

Identity (Re)Defined 3 - God (Re)Defines my physical and sexual identity

Intro

In this series we have been talking about what we think of ourselves and how we find our identity. This is, and has always been, a crucial topic for middle and high school students. The reason that this is so important is because for the first time in your life, you are becoming your own person in your thoughts, interests, and beliefs, not because of your parents but because that's who you are.

That is not to say that your parents can't or won't have any influence on who you become during these years, in fact they will have a significant impact on you for better or worse. Additionally, you will be influenced by your friends, teachers, mentors, music, movies, and all forms of social media. Who you become and how you identify will be a combination of all of these things. Not surprisingly, God has a lot to say about who are you and what you can become and for this series we will consider the wisdom and advice we can learn from God as we all consider who you are and who you are becoming.

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

John 8:31-32

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith = Believing the Bible is true regardless of my thoughts, feelings, or circumstances.

Last week we looked at Rahab and Paul who could have been defined by where they came from and the choices they made. However, God redefined their past identity and used their story to show his grace and mercy and used them in a very big way.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (Made new)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- In Christ we are completely new, nothing of the old sinful self remains.

Today we are going to talk about our physical, gender, and sexual identity. There is so many things that can and do inform our thoughts and opinions of this topic both for ourselves and others. However, if we believe that the Bible is true, then regardless of how think about yourself or how you feel about another person, we must hold on to the truth of God's design and purpose for us.

Uniquely Created (self image/gender)

Psalm 139:1-5

1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me! 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. 5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

- God knows you intimately, he knows everything about you.
- He knows your likes, dislikes, passions, and longings of your hearts
- He knows because he loves and cares deeply for you.

Psalm 139:13-14

13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

- Everything in you and about you is there on purpose
- God formed every part of you inside and out and He did so with loving and tender care
- God makes no mistakes

Created With Purpose (gender)

Genesis 1:26-28

26 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."

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

28 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."

- God makes male and female, both uniquely and separately represent God in His image equally
- God's direction to men and women is to "fill the earth and subdue it"
 - This biblical mandate is how we represent the tender loving care God has for all creation by our tender and loving care of the world around us.
 - God's purpose is for men and women to work together to do this

Genesis 2:18-25

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 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. 20 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.

21 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. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 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."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

- God created people to need and desire relationships. Friends, family, and romantic relationships are all a part of "its not good that man should be alone"
- God created the woman to help the man complete the task to bearing God's image on the earth
- The man was capable of completing the task on his own.
- He needed help to complete his purpose.
 - We need relationships with the opposite gender (family, friends, and sometimes romantic) to have a fulfilling life and to live a life in service to God.
 - We cannot do life alone and we cannot do it people just like us. We need different perspectives and insight that we cannot get ourselves or from people just like us.
- God charged the man with tending to his part of the world, that is his primary purpose in life.
- God charged the woman to help and empower the man to accomplish his purpose, he cannot do it alone

Gender roles in marriage (sexuality/gender)

1 Peter 3:5-7

5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

- One of the primary ways men and women serve God together is through marriage.
- Notice God gives different roles to husbands and wives to have fulfilling and God honoring marriage
 - Wives submit to their husbands - not as a slave but as a helper to his leadership and direction
 - Husband honor their wives - "as the weaker vessel" speaks to the woman's quality and high value, her physical strength or position in the marriage.
 - Think of the different between fine china and paper plates. One you take care of and treat with great regard, the other you throw away when you are done with it.

Ephesians 5:22-28

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

- Wives are to submit to their husband as the church submits to Christ.
- The church willingly and lovingly submits to Jesus in response to the love and care he has shown them
- In the same way the wife submits to the husband in response to the love and care shown her by her husband

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 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. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

- Husbands are charged to love and care for their wives in the same way that Jesus loves and cared for the church by his sacrifice, commitment, and care shown to them.

Ephesians 5:32-33

32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

- The picture of marriage is to be a witness to the outside world of God's love and care for them and that loving submission to him is a life-giving and something to be desired.
- This picture is dependent on the marriage being between one man and one woman. Anything other than this is a distortion of God's purpose and design for marriage.

Gender roles for singles (gender/image)

1 Corinthians 11:32-34

32 The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

- Whether married or unmarried a person's focus is not themselves. Your life is not for you or about you. Life is not about doing whatever makes you happy. Our mandate is to serve God when things are good and when things are bad.

1 Corinthians 11:11-12

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

- God's purpose for males and females starts as a child obeying their parents
- This obedience continues into adolescence and adulthood focusing more on being obedient to God by serving Him and/or serving your spouse and family.
- This obedience is our responsibility that we will answer to God for, any deliberate departure from God's purpose and design for your life is sin.
- Both men and women each individually and uniquely embody the image of God. You do not need to be married to complete God's purpose for your life.
- God created us to need other people to have good life, we need male and female relationships in our family, friends, and for most in romantic relationships.

God takes all this seriously

Romans 1:24-32

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 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.

- God has very harsh words for people who choose not to live and honor God
- The focus of this passage is how people view their own bodies and impure things they do with their bodies

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 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.

- God directly opposes passionate or romantic relationships with the same sex.
- Same sex relationships are not an accurate picture that God designed romantic relationships to portray
- Same sex relationships are in direct opposition to God's purpose and design for marriage

28 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. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

- Here we see the cost of disregarding God's design and purpose for how he created you and who he created you to be
- God does not directly punish those who do this, He simply gives them up to follow the natural and devastating consequences of their actions.

God designed each person uniquely and carefully. Your gender and everything else about you was purposefully and carefully crafted by God. We need relationships with other people to live a God-honoring and fulfilling life, however choosing to have relationships that are contrary to God's purpose can and do have devastating consequences. However, we honor and obey God's purpose and design for our lives, we are filled with life-giving purpose and fulfillment.

Discussion Questions

- What was the most meaningful thing to you about today's lesson?
- How does or should your self image be impacted by knowing God carefully crafted everything about you?
- Why is it sometimes hard to see ourselves the way God sees us?
- In your own words, why do you think God created you uniquely the way that you are?
- In what ways have you seen culture try to normalize things that are opposite of God's design and purpose for gender and relationships?
- How does the truth of the Bible impact someone who has questions about their gender identity?
- Is it possible for someone to be a Christian and struggle with gender identity?
 - How can faith help them in their struggle?
- Do you think it's possible for someone to have same sex attraction and be Christian?
 - How can faith help someone like this?
- In your own words how does someone individually fulfill God's purpose and design for your life?
- How do relationships with family and friends help us fulfill God's purpose and design?
- How would you describe God's gender roles for husbands and wives?
 - Can you think of examples you have seen this being lived out with people you know
 - Would describe God's purpose and design for marriage as good? Why or why not?
- How can someone who is single use and apply God's truth about gender roles for marriage?
- Why do you think God takes such great concern over His design for gender and sexuality?
- In your own words, how does God's word show that His design is better than anything else?