scripture may say at this point, “I agree that God makes as either male or female. But you are confusing biological sex with gender. I know transgender Christians who desire to embrace God’s design for men and women, but they also believe that who God created them to be does not correspond with the sex assigned to them at birth.” I don’t doubt that there are persons like this out there (and in our churches). While some people embracing a transgender identity may do so on a lark, many strongly feel that only by living as the opposite sex can they full embrace their true self.

The question is not whether such persons and feelings exist. The question is whether the *is* of our emotional or mental state equals the *ought* of God’s design. Most Christians reject this thinking in a host of other areas, from eating disorders to unbiblical divorces. We understand that following Christ means dying to ourselves (Matt. 16:24), being renewed in our minds (Rom. 12:2), and no longer walking as we once did (Eph. 4:17-18). Being “true to ourselves” is always a false choice when it means going against God’s Word.

The Bible teaches the organic unity of biological sex and gender identity. This is why male and female are (uniquely) the type of pair that can reproduce (Gen. 1:28; 2:20). It’s why homosexuality—a man lying with a man as with a woman (Lev. 18:22)—is wrong. It’s why the apostle Paul can speak of homosexual partnerships as deviating from the natural relations or natural function of male-female sexual intercourse (Rom. 1:26-27). In each instance, the argument only works if there is an assumed equivalence between the biology of sexual difference and the corresponding identities of male and female.

3. Gender Confusion

The third building block follows naturally from the other two. If the binary of male and female is God’s idea, and if we are meant to embrace, by divine design, our biological and creational difference as men and women, then it stands to reason that the confusion of these realities would be displeasing to God. And so we see clearly in the Bible that men should not act sexually as women (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10), that men should not dress like women (Deut. 22:5), and that when men and women embrace obviously other-gendered expressions of identity it is a disgrace (1 Cor. 11:14-15). We do not have an inalienable right to do whatever we want with our physical selves. We belong to God and should glorify him with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Transgenderism, Outdoor School Policies, and How Christian Families Might Respond - Randy Alcorn, Eternal Perspective Ministries, September 30, 2016 (To read the entire blog with access to its links, click the link below.)

<http://www.epm.org/blog/2016/Sep/30/transgenderism-outdoor-school>

Though it was foreseen for many years, nationwide legalized homosexual marriage was a long time in coming. I think we're beginning to see that now that it's here, it has broken down many restraining walls in our society. Consider the speed at which transgenderism and gender identity have grabbed hold of our culture, and even the world of our children and grandchildren.

Christian families in my hometown of Gresham, Oregon are feeling some of those effects after reading Oregon's new public school policies regarding transgender students. In particular he wrote about the school's policies regarding 6th Grade Outdoor school.

Question: Is it possible that my child will be placed in a cabin with a gender nonconforming or transgender student?

Yes. At Outdoor School we respect the gender identity asserted by the student. Sixth grade students that identify as male will be placed in male cabins. Student leaders that identify as male will lead male student cabin groups and be placed in male cabins. Sixth grade students that identify as female will be placed in female cabins. A student who was assigned a male gender at birth, and identifies as female, will be placed in a girl's cabin. A student who was assigned a female gender at birth, and identifies as male, will be placed in a male cabin.

A parent who attended a recent outdoor school meeting for teachers wrote, "Bottom line, ODS can't and won't assure teachers and parents that a sixth grade student will not be in a cabin with a high school student [cabin leader] of the opposite gender." (Another major concern for many families is that because students attending outdoor school are unable to phone home, if an issue does arise, they won't be able to contact their parents and express their concerns or discomforts)

Several families I know have prayerfully and thoughtfully decided to not have their children attend outdoor school this fall. Here's an example of how parents might graciously and respectfully communicate that choice. It was written by my daughter Angela, who gave me permission to share it. I believe it speaks truth and reflects grace:

We're sorry to say that we've decided our son won't be attending outdoor school this year. We read the new school district policy on transgender counselors and campers and we are aware of several situations that happened last year, and we're uncomfortable with potentially putting our son in that situation. Just so you know, we've had some great conversations with him about being respectful and kind to people who have different beliefs and make different choices than we do, but at this point we're just not comfortable sending him away for several nights with all of the unknowns created by this policy.

We're not sure how this will affect his grade, and want to be sure there's something else he can do to make up for it. Do you know if anything else will be offered on those days? Thanks for

understanding, and please let us know if you have any questions, as we'd love to keep an open dialogue with you about this.

Writing for the ERLC (Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission), Andrew Walker recommends that parents think through their responses to new policies now rather than later, and establish a tipping point for their families:

What actions taken by your local school will be sufficient for you to re-evaluate public education? Is having a teacher reprimand your child for his or her belief about marriage, sex, and gender acceptable? Will you allow them to be in schools where bathroom policies are based on gender identity rather than biological sex? Are you uncomfortable with a biological male having access to the restroom and locker room that your daughter uses? Not establishing a tipping point could leave your child over-exposed to environments they shouldn't be in. Not thinking about a tipping point is irresponsible and will communicate carelessness about a child's education and Christian formation. It is advisable that spouses have a candid conversation and establish a line in the sand.

How to talk to your kids about Gender - Mark Spansel, The Gospel Coalition, April 14, 2015
(To read the entire blog with access to its links, click the link below.)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-gender>

Books for further understanding:

We Cannot Be Silent – R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

What the Bible says about Homosexuality – Kevin DeYoung

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert – Rosaria Butterfield

Think Biblically: Recovering a Christian Worldview – John MacArthur

2. Jesus Christ is God. (2:9) (Supremacy)

The '*fullness of deity*' was Paul's way of stating that Jesus is every bit God. He shares the very essence and nature and qualities that God the Father and God the Spirit possess.

the fullness of God lives in Jesus in bodily form – Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man.

Go back to Colossians 1:16-20 (Read)

So Paul's answer to the threat of false teaching is this: Jesus Christ is the creator of all things and He is supreme and therefore sufficient: why would you want to settle for anything or anyone else?

3. In Christ, You Have Everything You Need. (2:10) (Sufficiency)

Everything you need for this life (and the answers to the questions about this life) and eternity is found in Christ.

As a result of the Fall, man is in a sad state of incompleteness. He is spiritually incomplete because He is totally out of fellowship with God. He is morally incomplete because he lives outside of God's will. He is mentally incomplete because he does not know ultimate truth.

At salvation, believers become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) and are made complete. Believers are spiritually complete because they have fellowship with God. They are morally complete in that they recognize the authority of God's will. They are mentally complete because they know the truth about ultimate reality.

Conclusion: See the World through Christ.

1. Look to God's Word – Study so you can develop a Biblical/Christ-centered worldview.
2. Follow Christ -Believe and obey His Word
-Follow his example by demonstrating both grace and truth
3. Expect opposition
4. Be compassionate – Our church must be a safe place for the gender confused and the sexually broken. We are all broken, and in need of salvation. We are all in need of grace.

Transition into Communion:

Let's not forget – everything we enjoy as Christians, forgiveness, peace, and the confidence of our Christ-centered world view is the result of God's grace.

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive in Christ. He forgave us all our sins." Colossians 2:13

We Cannot be Silent – R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

What Does the Bible Really Have to Say About Sex?

For Christians, the first question to ask when confronting any issue is, what does the Bible say? The answer to this question is fundamental to Christian faith and practice. The ultimate authority for our understanding of reality is the Bible, which is nothing less than the very Word of God. Our knowledge on anything of importance regarding essential questions of life is grounded in the reality that the one true and living God is not only the God who *is* but also the God who *speaks*.

As evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry explained so beautifully, God loves us so much that He forfeits His own personal privacy that His creatures might know Him. For this reason, evangelical Christians turn to Scripture by instinct. Going back to the Reformation itself, we live by the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, affirming that Scripture and Scripture alone is our final authority. The reason for this is straightforward. We believe that when Scripture speaks, God speaks. This means that to obey the Scriptures is to obey God and to disobey the Scriptures is to disobey God.

A Biblical Theology of Sex

Since Scripture must be interpreted according to this master narrative, when we consider what the Bible says about sex, gender, marriage, and family, we must begin our inquiry in the first act of the biblical story by recognizing that the doctrine of creation provides several essential theological principles for our understanding of sex and gender.

Creation, Gender and Marriage

The first essential theological principle is the sovereignty of God over all creation. The Creator has the absolute and solitary right to define the purpose of what he has created. As Genesis 1 tells us, human beings, and human beings alone, were created in the image of God. Furthermore, those human beings are gendered – identified as male and female. Together, the man and the woman were given the responsibility to exercise dominion, multiply, and fill the earth. They were given this responsibility as a couple – a husband and wife explicitly charged with procreation as part of their stewardship and ministry.

Genesis 2 provides an even deeper insight into what it means for human beings to be made in the image of God as male and female. Scripture indicates that Adam did not declare his need for a companion; rather, it was God who declared it is not good that man should be alone (Gen. 2:18). Immediately thereafter, God reinforced this point to Adam – in what surely must have been an unforgettable way – by bringing all creatures to Adam so that he might name them. Adam exercised his assignment of dominion by naming the other creatures, but he realized their insufficiency for him. As the Scripture state, “For Adam there was not found a helper fit for him” (v. 20).

At that point, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and created the woman out of Adam himself (vv. 21-22) – not out of the dust of the earth, and not out of any alien or external substance. Then God presented the woman to Adam as the complementary helper (Hebrew: *ezer*) fit for him. Adam, who had just had the responsibility of naming the animals, then named the woman “Eve,” for she had been taken out of man. “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Adam declared, understanding that Eve was made for him and, correspondingly, he was made for her (v. 23). She was the complement and companion for him. Adam immediately understood the rightness and the fittingness of their exclusive companionship with one another.

Without any transition in the biblical narrative, we are taken to the institution of marriage and told that the pattern from Adam and Eve forward will be that a man will leave his mother and his father, and will *cleave* to his wife (v. 24 KJV). The two then became one flesh. The righteousness of the man and the woman and their unity in a conjugal relationship means that they were naked in the garden and unashamed (v. 25). They were made distinctively male and female with God’s glory demonstrated in the maleness of the male and in the femaleness of the female. Further, they were joined together in the conjugal union of marriage and given the divine assignment to multiply and to fill the earth.

The Bible does not present marriage as a “contract,” which so many Western societies in the modern age have reduced it to. Rather, Scripture presents marriage as a covenant that reflects God’s own covenant-making love in Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:22-33). God’s faithfulness in making and keeping his covenants is on display in the lasting covenantal faithfulness of a man and a woman who enter into the monogamous, lifelong union of marriage.

Thus, in the very beginning, human beings are defined as male and female, not just as abstract genders. They are biologically sexed individuals who are created for the glory of God, for each other, and for a conjugal relationship that has as its end the one-flesh relationship of the marital act and the aim of procreation.

Fallen Sexuality

Genesis 3 explains why brokenness exists in the created order. The third chapter of the Bible explains why the universal human experience is one affected by sin, death, and disobedience rather than health and flourishing. Furthermore, the fall helps us understand why every dimension of the created order bears testimony to the effects of human sin and God's judgment upon that sin. In the garden, the on-flesh union of the man and woman was presented without any stain of sin, any potential embarrassment, or even the slightest insinuation of depravity or corruption. If anything, marriage becomes more important, not less, after the fall. As the traditional Christian wedding language of *The Book of Common Prayer* expresses it, one of the purposes of marriage is to serve as a "remedy for sin." After the fall, marriage and the rightly ordered family become not only a testimony to the goodness of God but also a massive defense against the effects of sin in the world.

Moving forward, the biblical narrative is abundantly honest about the brokenness of humanity. The Bible is straightforward in its depiction of sexual sin – from adultery to incest and bestiality to same-sex behaviors. The Bible's honesty on these matters is an incredible gift to us. Through Scripture, we understand that sin affects every human relationship, even our most intimate relationship – our marriages and families. This portrait of our depravity reveals to us our greatest need – our need of redemption.

As Scripture also makes clear, the identity of the human being as male and as female points to marriage as the context in which the man and the woman, made for each other, are to come together in a union that is holy, righteous, and absolutely necessary for human flourishing. The scriptural teachings concerning sexuality and marriage show that God made us as sexual beings and gave us sexual feelings, passions, and urges in order that these would be channeled into the desire for marriage and the satisfactions of marital faithfulness.

Sex, gender, marriage, and family all come together in the first chapters of Scripture in order to make clear that every aspect of our sexual lives is to submit to the creative purpose of God and be channeled into the exclusive arena of human sexual behavior – marriage – defined clearly and exclusively as the lifelong, monogamous union of a man and a woman.

***How to talk to your kids about Gender* - Mark Spansel, The Gospel Coalition, April 14, 2015**

From the minute Michelle and I got married, we had godly people around us modeling marriage and family. By the time we were preparing for our first child to enter the world, we'd watched

moms and dads around us closely, taken a few parenting classes, and drilled our close friends as to the “keys to successful parenting.”

But nothing really prepared me for the conversation I recently had with my kids. My sons and I were sitting in the corner of a Dunkin’ Donuts when a young man I’d counseled in previous years came over and said hello. It took me about 30 seconds to realize whom I was speaking with. This young man was now identifying as a transgender woman. I’d heard he’d made this decision but hadn’t yet bumped into him. We chatted briefly and shortly thereafter left to get the kids to school. Once we got in the car, I hoped my kids wouldn’t press in and ask too many questions about the encounter. But of course they did. This is 2016, and my kids go to public school. We have a TV in our home, and they are generally observant teenagers. Unfortunately I hadn’t rehearsed this “lesson” in my parenting arsenal.

Talking to my kids about transgender issues wasn’t in the parenting class Michelle and I took years ago. But here’s what I said.

God Made Gender

I reminded my kids that way back in the early pages of Genesis it says that God created gender: “Male and female he created them” ([Gen. 1:27](#)). We don’t get to choose our gender. Whether one is male or female is in the creative power and wisdom of God. Someone may struggle with “feeling” male or female, but that doesn’t *make* him or her different than God intended.

In the beginning, God determined that two genders were the perfect expression of his image. In the man and in the woman, then, God’s image is displayed—both in the individuals themselves and in the way they relate to each other as same (human) and as distinct (gender). One isn’t better than the other, nor did God design a way for humanity to switch between the two.

We All Struggle with Identity

I want my kids to be able to adequately navigate the waters of sexual identity for themselves. This is a watershed issue in our day that isn’t going away.

So I explained clearly to them how this young man I spoke with identified himself more as a woman. We then talked about how everyone struggles at some level to understand who they are and why God made them the way he did. I reassured them it’s normal to wrestle with such issues of identity, but that gender identity in particular is determined by God, and that transgender

expressions won't "fix" what's going on within. I wanted them to know that any "gender transitioning" is a shortsighted attempt to fix a common human struggle, and will likely add to the confusion a person already feels.

Where Worth Is Found

Ultimately, though, I wanted my kids to have empathy for this young man. They could see from his demeanor and physical mannerisms that he wasn't doing well. In fact, he'd told me he recently had a mental breakdown and was getting some neurological tests to determine what was going on.

I want my kids to fight the natural bent of their hearts to judge and snicker. I want them to show the grace and compassion that arises from feeling the hurt someone else carries with them. I want them to deeply understand who they are before the Lord—and even if they don't get that far, that they at least understand who God made them to be. I want them to grasp that without careful answers, you can start down a path that only leads to greater confusion and heartache.

The gospel-less culture around us champions being who you are, but offers only tips and tools that lead you away from being who God created you to be. So absolutely, I want my kids to be themselves. I want them to look different from my wife and me. I want them to have their own adventures, to walk their own paths. But I also want them to be equipped to find their worth in Jesus, so they can help others navigate the tricky roads ahead.

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