THE EQUIP INSTITUTE Theme: Christian Engagement Topic: Theological Anthropology: Gender and Sexuality Spring 2025

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. This week our topic is the gender and sexuality.

What Does the Bible Say?

Both genders are included in the *imago Dei*, and everything that is true about the nature and destiny of the first man is also true of the first woman.

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." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gen. 1:26-31)

God's design includes gender complementarity. Men and women especially complement each other in a unique oneflesh union called marriage. Sexuality is expressed within the covenant of marriage.



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. (Gen. 1:18-25; see also Gen. 5:1; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9)

In Genesis 3, both men and women rebel against God's commands in the fall. They both face the same general consequences of sin, but each also faces gender-specific consequences for their sins.

Men and women should not live as if they are a member of the opposite gender. This includes matters of both appearance and sexual intimacy.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. (Lev. 18:22)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (Lev. 20:13)

"A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God." (Deut. 22:5)

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. (Rom. 1:26-27)

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 men who practice homosexuality. (1 Cor. 6:9)

⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵ but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶ For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.... ¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, ¹⁵ but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (1 Cor. 11:4-6, 14-15)

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7)

Within the context of marriage, the husband is the head of the household. Husbands serve their wives through sacrificial spiritual leadership, and wives serve their husbands through gracious submission to that leadership. These gender roles and responsibilities in marriage reflect the gospel.

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. 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. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 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. (Eph. 5:22-33; see also 1 Cor. 11:3-16; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

Though men and women are both called and gifted to serve the body of Christ, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is reserved for men alone.

¹The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (1 Tim. 3:1-5)

⁵This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

Differing roles and responsibilities in marriage and the church do not imply any sort of difference in either human nature or spiritual worth. As mentioned above, both men and women are created in God's image. Both men and women who are believe in Christ share equally in his promises. These arguments apply not only to both genders, but to all ethnicities. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

For God shows no partiality. (Rom. 2:11)

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal. 3:27-29)

What Has the Church Said?

Human gender has provoked relatively little debate in church history. For most of church history, Christians have assumed there are only two genders and those genders are fixed. Men and women are complementary, including in their biology, their roles and responsibilities within marriage, and their roles and responsibilities within the church. Marriage is between one man and one woman, ideally for life, and is the only appropriate context for sexual intimacy. All other sexual experiences are sinful, including premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexual sex, masturbation, sex with multiple partners, and bestiality.

Increasingly over the past two generations, most of these beliefs have become debatable among Christians. As a general rule, theological conservatives hold to the beliefs summarized above, while theological progressives redefine or reject those beliefs. The one exception is women in pastoral ministry, which some groups affirm. The greater scandal among theological conservatives is that their views haven't changed much, but their practice doesn't always match their professed beliefs.

Where is Our Culture Confused?

Boundaries for sexual intercourse

Pornography

Marriage

Homosexuality

Gender fluidity

Gender egalitarianism

What Can We Learn from Non-Christian Sources?

General revelation provides clear witness to the biological aspects of gender complementarity. Men and women are different down to their chromosomes. Every cell in the human body reflects the individual's biological sex. Children can only be conceived through sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Homosexual sex between men often causes bodily damage and increases the likelihood of the spreading of sexually transmitted diseases.

There has been recent backlash against at least certain forms of transgenderism. Studies show that there is a close relationship between significant mental illness and gender transition procedures. It is also obvious that biological men who compete in women's athletic competitions often have an unfair advantage because of their greater strength, size, and speed.

What Should Christian Believe?

The Baptist Faith & Message (2000) offers the clearest statement on these matters of any denominational confession.

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. (Article III: Man)

While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. (Article VI: The Church)

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. (Article XVIII: The Family)

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. (Article XVIII: The Family)

How Should Christians Respond to Our Cultural Confusion?

We should remain steadfastly committed to Scripture's teaching about gender and sexuality. Increasingly, these views are countercultural. Many of our neighbors might even see Christian views as unjust or even immoral. This is arguably the most important—and most controversial—aspect of our cultural apologetic.

- We should not allow popular arts and entertainment to disciple us into accepting disordered understandings of gender and sexuality
- We should advocate for laws that are grounded in God's general revelation, especially when it comes to transgenderism
- We should work through appropriate channels to challenge the legality of homosexual marriage
- We should advocate for laws that undermine the pornography industry and minimize the exposure of minors to internet pornography
- We should model healthy marriages rooted in biblical teaching, including rejecting a culture of no-fault divorce that makes it easy to end a marriage for any reason
- We should recognize that sincere Christians struggle with sexual temptations of every type, including same-sex attraction, while also rejecting the idea that any disordered form of sexuality is part of God's design simply because the temptation is common or seems "natural" to some people
- We should model gender complementarity in our families and in our church