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Sermon Series: *Show Me Some ID, No. 4*

Male and Female

February 12, 2023

Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18-25 (NIV)

¹²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²¹⁸The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

We're in the book of Genesis again this morning. If you're counting, you know this is the third time we've been there in this series on identity, and that is no accident.

Certainly, there are details about the creation account that serious, committed Christ-followers have disagreed about through the ages. But they all agree that the importance of these first chapters in Genesis are critical in understanding who God is and who we are in relation to Him.

Genesis holds the keys for understanding the way God made us and our world to work, because Genesis is where God communicates human identity: our sense of self and worth. If we don't start here, then it doesn't matter how noble our intentions, *we will wind up far away from truth.*

Who does the God who made us say we are? We've repeated these for weeks now. We are, as humans:

- 1) Made by God in *His own image* – the only part of creation that is. This means:
- 2) We are of *tremendous value* to God, to the point that:
- 3) We are *ranked above* the rest of creation.
- 4) We are made either *male* or *female*.
- 5) We are intended to *grow* and *develop* and even *lead* the rest of creation, and,
- 6) We are, in God's own determination, *very good*.

That is who God says we are in Genesis 1.

However, Genesis 3 adds a seventh element to this list. There in the garden when we, in Adam and Eve, did what God said not to do, a break was created in us, in our nature, and in our relationship with God.

We are now no longer inherently good, which gets at the foundational error of identity that most of our world believes today.

You and I: God made us to be good, but because of our rebellion, we are now broken. We make mistakes; we err in judgment; we are absorbed with self. And we need repair.

More than repair, in fact, we need transformation – we need restoration – which God has made possible through Jesus, His sinless Son. God sent Jesus, who suffered and died, in order to pay the price for our rebellion, so that as we follow Him, our relationship with God can be restored.

That's why the account of Jesus is "gospel," which means "good news," and it is good news that you can receive even today if you have not yet done that.

We were made good, in God's own image. We are worth much, more than the rest of creation. We are broken by sin, and yet redeemable in Jesus. That's who God says we are.

Now, these past few weeks, we've drilled deeper into several of those seven points of identity, and we'll do that again today with the fourth: God made us to be male or female.

Now, I don't have to tell you that talking about this one, probably more than the rest, can be pretty emotionally charged in our day.

And really, it's only in our day, because for, basically, all of human history, up until this last decade or two, our birth gender was a foregone conclusion.

In our day and culture, though, that has changed, and I think that's primarily because we are living in a time when technology has developed to the point that we feel we can now manipulate even gender – and so, of course, some will try.

Now, human manipulation is, of course, nothing new. Since the Fall, people will manipulate whatever possible in order to get what we want whenever we are afforded the opportunity.

There in the garden, God said in Genesis 3, "*Whatever you do, don't do this!*" But because Adam and Eve had both the *technology*, the ability to reach up and grab the forbidden fruit, and because they had the *opportunity*, they gave in to that temptation to please self in spite of what God said, and they ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

And what a mess has been caused by this human manipulation of a situation in order to get what was wanted.

You see it again in Genesis 6 in the account of the flood. Because humanity had both the technology – that is, the ability – and the opportunity to do it, they gave in to the temptation to please self in all sorts of immoral, unjust ways, to the point that God had to destroy nearly everything in order to simply preserve His creation.

You see it again in Genesis 11 and the account of Babel. The new technology of brick and mortar provided both the ability and the opportunity for people to lift themselves up – literally and figuratively – to make a name for themselves. That was their motive – to please self.

You see it in the story of brothers Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Abel did what God wanted, but Cain did not, and when God blessed Abel, Cain got angry, and given the opportunity, he fell to the temptation and used the technology available to please himself.

Human history repeats this over and over again.

You see, just like what happened in the garden, the danger of the temptation to get *our* way is that it pulls us away from *God* and *His* way, which is, of course, what the enemy – the tempter – is all about.

Just as he did in Eden.

He said, “Look, see how good this is? Don’t listen to what God says. You can’t trust Him. Instead, trust your senses. Trust your feelings! You see, isn’t it beautiful? Isn’t it delicious? Isn’t it fulfilling? Yes! And you can have it right now!”

You see, when we have both motive (pleasing ourselves) and opportunity (the technology or ability,) the enemy will use that every time to tempt us, in order to distance us from God, which will destroy us.

In our day, the reason the gender questions are so prevalent is simply because we now have both motive and opportunity for the enemy to use in his temptation.

Hormonal and surgical technologies allow for changes to our bodies that were unimaginable only a few years ago.

And communication technologies have allowed the tempter to reach into every person’s most private places with this message, “You are not happy with who God made you to be. And you never will be, so why not become something else?”

Let me tell you, when the enemy has those sorts of tools at his disposal, plus the ongoing breakdown of the family unit so that parents and kids aren’t really engaged, plus all of the unhealthy and ungodly cultural conceptions of what love looks like: when you put all that together, you see, it’s no wonder that we are where we are regarding sexuality and gender.

Until a few years ago, girls who liked to hunt or fish or play sports were considered “tomboys.” Nothing bad about that at all, that’s just part of personality.

But now, those same girls are fed the message, “You’re really a boy at heart, and in our day, you can become a boy, so you should.”

Until a few years ago, when boys liked some things our culture happens to see as more feminine – maybe

dressing nicely or cooking or maybe design or fabrics or art or music, that was just their thing, and that’s okay.

But now, those same boys are fed the message, “You know, you’re really a girl at heart, and you can become a girl, so you should.”

To that suggestion, God would say, “Just because you may seem to have the ability – the technology or the opportunity to do something, that does not make it good or right.”

The fact is, human technology and ability have often gotten ahead of human morality, and when that happens, people always wind up deeply damaged.

Now of course, another part of this issue is same sex attraction.

Is it real?

Parts of Christ’s Church, through the ages, have denied that it is, which has caused much anguish in some.

Although I have, personally, never felt that, I can believe those feelings are very real.

We live in a fallen world. We are broken people, and our brokenness affects our feelings.

And yet, just because a feeling is there and real does not make the feeling inherently good or right.

A little boy or girl might well *feel* like snatching away their friend’s toy and playing with it themselves. But that doesn’t make doing so good or kind or Christ-like.

A teenage boy, because he’s hungry and likes pizza, may well *feel* like eating 15 pieces of it, but even apart from the gluttony of that, he will surely physically regret doing it soon after.

A teenage girl, because she likes the attention her boyfriend pays her, may *feel* like giving up her purity, but her feeling does not make her action good and right.

A bank employee *feels justified* in embezzling money from her workplace, but her *feeling* in no way *justifies* her behavior.

A husband or wife who is going through marital problems at home may well *feel* as though they want to sleep with a co-worker who has given them attention – and maybe even an invitation, but that makes neither the *feeling* nor the adultery that follows in any way good or right.

You see, we are fallen people with fallen feelings – we all feel like doing things God says not to do, so I don’t think there’s any doubt that some genuinely feel attracted to persons of their own gender.

I can also believe that some people have been so hurt and are so hungry for love that they’ll do anything to find it – or something that seems like it. And so that adds to those who are willing to experiment with letting their feelings direct their behavior.

And, you can bet that this world, which denies God’s existence and authority, will absolutely follow its feelings, just as it has done since the fall, and will tempt and encourage all around to do that as well.

The non-God world proudly declares, “you are what you feel.” That’s why it champions philosophies like, “If

it *feels* good, do it;" and, "if it *feels* right, then it's right for you," and on and on and on.

And so then,

- given the ability technology has given us to make so called "gender changes,"
- and given the *motive* to please self that characterizes fallen humanity,
- and adding to those two things the power of the sexual drive in people,

it's no wonder there is so much talk and energy these days about gender and sexuality and all that goes with it.

We're really to the point that, if we feel something, or if we even think we feel something, just about the whole non-God culture around us shouts, "Sure, go for it!"

So, can you see how we've gotten where we are? It should not surprise us. It all makes perfect sense.

But here's the thing: as people of God and specifically as followers of Jesus, we cannot simply give in to the temptations that come to us. We cannot let our feelings, even those that stir powerfully and deep within us, determine our identities and the course of our lives and the choices we make.

Think about it: what would the world be like if everyone just did what they, personally, *felt* was right?

Actually, that's exactly what the days of the judges were like. Israel was on a steep, downward spiral in every way, because nearly everyone just let their *feelings* determine what they did.

The book of Judges tells us twice, in lament of the terrible state of things, that, "*In those days – everyone did as they saw fit.*"¹

Actually, there is another part to that phrase that needs to be included. The whole phrase says, "*In those days, Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.*"

You see, the reason things were as chaotic and awful as they were, other than just the pervasive effects of sin, is that there was no outside, objective authority keeping order and maintaining sensibility and peace.

That's what happens in a broken world when everyone simply does what they *feel* is right.

You know, you and I, we can complain about government, and, to be sure, our complaints are often justified. But in a fallen world of self-absorbed people who are inclined to just do whatever they feel, without some greater authority present to keep order, we would have chaos.

God knows this, and that's why He uses governments, sometimes even corrupt ones, simply to preserve a people.

Now, He would rather not do that. God would rather we govern ourselves by listening to Him and His word and His standards of behavior, you see?

God would rather be our King Himself, ruling from within. If everyone would do as He says, there would be unending beauty and peace and love.

That's what His Kingdom is.

That's what it was in the Garden, and that's what it will be again when Jesus returns.

But for now, though His Kingdom and rule are present in His Church, they do not prevail in the world.

And that's why we have the world we have.

The Apostle Paul describes it in Romans 1.

God invites people to Himself, but He doesn't force people to choose Him. So, though it pains Him, God will let people suffer in their sins and ungodly choices, if they refuse Him and His way, hoping one day they will turn to Him.

We have that freedom, because we're made in His image.

In our nation, for the vast majority of our existence, those who've governed us have understood at least something of godly sexuality, and they neither embraced nor encouraged giving in to ungodly sexual temptations.

And when I say, "ungodly sexuality," it is more than just today's gender stuff.

The Bible clearly includes as ungodly sexuality: fornication (sexual activity outside of marriage), adultery (fornication involving at least one married person), polygamy, rape, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, prostitution and pornography.

If you want definitions and Scripture references for all those, you can pick up one of the papers at the Welcome Center, or e-mail me for an electronic copy. [Follows this sermon as pp. 5-7 in this document.]

The leaders of our nation, for the vast majority of our existence, have agreed with the harm these sexual sins cause.

But, of course, changes are occurring in what's *now permitted* and what's *now encouraged*. What may be yet to come?

Our society (our culture) has changed and is changing.

But friends, God's word does not change. It is as clear as it has always been in Judeo-Christian history.

Both of the Genesis passages read as our text today convey human identity as distinctly male or female and as being part of bearing God's image. Verse 27 from Chapter 1 is especially significant.

That verse is a poem of three lines, with the second and third lines structured in parallel. Not only is it saying (three times) that God is the creator, but it is emphasizing the absolute correlation between God's image and "male and female."

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

It means that being created *both* in the image of God, *and* male or female are part of human essence.

Maleness or femaleness are not just matters of biology or genetics or feelings, any more than being human is.

Male and female are spiritual and natural realities that are created by God and cannot be changed.

¹ Judges 17:6, 21:25

Sure, technology today makes it possible to artificially remove or augment body parts and use pharmaceuticals to suppress biological and hormonal realities.

But even that technology only goes so far.

Biologically, you can't change the DNA, and **spiritually**, you can't change our essence of being male or female.

And so, followers of Jesus: we cannot encourage or advocate for the inevitable harm that comes when people simply follow their feelings instead of God's will and ways. To do so would be unloving.

God says, "You are who I created you to be," and that truth transcends any way we may feel. It's as Jeremiah says, "*the fallen heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick!*"²

Christ-followers have to submit our feelings to God's objective word about this and everything else.

At the same time, choosing to submit our feelings to God does not mean those feelings simply cease to exist.

Feelings are very real, and so are the temptations that come with them.

Please understand this:

- To have feelings is *not* to sin.
- To be *tempted* to *act* on those feelings is *not* to sin. (If to be tempted were to sin, Jesus would have been the world's greatest sinner.)

Again, to *feel* is *not* to *sin*; and to be *tempted* is *not* to *sin*.

However, to *give in* to temptation, sexually or otherwise, and to accept, absorb, or perpetuate ungodly feelings, allowing them to rule your life and perspective and your choices: *that* is to sin.

And so, to those in Christ who fight these sorts of temptations, to those who fight against giving in to them and thus act in sinful ways, sexual and otherwise: please hear me say, on behalf of your brothers and sisters in Christ, "We stand with you in your fight."

We all know temptation in one way or another, and we need to pray for one another. Pray that either God would deliver us, or that we would have the strength to resist or the presence of mind to flee, so that we might not sin against God.

In Jesus, it is possible to keep from sinning!

With the help of God's Spirit, within us, it is possible to not give in to temptation. It's possible to keep from sinning against God!

As we will be honest and pray for each other in our temptations, it is possible!

So, when the tempter, the devil, approaches any of us with his old line, "Did God really say...?": let's not shame each other.

Instead, let's fight for one another's purity and integrity and holiness, and let's pray for each other's renewal of mind, so that every thought – every thought – becomes captive to Jesus.

And then, let's stand together and offer, with love and grace, the truth of God's better way to our world: the better way of, as Christopher Yuan puts it, "Placing fact over feeling, and biology over psychology, realizing that we are created in God's image, male or female, and that God never, never makes mistakes."³

Of course, we can't control how the world will respond to that. We can guess, but even still, *we must let them know*.

Because God knows what the world would be like if everyone just did as they felt was right, and He will not allow that to rule His world! And so, He calls His Church to lovingly and graciously proclaim the truth of our identity.

It's neither a popular nor easy role in our world today, but it is part of what it means to follow Jesus.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, we all fully realize that this word on gender and sexuality and sin may sound judgmental and even condemning to much of our culture. And it is Your word, but it's meant to be saving and redeeming – just as You came not to condemn but to save.

Still, as the world rejects Your word and those who stand for it, it is as You said to Samuel: the one they're really rejecting is You. And that hurts everyone, because Your word and Your way really are good and right and lead to life.

Would You help our world to see that? Would You bring a new awakening to the goodness of who You are and the rightness of Your word and way? And would You give Your Church the stamina to stand with You and the love and grace to keep reaching out for those who don't yet know and who've not yet heard and who've not yet believed. Amen.

Closing Song: *Holy, Holy, Holy*

I asked that we close with this song because it illustrates the importance in the Bible of repeating things three times. You see that over and over again.

In the case of the song, that's Isaiah 6:3 and it appears again in Revelation 4:8. But you also see it there in that text, Genesis 1:27.

***So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.***

God is our maker, and He made us with intention and specificity. And we have to trust Him with that most intimate part of ourselves if, indeed, we want to be at peace. It is as if this were emphasized three times in Genesis for our day today.

Benediction

² Jeremiah 17:9

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/gender-identity-and-sexual-orientation/>

The Ten Most Forbidden Biblical Sexual Sins

Fornication – sexual intercourse involving unmarried people

Gen. 38:24 Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has prostituted herself, and behold, she is also pregnant by prostitution.” Then Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned!

Lev. 21:9 Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

Deut. 22:21 Then they shall bring the girl out to the doorway of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death, because she has committed a disgraceful sin in Israel by playing the prostitute in her father’s house; so you shall eliminate the evil from among you.

1 Cor. 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

1 Cor 7:2 But because of sexual immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

Heb. 13:4 Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.

Adultery – sexual intercourse involving person(s) married to someone else

Ex. 20:14 You shall not commit adultery.

Deut. 5:18 You shall not commit adultery.

Prov. 6:32 One who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who would destroy himself commits it.

Matt. 5:27-32 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 Now if your right eye is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand is causing you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.31 “Now it was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away is to give her a certificate of divorce’; 32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matt. 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, acts of adultery, other immoral sexual acts, thefts, false testimonies, and slanderous statements.

1 Cor. 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Polygamy – being married to / sexually active with more than one person at a time

Gen. 2:1-8 And so the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their heavenly lights. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven. 5 Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living person. 8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Matt. 19:4-6 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no person is to separate."

Gen. 4:19-24 Lamech took two wives for himself: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah. 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and have livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and flute. 22 As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.23 Lamech said to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, you wives of Lamech, pay attention to my words, for I have killed a man for wounding me; and a boy for striking me! 24 If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times!"

1 Ki. 11:1-9 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations of which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you; they will certainly turn your heart away to follow their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives, who were princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned his heart away. 4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away to follow other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of his father David had been. 5 For Solomon became a follower of Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and of Milcom the abhorrent idol of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as his father David had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abhorrent idol of Moab, on the mountain that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abhorrent idol of the sons of Ammon. 8 He also did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.9 Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

1 Tim. 3:2,12 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, Verse 12 Deacons must be husbands of one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.

Rape – forcing another to engage in sexual intercourse

Gen. 34:1-31

Jdg. 19:1-30

2 Sam. 13:11-14 When she brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, sleep with me, my sister." 12 But she said to him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful sin! 13 As for me, where could I get rid of my shame? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now then, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." 14 However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and slept with her.

Incest

Lev. 18

Lev. 20

Lev. 27

Homosexuality

Lev. 18:22 You shall not sleep with a male as one sleeps with a female; it is an abomination.

Lev. 20:13 If there is a man who sleeps with a male as those who sleep with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they must be put to death. They have brought their own deaths upon themselves.

Rom. 1:26-27 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged natural relations for that which is contrary to nature, 27 and likewise the men, too, abandoned natural relations with women and burned in their desire toward one another, males with males committing shameful acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

1 Cor. 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals,

Bestiality - sexual intercourse with animals

Ex. 22:19

Lev. 20:15-16

Deut. 27:21

Prostitution

Lev. 19:29, 21:9

1 Cor. 6:16

Sexual Immorality - numerous sexual sins including pornography

Matt. 19:9

1 Cor. 6:13, 6:18

Eph. 5:3

1 Thess. 4:3

Pagan Sexual Activity

Ex. 32

Is. 57:7-8

Hosea 4:12-14

Eph. 5:5

Col. 3:5²

² <https://realfaith.com/daily-devotions/10-forbidden-sexual-acts-in-the-bible/>