

Sermon Series: “The Bible and Some Election Issues”
“Sexuality/Gender”
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Have you ever felt like you inserted your foot in your mouth? When you said something you wish you could have taken back? E.g., I recall some years ago a friend of mine from Europe who was working here invited me to a party at his house, and his whole family was there— his wife and his junior high age children. I recall meeting his son, and then during the party another one of his children came up to me with long hair and thin. After talking a while I went to talk to my friend and I said something like, “Wow, I have really enjoyed meeting your family— your wife, and your son and your daughter were very nice!” And he turned and looked at me and said in effect, “Uh, I have two sons!” After apologizing, I wanted to sulk out of his house and go home! But sometimes we make those mistakes. Well, today, such mistakes are even easier to make, where now it is even seen as offensive in some schools to say such things as, “Good morning boys and girls”.

Today we are going to take a look at three areas where the issue of sexuality and gender have become more pronounced in our nation’s consciousness. Then we are going to look at what the Bible has to say on both sexuality and gender issues.

“Three aspects of the issue of sexuality/gender which have changed today in the U.S. since the 2016 presidential election”. The first area where sexuality and gender have risen in our national consciousness since 2016 involves the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on June 16, 2020 on what “sex” means in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We recall that the Civil Rights Act forbids discrimination to someone due to his or her national origin, religion, race, and sex. The court has now ruled that “sex” includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and

Questioning/Queer (LGBTQ) individuals as well; I.e., “sex” now includes LGBTQ as a protected class from discrimination in employment (from govdocs.com online article “Supreme Court: 1964 Civil Rights Act Protects LGBTQ Employees from Workplace Discrimination”, June 16, 2020). This ruling is one of many rulings by courts where judges foresake their role as ruling from the constitution and become legislators from the bench. It should be noted that less than half the states in the U.S. had such an understanding of sex. The reason for rejecting what the U.S. Supreme Court has done here is not that discrimination is good; there are laws protecting people from unlawful dismissal. Rather, the reason is threefold: first, now the law elevates LGBTQ individuals as a protected class along the lines of national origin, religion, race, and sex. Three of these are things someone cannot change— national origin, race, and sex— and the other, religion, has always been granted a special place in American law as protected from government interference. Also, is LGBTQ is now a protected class, why not one’s political party preference, hair color, being overweight, being under weight, school from which one graduated, etc.? Second, the Civil Rights law of 1964 had no intention of defining sex to include LGBTQ individuals; if such a meaning is to be included, it is the legislator’s job to do so, *not* a judge. The third reason to reject the Court’s ruling is that now a pandora’s box has been opened with seemingly limitless way for LGBTQ activists to impose the law on religious institutions and businesses owned by Christians. E.g., in 2018 the U.S. Supreme Court decided in favor of a Christian Colorado baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, because the Court found religious bias by Colorado officials. Another Christian baker, this one in Oregon, has been fined \$135,000 for discriminating against a same-sex couple because the baker refused to make them a wedding cake; this case has yet to make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court (from a *Washington Post* online article, “Supreme Court passes on case involving baker who refused to make wedding cake for same-sex couple”,

June 17, 2019).

A second area of increased national awareness of sexuality/gender issues involves more confusion over gender identity. We are not only talking about men who identify as women being allowed to use the women's bathroom and shower room, but also women's competition in sports. E.g., Connecticut is one of 18 states which allows boys who see themselves as girls to compete in girls' sporting events. In the 2019 State Open indoor high school track championships, two boys who identify as girls won first and second place. (From ESPN.com's June 23, 2020 online article, "The Battle Over Title IX and Who Gets to Be a Woman in Sports; Inside the Raging National Debate"). In college, the NCAA's policy uses "a one-year hormone therapy requirement for transgender women" to allow men who identify as women to compete in women's athletics. A study has shown, in the ESPN.com article cited above, that even with a year of hormone therapy, there was only a 5% reduction of muscle mass in men who identify as women, and men generally have 30% or more muscle mass than women. One should also factor in men have a large lung capacity than women and men have about 7-8 times as much testosterone as women.

The third area of sexuality/gender that has become more pronounced in the nation since 2016 is some devastating news in the Christian Church over sexual misconduct. This has included a noted Christian apologist, Christian university president, and church clergy.

"What is the foundational understanding of human sexuality in the Bible? Why is this so?" READ Genesis 2:24. Here we find the basic understanding of marriage— it is between a man and a woman, where they become one flesh. This one-fleshness means that they become one not only physically, as 1 Corinthians 6:16 makes clear, but also emotionally, spiritually, materially, and in every other way. E.g., I recall when this hit home to me in Elena's and my marriage. We were standing on a bridge in Edinburgh on a cold day with Norwood in a stroller,

and blithely told Elena I would be back in a few hours after shopping in used book stores, just as we normally did in past trips to Edinburgh. The only problem was, past trips to Edinburgh did not involve Norwood! So Elena looked at me like I was crazy for leaving her alone with the baby while I went off to pursue my selfish interests— and I realized that we were one, not two separate individuals. Why is this important? Because God made men and women to complement each other— not only anatomically, but also personally, emotionally, and physically. READ Romans 1:24-27. This is the most comprehensive statement in the Bible on its rejection of homosexuality, and it is based on the Creator’s clear intent. I am reminded of what Jeffrey Satinover, a psychiatrist who has taught at Yale and Harvard Universities, says in his important book, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*, pp. 49-51. “What would you think if a relative, friend, or colleague had a condition that is routinely, even if not always, associated with the following problems: - A significantly decreased likelihood of establishing or preserving a successful marriage; - A five- to ten- year decrease in life expectancy; Chronic, potentially fatal, liver disease— hepatitis; - Pneumonia; -Internal bleeding; - Serious mental disabilities, many of which are irreversible; - A much higher than usual incidence of suicide; - A very low likelihood that its adverse effects can be eliminated unless the condition itself is eliminated; - An only 3- percent likelihood of being eliminated through lengthy, often costly and very time-consuming treatment in an otherwise unselected population of sufferers (although a very high success rate among highly motivated, carefully selected sufferers). We can add four qualifications to this unnamed condition. First, even though its origins are influenced by genetics, the condition is, strictly speaking, rooted in behavior. Second, individuals who have this condition continue the behavior in spite of the destructive consequences of doing so. Third, although some people with this condition perceive it as a problem and wish they could rid themselves of it, many others deny they have any problem at all and violently resist all attempts to ‘help’

them. And fourth, these people who resist help tend to socialize with one another sometimes exclusively, and form a kind of ‘subculture’. No doubt you would care deeply for someone close to you who had such a condition. And whether or not society considered it undesirable or even an illness, you would want to help. Undoubtedly, you would consider it worth ‘treating,’ that is, you would seek to help your relative, friend, or colleague by eliminating the condition entirely. The condition we are speaking of is alcoholism. . . And now imagine another friend or colleague who had a condition associated with a similar list of problems:

- A significantly decreased likelihood of establishing or preserving a successful marriage;
- A *twenty-five to thirty-year* decrease in life expectancy;
- Chronic, potentially fatal, liver disease— infectious hepatitis, which increased the risk of liver cancer;
- Inevitably fatal immune disease including associated cancers;
- Frequently fatal rectal cancer;
- Multiple bowel and other infectious disease;
- A much higher than usual incidence of suicide;
- A very low likelihood that its adverse effects can be eliminated unless the condition is;
- An at least 50 percent [probably more like 30 percent] of being eliminated through lengthy, and often costly, and very time-consuming treatment in an otherwise unselected group of sufferers (although a very high success rate, in some instances nearing 100 percent, for groups of highly motivated, carefully selected individuals.”

Many people suppose the higher rate of such things as substance abuse, depression, and suicide among homosexuals are caused by the rejection of homosexuals in society in general, but the same disfunctions among the homosexual community also exist in areas where they are widely accepted, like San Francisco (see Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, p. 475).

“What is the foundational understanding of human gender in the Bible? Why is this so?” READ Deuteronomy 22:5. God intended for male and female not to be confused, for in doing so we create social chaos, as we can see from the sports and bathroom problems mentioned earlier. But this chaos is becoming

more and more celebrated and mainstream. E.g., *Time* magazine (September 28, 2020; “I Didn’t Assign a Gender to My Kid. It’s Up to Them to Decide What Identity Fits Them Best”, by Kyl Myers, pp. 94-97) featured an essay by woman who has a gender-studies degree and Ph.D. in Sociology, Dr. Kyl Myers. Myers had a child with her partner and they named the child Zoomer and have let the child decide the gender. Myers tells Zoomer’s day care teachers to complement Zoomer on Zoomer’s painted toenails and let Zoomer play in the mud, and let Zoomer play with both Hot Wheels and the kitchen set. “When a character on a kids’s show says, “Hello, boys and girls!” Zoomer adds, “And nonbinary pals!” It is startling the way Myers ends her article—and notice that Zoomer is identified with third person plural pronouns, like “them” and “their”. “Around their fourth birthday, Zoomer started declaring a gender identity and claiming some gendered pronouns. . . . I’m witnessing my child create their own gender—and who Zoomer has become is greater than anything I could have imagined or assigned. Instead of us telling the children who they should be, maybe it’s the children who will teach us how to be. We just have to get our their way.” The good news is that children are told by their Creator who they are-- it’s on their chromosomes! 99% of the human population have no problem with this, and the 1% who do should be pitied and helped. And teaching a child that his or her gender identity is optional is tantamount to parental abuse.

“So, how should Christians approach the issue of sexuality/gender?” First, we should love and have compassion on anyone who claims to have a homosexual orientation or gender dysphoria. If someone who has a homosexual orientation cannot change to desire the opposite sex, then that person is called to celibacy, which is a condition Paul applauds in 1 Corinthians 7:36-40. But celibacy can be nearly impossible, and that is where the Holy Spirit and the believing community of the local church come in. Wesley Hill, a New Testament scholar who has a homosexual orientation and celibate, says this to the church: “‘Singleness’ as we

conceive of it in our culture is not the will of God at all. It is representative of a deeply fragmented society. Singleness in America typically means a lack of kinship connectedness.’ What those of us who are seeking to live celibate lives need to encouragement to pursue relationships of spiritual kinship in which our celibacy may become not an occasion of isolation, loneliness, and self-indulgence but rather a practice by which we may begin to learn alongside our married friends, the virtues of self-sacrifice and promise keeping” (*Washed and Waiting*, p. 199). Second, we should never give in to the pressure, which will surely be increasing in the future, to compromise biblical truth— God has made us male and female, and sex is a wonderful gift from God to be enjoyed only in a marriage between a man and a woman. And finally, for those of us who are not struggling with LGBTQ issues and those who are, let us keep God’s ways— sexual abstinence in singleness, and sexual faithfulness in marriage.