

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Wes Butler (with commentary from Jonathan Pokluda)  
Series: Uncommon Family  
May 15, 2022

### Uncommon Men and Women

JP:

Good Morning Church! It's great to be with you this morning. I know that we probably have some graduating high school seniors in the room. Anyone here graduating from high school? If you are, would you stand up for a second? (Crowd Cheers.) OK, yeah. Look at them. That's great! Stay standing for just a minute and then let me ask you this. Any college graduates? Any people graduating from Baylor, MCC, TSTC? Any college graduates? Oh yeah! Little delayed there, but we got to it. We got to it. You did it! You guys did it. I'm proud of you. Thank you guys, so much. Just for standing and allowing us to acknowledge you.

One of the things that I was most excited about when we sensed the Lord calling our family here, was the opportunity to send missionaries around the world. And just as they would come here for four years, in some cases 5, 6, 7, 8 years. And just learn and really be disciplined here; be equipped in God's word here; and then go in corporate America, in schools, in companies, and all kinds of situations around the world and be a light.

So here last week, we had an elder retreat. So the elders and our wives went and prayed and planned and celebrated. We thanked God for all that He's doing here. We looked ahead. We said, "God, what else do you want to do?" We spent extended time just praying and asking him to continue to be a part of this. Then I came back for two nights and then went back out with the staff. And so then we had staff retreat. It's not like...retreat is a little bit of a misnomer because it's a lot of planning, a lot of praying, and some playing as well in the midst of that. You can see my voice is a little shot just from yelling and celebrating and not sleeping. So, as a result of those things, we have a guest preacher. A guest pastor this morning.

We're in a series, Uncommon Family, and you're going to get to hear from my friend, Wes Butler, who has served in parenting ministry, family ministry, and kids ministry for over 10 years. He is someone that I reach out to when I get stumped or if I'm in a situation, I will be like, "Hey, have you seen this? What would you do here?" He is an expert and I know Scott Kedersha on our staff calls and talks to Wes frequently as well. And so, he is someone that we learn from.

He does have an uncommon family. He's going to tell you more about that, but I'll just say this. Something that ministered to me early in my walk with Jesus was that his family was adopting, they were going to grow their family through adoption. I'm not sure if you're aware, adoption is expensive. So, they got their community involved in that. They were raising support to be able to grow their family through these meetings and they began to ask the question, what do we have of

value? And so, one of the things that they had of value was their wedding rings. And so, they sold their wedding rings to be able to grow their family through adoption. And that's a story that just ministered to me early on, to hold this world loosely, and to continue to think about what is on the heart of God.

When I think about pastors who serve with the heart of God, you're going to see this this morning, I think about Wes Butler. Wes, would you come out here for me for just a second? So, this is him. This is the grand unveiling, haha. (Crowd applauds.) You see the 11:00 AM, they're friendlier than the 9 a.m. because I didn't have to ask them to applaud, you know. The 9 a.m. we had to bribe them, but they're just excited that you're here. Brother, thank you for opening God's word with us today. I'm excited to get to learn from my friend, Wes Butler.

Wes Butler:

Thank you, brother. Well, I will tell you that everyone should have the opportunity to be introduced by Jonathan Pokluda at some point in time. Because if you're ever feel a little bit down on yourself, just let JP say nice things about you. Then you are like, "Eh, yeah. I'm actually OK."

It is good to be with you guys, Harris Creek. It is a privilege for me, and I love getting to step into the series that you guys are in on the Uncommon Family. I do want to introduce you to my uncommon family. They're not here today. They were here, part of them were here for the first service. (Picture on Screen) This is my crew here. My wife Brady and I have been married...are celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary on July 5<sup>th</sup> - so just about six weeks from now. Amazing! Yeah, you can clap. Don't clap for me. The Lord did that and my sweet wife put up with a lot. And so, I'm so thankful for that. And then we have these four crazy and amazing kiddos. So, my oldest, Josiah, is a senior in high school - headed off to the mystical land of Stillwater, OK, in the fall to be an Oklahoma State Cowboy. So, you can pray for us there. And then my daughter Selah, is 17-year-old junior. Malachi is 14 years old and in 8th grade. Then Sweet Ella is a 6th grader, she's 12. But let's not kid ourselves, they're all teenagers and we're dealing with all the hormones. Pray for us. It's a lot of fun!

I do want to tell you a story about my oldest. When he was - this is a picture of him when he was cute, OK. (Picture shows on screen.) So, if you go to the next picture there, yeah. See, he used to be cute. Once upon a time. This is Josiah. When he was about five years old or so my wife and him were driving back from somewhere. It was dark, late at night, and they're driving in the car. He's kind of quiet and just reflective. And he's looking out the window as he's sitting there in his car seat. Then he speaks up and he says, "Mama. I love the stars. The stars are so awesome." And my sweet wife, in this moment, she kind of went, "Oh, my baby. He's this blossoming poet. He's sweet and so tender and sensitive and all the things. This is going to be so great." And so, she wanted to capitalize on the teachable moment and just said, "Yes, Josiah, the stars are beautiful! But you know what? More than all the stars in the universe, God loves you more than them." So, he kind of takes that in and waits a few minutes, still kind of reflecting as he stares out the window. He speaks up again. He goes, "Yeah, mom. The stars are just so cool! And I

really love it when they punch each other in the face and there's blood everywhere.” So, my wife is like, “what's happening?”

Well, what my wife had forgotten was that just a couple of nights before this, I had had the chance to take my son to his first ever hockey game. We had some very generous friends who gave us tickets. We were sitting right behind the goalie, right up against the glass and the greatest fight in NHL history broke out right in front of us. I mean, the cleanest punch you've ever seen land. It just cut this guy square in the nose, blood gushes everywhere. There's people coming and scraping it up off the ice because it had frozen to the ice. He's just looking at all of it thinking, ‘this is great’. And so that sweet, tender boy, that my wife was maybe hopeful that she was going to get was not the sweet, tender boy after all. It was just a rough and tumble – “Hey, we're going to go and fight somebody, and blood is really cool – kind of boy.

Here's what I want you to know didn't happen in that story. See in that little kind of one minute window in which my wife thought that my son was just this sweet, kind, tenderhearted, little boy, what she didn't ask herself, was, “Huh, I wonder if that's a sign that he's not really the gender that he says he is or that is on his birth certificate?”. See that question wasn't even on the horizon. Some of you are like, “Wait, we're going there?” Yes, we're going there. The reality is, is that that was 12 or 13 years ago and now 12 or 13 years later, it is almost an assumed question that our culture is throwing at us. Is to go, “Hey, you know what? Gender or sexuality? It is a very fluid thing. It is something that you can dictate on your own and decide for yourself, whatever you're feeling.” So, what we are living in the midst of as people who seek to be the people of God, an uncommon family, we are living in the midst of that Modern Family that says, ‘No listen, whatever you feel you do you. You be who you were made to be, and whatever you feel is reality.’ As opposed to fundamental, ontological, biological reality - we are allowing our feelings to dictate who we are.

So, this morning, as we dive into and continue this series on the uncommon family, here's what we're going to look at. We're going to look at what it means to be uncommon men and women in a culture that is consistently blurring the lines between the two, and maybe even saying the two are just these, like, social constructs that we've just created for ourselves. And what we as the people of God, we the church, want to acknowledge is that gender is not a social construct. Gender is something that God has designed and created and given to us as a good thing. It is something He has given to us to bring glory to Himself. But this is this idea is not just kind of out there, it is right here on our doorstep.

I just want to tell you, literally this week, I sat with a community group on Tuesday night in our church. They had, over the last several months, have been wrestling through and processing over what they should do about their children. Their children have been enrolled in a private Christian School, associated with a mainline denomination, and that school is now promoting a transgender agenda. They are integrating bathrooms and locker rooms. So, they've had to wrestle with, “Hey, do we need to pull our kids out of the school?” That's this week.

One of my closest friends in the world, I have watched the last several months wrestle with how to engage with her family. She has a preschool aged nephew who has told his parents that he no

longer identifies as a boy, that he wants to be a girl. My friend's sister is embracing this and saying, "Sure that's great!" and then forcing that upon my friend and saying that if you don't affirm this decision, then you can no longer be a part of our family. So, I've got that going on. In my own community group, some of my friends - just not too long ago - they really had to figure out things. Their kids were going off on a school field trip, except that they knew that there was a little girl who identified as a boy who was also going on this field trip and planned to stay in the same cabin with the other boys. And they had to wrestle with what do we do with this? And then all of that in the context of just watching my own children wrestle with some of the questions that are being thrown at them by their peers at school - maybe you're this and maybe you're that.

So, the reality is that today, our kids are wrestling with and having to give answers to questions that literally no one was even asking 10 years ago. And we, as the people of God, can either get caught off guard by that or we can be ready to respond to that. So that's what we want to do with our time together this morning; to understand that the uncommon family knows that gender and sexuality is a divine construct created and shaped by our infinitely wise God, who has our best interests in mind. And He's designed it in such a way as to allow us to flourish in this world - the one that He created.

So how is it then that we, the people of God, make sense of the confusion around us? And how do we engage with that confusion in such a way that we might bring clarity and light and life to those around us? And then maybe more than that, how do we preserve and conserve God's original design, His intent for Creation? So that He might be glorified through us as we live out our lives as followers of Jesus in this culture. So, what I want to do is I want us to take a look at the biblical worldview and how that informs how we should think about this. Then I want to give you four principles that I think are helpful to us, as the people of God, and how we engage in this culture.

If you have your Bibles and you want to turn with me, we're just going to start at the very beginning in Genesis 1. Genesis 1, 2, and 3 are probably the most important chapters in all of your Bible. Because if they aren't real, if they are not true, then honestly nothing else makes sense after them, including the reality that we are living in today. So, in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 we see the biblical worldview come into place. So, I'm going to give you this slide really quick. This is just these five principles of a biblical worldview. And then we're going to look at them really quickly in the text and then talk about those things.

1. God Created Everything
2. Everything God Created Was Good
3. Sin Marred God's Good Creation
4. God Redeemed Creation Through Jesus
5. God Will Restore Creation

The first one is - God created everything. Everything that you've seen and everything that you experience, God is the creator and the designer of it. Not only is He the creator and designer of it, but that what He created is good. He created it with goodness and with good intent. So literally everything that was created He deemed good or very good as he walked through the seven days of Creation. Then third, what we know is that sin then stepped into the picture, and it marred that creation. So, what was good all of a sudden had a stain on it. So, now there is this wrestle of, "Gosh, it doesn't feel good anymore. It feels broken." So, sin has swept into the world through the temptation of Eve and Adam in such a way that it has marred everything around us, and yet God didn't just stop there. He didn't give up, but rather He redeemed that creation through the death and resurrection of His son. And then ultimately, that fifth principle, is that God intends to restore Creation and make all things new again.

So this is the reality of why we sing a song that says:

Do you feel that the world is broken? And we all respond with what? We do.

Do you feel the shadows deepen? And we all say? We do.

And not just because that's what you're supposed to say in the song, but because when you hear that you're like, "Actually... When I turn on my television and I hear about what happened in Buffalo yesterday, I do. This world is broken." But then there's hope, right? When it says: but do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through? What is that? That's the redemptive work of God. And of course, we respond with, we do. We believe that. But do you wish that you could see it all made new? Yes, we do. So, we're longing for that.

So that's that biblical worldview. So, how does that then inform us as we're thinking about gender and how to help our families to live out God's divine intention for gender? Well again, if we just look at Genesis 1:27, we have this reality right here in the Word. **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.** Then skip on down to verse 31. **And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.** And so, we see right there, God created everything, male and female. And then He created it and deemed it as good. And yet if we go on down, we see this unpacked even further in Chapter 2:18. It says, **Then the Lord God said, "It is not good..."** This is the first time that God said something was not good. ...**"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him helper fit for him."** And then we skip down to Genesis 2:21, **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. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.** And then we skip down to verse 25 where it says, **And the man and his wife were both naked and unashamed.**

So, we see this goodness that God has created and instilled and designed as male and female; complimentary of one another and working together in such a beautiful way that God is glorified in that. Yet we just go on to the next chapter and in Genesis 3:6-7 and it says, **So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and**

**they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloth.** So, what happens? Well sin enters the world and then look what Adam and Eve do. They say, well, sin is here; something is broken. I don't know if you have thought about this, but I don't think that Adam and Eve fully understood what was broken, it was just all of a sudden, their eyes were opened and they knew something is not right here. And so, they get to work going, "Well, I think maybe we can fix this." Guys, that's the culture that we are living in too, today. We are still Adam and Eve trying to sew together fig leaves to try to right things that we think are wrong but doing so in our own way. And yet when you read down through the rest of the narrative of Genesis 3, you realize that God goes, "Hey guys, nice fashion statement with the fig leaves and all, but I'm just telling you that it's actually the shedding of blood that covers your sins." So, we're told that God takes an animal and slaughters it and wraps Adam and Eve in the blood-soaked skins of animals as their covering. What was He doing? He was foreshadowing the redemptive work that He was going to do through the blood of Jesus.

Yet again, we're still living in a culture today and we are prone to it ourselves. Going, "Man, that feels broken." or "I know I messed that up, but I know that I can fix it." "So, I'm going to orchestrate things in my life. Whether it's technology or medicine or hormone treatments or surgery or whatever. I'm going to do so in such a way... or I'm going to redefine the laws of the land so that I can marry who I want to marry and be with who I want to be with. All of those things." And we just start going, 'Oh, man, it's a lot of fig leaves.' And God is asking us to trust in His redemptive work.

And so how do we then, as the people of God, respond to a culture that is sewing those fig leaves together? And we are kind of being forced to live in the midst of some of those temporary and poor solutions. Well, I want to give you 4 things today and it goes back to that word MADE. This is something that God made. It's this idea that we are reclaiming the biblical ideal of what God made men and women to be and so: M A D E. It's something I hope you can remember as you walk away from today. Just 4 principles for us as the redeemed people of God reclaiming this.

*1. Uncommon men and women are made when we model biblical womanhood and manhood.*

When we begin to model these things, you see this isn't something that God designed and you're like, 'OK, now let's go and redesign it however you want to know.' No, no. He's given us His word and when we place ourselves under the authority of His word, and we begin to study passages like Ephesians 5 or Proverbs 31 or Titus 2, when we begin to look at the person of Jesus who is intended to be the bridegroom in this perfect representation of the bridegroom serving his bride, all of a sudden, things start to come into focus. Then we are called to live it out. Jesus actually faced this type of questioning. "Hey, wait, isn't it OK that we kind of go a different way." In Matthew 19, the Pharisees come to him in verse three, and they test Him asking is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? So, what they're saying is, "Hey, can we kind of dumb down what God designed and created?" Jesus steps in and He says, "Well, look, have you not read what is good for you? **Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said therefore man shall leave his father and his**

**mother and hold fast to his wife? The two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.**

So, Jesus steps in and He goes, 'Look there is a design for biblical manhood and womanhood that you have the opportunity to live in the midst of.' Now we don't have time today, there's a whole other series here where we could talk about what is a biblical man or what is a biblical woman. We're not going to cover that ground today, but again, if we give ourselves to the study of it, we understand that there are roles that we get to play that are a glory to God.

Just this week, I heard this quote by John Piper and reflecting on his own childhood that I thought was so helpful as we think about this. He just said,

When I was a boy growing up in Greenville, SC, my father was away from the home about 2/3 of the year preaching across the country. He said, my mother handled the finances, paying all the bills. She once ran a little laundry business on the side and was active on the park board. She taught me how to cut the grass and splice electric cord and pulled Bermuda grass by the roots and paint the eaves. To shine the dining room table with a shammy, and drive a car, and keep French fries from getting soggy in the cooking oil.

At this point I'm feeling very inadequate because I don't know how to do like three quarters of those things. Right? He said,

I heard one time that women don't sweat, they glow. Not true! My mother sweated. She dealt with the contractors when we added a basement. More than once, put her hands to the shovel. She was strong. But it never occurred to me to think of my mother and my father in the same category. Unmistakably, my father was a man, and my mother was a woman.

Isn't that great? See, the reality is that we can't get away from the reality that we were created male and female, that there are good things about that. We are not ever in a good place when we are desiring to be something other than what God has designed us to be. So, the first thing that we have the opportunity to do, church, is that we get to live those principles out in the way that we love and lead and sacrifice and help, in all the roles that we have been called to live out as the people of God. So, the first principle is just this, that we want to model biblical manhood and womanhood.

*2. Uncommon men and women are made when we avoid gender stereotypes.*

This is such a key one. Sometimes you might look at that list that John Piper just rattled off and you just go, 'Oh, man, that sounds like all the things for a man.' And that, quite honestly, is a shortsighted, narrow view of what biblical manhood and womanhood looks like. Instead, what we need to do is we need to broaden our horizons, our understanding, and realize that so much of what we deem as masculine or feminine is actually neither one and both all at the same time. You see, oftentimes we hear about the gender spectrum. You have kind of the masculine side over here and the feminine side over here and we all kind of live within this spectrum.

My friend Sue Bohlin wrote a blog post where she talked about the gender spectrum, and in it, she just argues the reality is that there really isn't one gender spectrum. There are two gender spectrums. There is the male gender spectrum and there's the female gender spectrum. So, a male can look like a lot of different things. He can be that tender hearted sweet little boy that's a blossoming poet in the backseat, looking at the stars. And it can be the boy who's over here going, 'No, no. I'd really like to see someone get punched and blood go everywhere.' There is nothing about either end of that spectrum that makes that little boy less of a man than the other end of the spectrum. The same thing is true for women. It's okay that there are women on this gender spectrum that exist and exhibit things that we would say, in our understanding, culturally of what is masculine. 'Oh well, that's more masculine. She's climbing trees and chasing after lizards. She is getting dirty and all that.' And then you've got the girl over here who is like, 'Don't let me get near the mud.' Right? Neither one of those are less of a woman because they exhibit those things.

So, what we have done unintentionally and some of the lies that we've been fed is that, 'Hey, there is this thing that determines what is feminine and what is masculine.' And the reality is we need to avoid those gender stereotypes. We need to avoid those things. And so, we see this in the scriptures. Men like David, who are over here in one moment, strumming on a harp, writing a great poem, cuddling with the sheep, right? And in the very next moment, he's grabbing his slingshot to go fend off the bear, fight the giant, and lead armies into battle. We see that he is a man's man. He is God's man. A man after God's own heart.

And we see characters like Deborah in the Book of Judges. Who in one moment is having to stand in the gap because the men around her were weak. She's saying, 'Well, look, I'll show you how to lead an army.' And so, she does. She leads an army forward and then literally in the very next chapter she writes a song of praise and adoration to her God. In both of those moments, she is exhibiting the full extent of her feminine nature. It is a glory to God, and we have this opportunity to avoid making those stereotypes.

So, real practically speaking, my wife has been such a champion in this in our home. We largely avoid the kind of jokes that say, 'Well, you do such and such like a girl.' So, I grew up on Sandlot. There's that great scene in Sandlot right where it's like you throw like a girl. You play baseball like a girl. Ohhh - so bad. And that's kind of like the running joke. And yet what we do when we joke that way in our own homes, we begin to plant seeds of doubt in our children. That once again because of the way that culture is going, they are beginning to go well, "Maybe I am. Maybe I am less of a man because I don't do this the same way that all the other boys do. Maybe I am less of a girl because I don't do this the same way that all the other girls do."

And parents, let me just encourage you. We have an opportunity to really affirm in our children their unique design by God, which is our next principle. So, we want to model biblical manhood and womanhood. We want to avoid gender stereotypes.

### *3. Uncommon men and women delight in diversity.*

We want to delight in the wide range that is on that spectrum, in such a way that our children feel loved and valued for who they were created to be. One of my favorite heroes, if you will, of kind



of contemporary society is a man named Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers was not just a TV personality. Mr. Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian pastor who just so happened to do his ministry on the television. As he loved children, as he shepherded their hearts, as he helped them to navigate some of the hard things. One of the things that Mr. Rogers was most well-known for was just to make sure that he told every child, or stagehand on his production team, or guest that he might have on his show, “Hey, I like you just the way you are.” And what he was affirming there is, he was not affirming lifestyle choices. He was not affirming, ‘Hey you go and be you.’ He was just saying, ‘Look, God has designed you and the way that God has designed you is beautiful.’ In that way, he was reflecting the heart of God and passages like Psalm 18:19, where God is looking at you and me as His children. He's saying, **He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.**

Parents, do your kids know that you like them? Do your kids know that you like them? That you like who they are? Or do they feel like, and I'll just acknowledge that this is sometimes my ditch. My struggle is, I want to be my kid's biggest cheerleader, but oftentimes I'm their harshest critic. “Hey, why can't you do this better? Why can't you be like that?” Rather than delighting in who they are and acknowledging that it's good. It's glorious. Zephaniah 3:17 says, **The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness...**

Parents, do you rejoice over your children in the ways that they're created? Have you felt rejoiced over, friends? Because your God delights in you. This is not an affirming of a lifestyle choice. This is just an acknowledgement, “Hey, there is a unique design and we can celebrate the diversity of that design on that spectrum in such a way that God is glorified; our church is built up; and we get to flourish in the midst of it.” So, we model godly biblical manhood and womanhood. We avoid gender stereotypes. We delight in diversity. The final principle here is just this.

#### *4. Uncommon men and women empathize with the broken.*

The reality is that what we are seeing in our culture, once again, is an attempt in which we are being told, ‘Hey, the broken is not broken, it's normal. And you need to embrace it and to accept it for what it is.’ And yet there's something in all of us that's going, ‘Well, it doesn't feel normal. It feels broken.’ And even the individuals - here's the crazy thing - there's all the stats that are being thrown at us as parents of, like, “Hey, you need to be really careful because the suicide rates of kids who have this leaning towards transgenderism, like they're through the roof.” And yet, what they don't tell you is that those suicide rates actually stay for those kids who do transition. Why? Because they did the thing that they thought would satisfy their hearts, and yet they found that there was still brokenness. What we are tempted to do, as we hear those stories or we see those individuals or interact with them, is maybe we're tempted to kind of put them in a place of like, ‘Oh man, they're those people. They're the enemy out there.’ And yet what we as the people of God should do is what our savior did. Acknowledge that there's a brokenness there.

And first, it starts with us acknowledging that we are broken too. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, **Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice**

**homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God.** And then Paul says this, **and such were some of you.** What's he saying? 'Hey, that brokenness over here is no different than the brokenness that God met you at.' And then look at what he says. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified...** By the way, all of these things are not things that I did. It's things that were done to me by a loving Savior. **...you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God.** And so, as we hear about the brokenness that's out there, what we should be acknowledging is these are people who need the same thing that I need. They need to be washed. They need to be sanctified. They need to be justified in the name of Jesus. Our brokenness is no different than their brokenness.

All of our gender and sexuality is broken; every one of us because of the presence of sin in this world. It's just a matter of how it manifests itself. So, we have an opportunity to empathize with the broken rather than to demonize the broken, which is what we're tempted to do. We see this in the person of Jesus, in one of my favorite moments in all the Gospels. It is in Matthew 9:35-38, **And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them...** Notice what He didn't do. He didn't go, 'Oh man, there's those people again.' No, He had compassion on them. Why? **...because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ...** "Guys, us disciples. You. Me. We, who identify with Jesus. Guys do you see the broken that are out there? The harvest is plentiful, but there's few people going to them. So go and empathize with their brokenness and let them know that there is redemption that is possible. Go into the fields."

I went, last weekend actually, with my daughter, I got to go with her as a guest to a high school dance with a bunch of kids, a bunch of knuckleheads. It was great. And I walked away from that dance just so heavy hearted as I watched kids trying so desperately to find their way. And it literally was this visual - like I am at a dance with a bunch of sheep who have no shepherd. They have no North Star. They've been left to kind of figure this thing out on their own. Who are you? Are you attracted in this way? Are you identified in this way? And it just left me heavy hearted. And yet the call of Jesus is, 'Hey, let's go.'

Just a few weeks ago there was an article that was written up in World Magazine. Which I commend to you if you are not familiar with World Magazine, you should get familiar with it. Go to [wng.org](http://wng.org) - World News Group. [wng.org](http://wng.org) The cover story of that particular issue of the magazine was *Laura to Jake and Back Again*. It was a story of a woman named Laura Perry. I think we have a picture of her up here. (Picture shows on screen.) Laura Perry. Laura, in her early 20s, learned about transgenderism. She learned about it on the Internet. She searched for it on Google, and she began the transition to or the journey of transitioning to become Jake. After all, that's how she felt like she was. And so, after years of feeling like she should have been born a boy, she took all the steps - the hormones, surgeries, everything, and began to make this journey.

So again, sometimes we hear that and we're like, 'Oh my gosh, what's wrong with her?' Well, listen to maybe what might have been wrong with Laura. This isn't everyone's story, but this was Laura's story. See that wasn't the beginning of the story. Laura was born into a family with a mom who had suffered two traumatic late term miscarriages. Her mom was so emotionally impacted by those things that she really distanced herself from Laura when Laura was born. So, she never had a great relationship with her mom. At the age of eight and again at nine, Laura was molested by two different boys older than her. And then she hid those things, never told anyone until she was 33 years old that that had ever happened to her. And as a result of the shame of that, she pulled away from her dad. So, this relationship she had with her dad, she pulled away from it. So now Laura is on her own, trying to figure out life. She begins to engage in multiple inappropriate relationships with boys. She becomes addicted to pornography and joins the adult hookup culture online. She even dabbles in the occult. This is Laura's story. There's so much pain and confusion. She's like a sheep without a shepherd, so she tried to soothe her pain with multiple surgeries, hormone treatments, and yet another relationship. This time in a relationship with a man who identified as a woman, all in an effort to just sew those fig leaves together. 'If I could just sew this fig leaf together, I'll feel better. I'll feel better. I'll feel better.'

Meanwhile, Laura's mom Francine met Jesus. She surrendered her life to Christ and began to study her Bible and started inviting Laura, "Hey, would you come?" As Jake, "Would you come and just study the Bible with me? Would you read these things?" As Laura began to understand the goodness of the Gospel, her eyes were opened in such a way that she herself embraced the Gospel of Jesus and she changed. She traded in her fig leaf sewing for the blood covering of Jesus. It changed her everything; changed everything.

So, I don't know where you are as you're sitting there. If you're just like, 'Man, I can't even imagine that world for me.' But the reality is we are all sewing fig leaves together if we are leaving ourselves to our own devices. We are all in desperate need of the redemption that comes only through the blood of Jesus. So maybe you are one of those individuals who struggles in that way and wondering whether you were a mistake or that God created you wrong or whatever it might be. And we want you to know that there is a safe place among the people of God because we too have been redeemed. We have stopped sewing fig leaves together in order to soothe those pains and those longings in our heart. And we have found the blood of Jesus to be the only sufficient solution for it. We invite you to come and be a part of it.

But for so many of us, we have experienced that, and the question is, will we go? Will we be the people of God, the ambassadors to say, 'Hey, there is a better way!' Will we shy away from those people because we've demonized them, or will we go to them? Will we see people as a problem to be solved or will we see them as people to be served? God has called us to be His ambassadors, to serve and to engage a broken, very confused world. And the way that we model our own Biblical manhood and womanhood, and the way that we avoid those gender stereotypes, and the way that we really delight in the diversity around us, and then in the way that we empathize with them. Would you join me in doing that? And what might happen in our world is the people of God step into the gap.

Let me pray.

Father, we thank you. That you have stepped into the gap for us. Thank you that you sent Jesus to stand in our place and to take the punishment for our sin. We are all broken. We are all sinners, in desperate need of a savior. And Lord, you stepped in. Not when we had cleaned ourselves up and sewed the right amount of fig leaves together, but when we were broken and bloody and beaten up by our sin. You stepped in at the right time. You died for us. And so, God we give you the praise and the glory for that. Lord, as people who have been redeemed in that way, would you help us to be those who go to the harvest fields that are ripe unto harvest. To tell the sheep that are without a shepherd, that there is a Good Shepherd who has given His life for them. Who has laid down His life for them, so that they might have life? God, would you do that through us. Father, I pray for anyone who is here, and perhaps they're feeling right in this moment, 'Gosh, I feel like I am that sheep. And I don't feel like I have a shepherd.' Lord, would today be the day that they would encounter you. That they would see you for who you are. That they would know all that you have done for them, that they would know that you love them. That you made them exactly how they are, and that what you made is good. And that you alone can redeem them. Lord, I pray that today might be that day of redemption, of salvation for them. So, God may you be glorified in our families. Lord, help us to be uncommon families in a way that would bring glory and honor to you and would cause good to just flood over all of our communities; starting here at this church and everywhere we might go. I pray all this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

JP:

Would you guys have a seat? Let me say this right here, a series on parenting is ripe to heap shame on your shoulders. Okay? I know how the enemy wants to work in that. Whenever you are talking about, 'this is what the family should like' and we start examining our family and we leave here and we are like, "Oh, we are not doing this right." We tend to overcorrect and whatnot. So, I heard this quote some time ago and I want to put it in front of you and I want you to hold fast to it throughout this series. As parents, we take too much credit when our kids turn out well. Okay? And we take too much blame when they do not. Extraordinary children, it is often an extraordinary grace. Sometimes God just moves. So, as we talk about what's happening in the home and effects from that, I want you to know some of the most dysfunctional children that I know of – prodigals that have not returned yet – have come from some of the most godliest homes I have ever seen. Homes that I have been inside of and parents that I know very, very well. So, the world, Genesis 3, the world is broken and so there are all kinds of outcomes that can happen. Just as you can't determine obedience from the outcome. You can't look at the outcome and decide that you have done something wrong either. Sometimes you have just done a whole lot right and things spin out and that is where you just receive grace; pray a lot; and you rest well, and you trust the Lord.

I have had, just through the journey that God has had me on as an adult, I've had a really unique opportunity to counsel hundreds of young adults - the results of parenting, if you will. And so, I've seen people in some really tough spots. Names flash before my eyes. I remember meeting with a young man and as we talked about his story, he could not say the word abandonment. He

literally, physically could not bring himself to a place to say the word abandonment because his parents had left him. He could not say it. I mean, there was a stronghold in his life. He couldn't get that word out.

But one of the most challenging young adults I've ever had the privilege to counsel, his parents were very much involved in his life. Too involved. His issue was something they call enmeshment. His life was completely intertwined with his parents, and then as an adult, a 20 something year old male he didn't know how to live his life separate from his parents. This young man and me, we had quite the journey of me removing guns from his possession and finding him under a bridge one day. Talking him off a ledge. There are lots of stories there that when you begin to peel back the layers, what was foundational to the problem was something that I'll call distorted compassion.

We know that as Christians, we are to be compassionate. Jesus was compassionate. He is compassionate. He moves toward those who could do nothing for them. He responds with compassion. And there's some very compassionate people here at Harris Creek, like bleeding hearts. They find the need, meet the need, would empty their savings account to care for someone. You always have to balance that with truth. There are also people here that use a prophetic gift as an excuse to whack people over the head with "truth". And as I examine our church, like if I can just speak directly to this, there's not a lot in the middle here. We've got bleeding hearts and we've got blue blooded, "Argh. I know everything!" And I think we can both kind of come toward the middle and that's what I love about the message that Wes put before us today.

It's a biblical worldview of how God has made us, and He's put us here. I have to tell you, parents. Anyone here Gen Z? If you are here and you are Gen Z I just want to apologize to you. We've confused you. You're confused. Parents, they're confused.

Eight years ago, I gave a message on this topic, and I showed a video. In that video there was a young man that just said, "What am I, a man just because I have a penis?" I came out of that message, and I just said to thousands of people, what's the answer to that question. In one sweep, everyone just said yes! Eight years ago, yes! Today, I remember as this has progressed - on our watch - being in the green room with a young man at college and him saying, "Hey, there's not just two genders." I said, "What do you mean by that?" He says, "Well, it's not your biology that makes your gender, it's your emotional potion." I said, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "Well, if you have the biology of a man but you feel like a woman, then then you're a woman. It is your feelings that determine your gender." And I just was like, I had never heard that before. But now it's commonplace.

In the schools here, in our community, the schools here. Around you, the ones that that we could drive to within five minutes, those schools. A young woman gets broken up with. She can't sleep. Her heart hurts, you've been there probably. Some of you know, your hearts just all twisted and torn and you're there and you're trying to find which way is up. And then a young woman reaches out and just says, "Hey, I want to show you compassion. Come over. You know what, we can be together." And she thinks, 'Well maybe. Maybe I'm gay. Maybe I'm a man.'

Some of you right now are like, “Why are we talking about this it is uncomfortable.” And that's why we're losing. That's why it's happening on our watch, we are facing new problems because nobody is fighting for these kids. Nobody knows what to do. It's like we can stand back here and we can make fun of it. We can make jokes. We can say things that are off color that don't represent the heart of Christ, or we just move, and we say, “Oh yeah, that's how you feel. That's how you should be.” and just compassion, compassion, compassion, compassion.

Can we find the balance? Can we say, “Hey, I'm going to love you. I'm not going anywhere. I'm not afraid of you. I'm not afraid of how you feel. I've got an empty seat at my dining room table. You can have it. I've got an empty bedroom. You can sleep there. You need resources. I got you. I'll pick you up. I'll bring you to church. I can't promise you that you're not going to hear something there that's offensive. But here's where I can promise you, they're going to fight for you. They're going to be there when you need somebody. They're going to be there when you need, they're not going to turn their backs on you. They're not afraid of you. They're not afraid of your sin because they've got their own sin. And they've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, just like you can be.” And you're never so far gone that God is like, ‘Oh, I don't know what to do with them. I don't know what to do. I'm just so confused because gosh they even changed their sex. They had the surgery. They're taking the pills. What am I going to do? I don't know what to do, I am so confused’. God's never been stumped, guys. He's never been stumped. You have to stop hiding behind this. “Well, I don't know what to do. I don't know what to say. I don't know how to handle this. People are going to hate me. They're going to cancel me.” Cancel me. Cancel me. Click unfollow. It's OK. It's OK. We got God. It's OK.

Don't live in fear. Don't be so bold that you're off putting. Don't be so compassionate that you have lost the truth. Be consistent. Be balanced. Be helpful.

Somebody asked me this on Friday (picture on screen). How to deal with a transgender family member? Even in the question and it is in short form, so like grace in that, how to **deal** with, right? I think that that can sometimes even show our heart. How do I deal with them? Create space to talk to them. Even that...if I just stopped right there, there are a lot of people who are like, “I don't want to do that. It's so much easier for me to stay on this side of the fence. To just believe the worst and believe that they're so far gone that God can't do anything.” Create space to talk to them. (The picture went off the screen.) Bring it back up if you can. It works if you can't, I got it. Create space to talk to them. Love them. Listen to their story, like Wes said there at the end. Invite them to meals. Ask lots of questions sincerely. Show them something good. Pray fervently for them and for an opportunity to talk to them when they can hear you. You've heard it, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Some of our issue is that we just don't care, and then others of our issues are we don't know how to care. After you've shown them a ton of love.

There's a fight going on. One of the tools of the enemy... and coming out of “Unseen Battles” I'll never see the world the same. Because now I see everything as just this spiritual war, right? And one of the tools of the enemy is this distorted compassion. It's distorted compassion. “To each his own. I'm not going to have you at the table. I'm just going to leave you alone and maybe talk about you behind your back.” That is not of the heart of Jesus. You should repent. If you've done

that, you should repent of sin against the spirit of God. You should repent. You should commit to something better that's consistent with the heart of God.

Create space for those conversations. I want to be that kind of church. It's happening here. If you have kids in school, you've heard of furrries. You know you've heard of people that are coming to school just confused. They are confused. We have confused them. I want to bring clarity. Will you please help me? We're a resource. We're not one to just drop a bomb, not that that was any kind of bomb, but we're not one to just shout at you for a minute and then send you on your way. You are always welcome to have a conversation. I'm going to be up here afterwards as I am every week that I'm here. I'll stay as long as it takes to talk as many of you as want to. There's no veil. There's no wall. There's no separation between you and I, or you and our staff. We are here. That's what it means to be the church, the body of Christ. We want to resource you. We want to help you.

Can we thank my friend Wes Butler, just for leaving his family to be with us today? I know that we're moving to graduation. If you're a high school graduate, will you stand up? Any high school graduates here? Don't clap yet, because there may not be a single one in the room, but I'm looking. OK, I got one right here. Any other high school graduate? OK, here we go. Any Baylor graduates in the room? Baylor graduates there. OK, here we go. Baylor graduates. Yeah. Let's go! Let's go! You guys did it. You did it.

Hey, thank you, guys. Thanks for being a light in your schools. Thanks for being here consistently. Thanks for being disciplined and one of the things that I was most excited about when we came here was just sending missionaries into the world. Investing in people for five years and sending them or four years rather, five for some of you. Sending them around the world to be a light and represent Jesus Christ. So, it is a great privilege to get to do that.

I love you guys so much. If we can help you in anyway, please reach out to us up here. We have the welcome center out there. You can always email us, [hello@harriscreek.org](mailto:hello@harriscreek.org), at any time with anything that you need. I love you guys. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.