

Male and Female. Ancient Text, Modern Debate | Genesis 1:27 Sermon Discussion Leader's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To discuss how the Bible challenges us in order to equip us with God's vision for human health and welfare.

Sermon Refresher: Keith explored how gender is not a social construct, but a reality created by God. He challenged Christians to practically love those experiencing gender dysphoria (a mismatch between one's biological sex and internal sense of gender identity), while simultaneously submitting to God's vision for human welfare: there are two genders, male and female.

Icebreaker: New Testament scholar N.T. Wright said, "People thought the early Christians were crazy... But that they were good to have in the neighborhood." How do Christians in Columbia make "the neighborhood" better? What kinds of "crazy" things do we believe?

Transition: Some of the Bible's ethical teachings have always looked "crazy" to the world. In fact, it doesn't matter who you are, the Bible challenges everyone in different ways.

Discussion:

1. Share one part of the Bible's ethical system that you find most challenging.
(examples: greed, materialism, destructive language, pride, injustice toward the poor or foreigner, dishonesty, gluttony, sexual impurity, envy, laziness, idolatry).
2. Read Matthew 19:3-6, where Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27.

Matthew 19:3-6

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" **4** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife,

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and the two shall become one flesh'? **6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Transition Jesus was challenging his contemporaries' ideas about divorce, which was a hotly debated ethical topic in his time.

What do you think motivated Jesus to challenge his contemporaries?

3. Keith said, "Jesus wants what's best for people. He thought living by biblical sexual ethics is what's best for human welfare. Jesus says things go best when we live according to God's design. And he quoted Genesis to show God's original design." If we believe this is true, how does that change how we read challenging parts of the Bible?
4. The Bible's view of gender can be equally challenging today. Read Genesis 1:27.

Genesis 1:27

God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them

What does this passage teach us about God's design for gender and human flourishing?

5. Sin causes discontinuity between our minds (desires, feelings, thoughts) and our bodies (our actions & habits). We all experience this, even if we don't struggle with gender dysphoria. How do you see the discontinuity between mind and body in your own life?
6. At the end of Keith's sermon, he gave a list of questions he thinks Christians should be asking themselves:

Are we sure that the deconstruction of Gender is best for individuals given increased mental unrest and suicide rates from those who undergo sex-reassignment surgery? For children given the long-term effects of puberty blockers and the fact that 80% of children will identify with their biological gender by the end of puberty? For women wanting fairplay in sports? Is it logical given the fact that people cannot freely identify as other ethnicities,

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no matter what they feel inside? Given that they cannot demand a limb amputation even if they have body identity integrity disorder?

How do these questions challenge the way our culture discusses these issues?

7. Jesus not only challenges his followers by calling them to love *all people*. In Matthew 12:31 he says the second greatest commandment is to "Love your neighbor as yourself." No one is to be excluded from Christian love. How do both sides of the transgender debate demonize rather than love their neighbor?
8. How do you think Christians can offer Jesus's healing love to those who identify as transgendered or struggle with gender dysphoria?

Prayer: As a small group, pray for people in our local community who identify as transgender and struggle with gender dysphoria. Pray for Jesus' healing for bodies, emotions, and minds.