

God's Design for Marriage

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[0:00] Let's open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew, to the 19th chapter, Matthew 19. As you're looking for that, let me say that earlier in the pastoral prayer, I forgot to pray for Dave Thompson, one of our elders.

He's preaching today in Mount Carmel. So as we read the passage, as usual, when we get to the end, I'll pray for the Word, but I want to pray for our brother who's preaching the Word right now as well.

So let's look together at Matthew 19. We'll begin reading in verse 1 and read to verse 12. We're continuing to look at the same passage we did last week. We're looking at a different aspect of the passage.

So Matthew 19, beginning in verse 1. Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.

And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?

[1:01] He answered, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female? And he said, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to him, why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?

He said to them, because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning, it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery.

The disciples said to him, if such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry. But he said to them, not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.

For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth. There are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men. And there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

[2:13] Let the one who is able to receive this, receive it. Let's pray together. Lord, we again ask for your help acknowledging that what we're looking at today is difficult and really contrary to what's being taught in the world around us today.

So we pray that you'd give wisdom, that you would give us a ability by your spirit to cling to your word and what's true. And we pray that you'd make that truth very clear in the preaching of your word by your spirit's working.

Lord, we lift up to you as well, Dave Thompson, with the preaching in Mount Carmel. We pray that you would bless the work there while Dan Renno's out of the pulpit, that you'd be with Dave, that you'd give him great clarity of thought, that your spirit would speak through him, that you would be glorified in that preaching as well.

We ask this all in Christ's name. Amen. Now, as I said, we're continuing what we were looking at last week in Matthew 19, 1 through 12. And you may remember that last week we focused in on the idea of divorce and what God's word says about divorce.

I want to be careful because I always want to preach what's there in the text. And I think Matthew 19, 1 through 12 is about the subject to divorce, and that's clearly there. And my intention originally was for one of my main points of the message to be on the idea of gender because it's directly addressed in this passage.

[3 : 35] As it worked out, there was enough to say about divorce that it filled up a sermon, and there's enough about gender that I thought it needed to be addressed in more detail, especially given the culture and what's going on in our culture today.

So I've set this apart as a separate sermon. I'm willing to acknowledge this isn't the major thrust of the passage, but I think it does deal with this issue and needs to be addressed. And as I said already, it's a very relevant topic today.

I thought there's probably many examples that we could use in our culture, but just some of the idea of where we're at today and why this is relevant. In many places in our culture, we're being asked to treat some boys as girls and some girls as boys.

People are being allowed to choose what bathroom they want to use, and even in schools, what locker rooms they want to undress in, which I think, for obvious reasons, can be alarming for parents and for those in our culture who aren't in that situation.

One of the big issues in our culture the last few years has been boys being allowed to compete with girls in high school, in college, athletic competitions.

[4 : 44] Parents are raising children as gender neutral. You may be aware of the whole gender reveal thing that happens when kids are born. Sometimes they're telling their family, it's going to be a boy, it's going to be a girl. Well, now more and more families are raising kids as gender neutral and allowing the kids to do their own gender reveal when they come of age or whenever they think they're ready for that.

Even to the point of having surgeries on children, even some as young as five years old to change their gender if the parents feel like they wanted their kid to be a different gender. And the pressure's there for us in our culture today, and it's only going to increase as time goes on.

You can think back, where were we 10 years ago and what would we have said about this and 10 years before that, and the pressure, we could even say, has been in different areas at different times, and it's really worked towards this.

And if I think, if I personally were to try to gauge where we headed, you may have heard just last month that there was a conference, a TED Talk of some sort with scientists who were arguing that pedophilia was normal and that we should be accepting it.

And I think this is just the reality of where we're heading and what's going on. So years ago it would have been homosexuality. We were arguing now today it's gender, if gender even exists, down the road it's going to be other issues and we can understand that.

[6 : 00] It's even happened already in some nations that are probably more liberal than we are, such as Canada and other areas of the world. So what I'd like for us to do today is really deal with the idea of gender.

Is gender really just a social construct as it's being argued in our culture today? Are there more than only two genders? And so what I want us to do is, in three points, I want us to consider first the divine purpose of gender, God's purpose in gender.

Secondly, if that's true, then why is the confusion today? So secondly, why is there such confusion over gender today? And thirdly, as Christians, how do we respond to these issues?

As I've acknowledged in my prayer, this is an easy topic to deal with, especially given where we are in our culture. I realize as well that there are many children in the room and I'm trying to be as generic as possible.

But at the same time, our kids are facing this in public schools, on the television. They're getting it. And I hope you'll take the time, parents, to talk with your kids and try to explain this is what the pastor was talking about.

[7 : 09] And here's what God's word says, because they need to be thinking through this. They're going to be faced with it from our culture. They're going to be bombarded with it from our culture. So first, let's look at the divine purpose in gender.

Verses 4 through the beginning of verse 6. He answered, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. I think we see here God really addressing this and Jesus bringing this up, that how God has designed the world is that he's designed male and female gender.

It's part of how God created it. He's given sexual identity. God has established this. This isn't some creation of man sometime afterward. I want us to take time to actually look at these passages. Jesus is quoting them. I'm actually going to have us read a few passages in length, but I think it's helpful for us to understand this argument. So Genesis 1, 26 through 28 is where Jesus is quoting from.

[8 : 23] So from the very beginning, first chapter of the Bible, we read there, beginning of verse 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.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. 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.

So we see from the beginning that God has designed this. He's created them. From the very beginning, God has made them male and female. And there's purpose in this.

We see as well that there's no third category. There's no other gender being presented in the Bible. God created only two genders. If I were to use the language of our culture, it would be to say gender is binary, as God has presented it in the Word.

There's only two options with gender, male and female. Again, I don't want to go into great detail of everything that's being argued in our culture, but you may well know that that's the latest argument, is that male and female's parts of a spectrum, and there's anywhere in between that could be someone's gender.

[9 : 44] But what we see presented in God's Word is that when God made man, he made him male and female. And so gender has existed from the beginning, and it was part of God's purpose.

We also understand, both biblically and as well, just from the world around us, that men and women are born a specific gender biologically. God determines, God designs, and he decrees what gender or person is born.

It's not left up to us. If I were to step back a little further and say, what's going on really is that there's an attack on God that's going on in our culture, I think, and there's an argument for man to be autonomous.

Our own judge, our own ruler, we decide what's right, what's wrong, and part of that even applies to gender. But as Christians, we have to see that God is the one who determines gender. I think we want to look at this as a beautiful way, and this is really what I want to present.

It's not an argument against something, but an argument for something. So Psalm 139, we have, it says there, As a Christian, there's a positive example we see that God knits the embryo together.

[10 : 58] He knits the baby together as it's formed in the womb. He mates the baby. And this is both a fearful and a wonderful thing that God does. And so it's God who's really determining this.

Now, you can imagine that years ago, things might look even far different than how they do now, but the reality today is that we even understand genetics in a way that was probably never understood before in history as clearly as we do.

So the Bible writers obviously did not understand this, but yet they understood that gender was a solid reality. But we understand that God is ingraining gender not into just the biology that we can see, the physical appearance, but into the very DNA of a person.

He's prescribed this into their very being. Maybe I could say it in other ways to say, even as we think of genetics, we understand the chromosomes and what determines someone to be a male or female.

And again, we see that God presents these two options. And so God really is the one who determines these things. We see as well that male and female exist for a purpose.

[12 : 07] God made the two genders for the purpose of the marriage union in particular. Even as we think about what we see Jesus presenting in Matthew 19, he answered them, Have you not read, this is verse 4, that he created them from the beginning, made them male and female, and said, Therefore, now he's tying together a passage from Genesis 2 that we're going to look at in a second, but you see what Jesus is saying.

Therefore, what's the therefore connected to? God made them male and female. Therefore, Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall

become one flesh. And so, at least one purpose, one primary purpose in male and female existence or gender existence is that they can be married and together become one flesh.

This is Genesis 2, 18 through 24. So we get the context of what Jesus is quoting. Then the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.

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.

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. So you see this picture, it's beautiful. God's made male first, Adam, and he realizes, not that God just all of a sudden realized, God understood from the beginning, that man by himself was incomplete.

[13:36] He says, I want to complete you. I want to find a helper fit for you. So he parades before him every animal that's been created. And Adam looks at every one, he names them and realizes none of them are complementary to him.

None of them fit with him. None of them are right for him. None of them can truly be his helper. And so the Lord, God calls 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. 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. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh. There again, we see the therefore and what it is connected to.

That God specifically has made the female to be complementary to the male. To fit together, to work together, to be one union, to become one flesh. That is the reason that a man or a woman will leave their parents and be joined to another person because God designed it this way to fit together, to work in these ways.

[14:49] And so we can understand as well, even as we consider where we are with homosexual marriage, that that's not how God has designed marriage. In fact, it's a slap in the face to the design that God's created.

It's not meant to be complementary, a man to a man or a woman to a woman. There's something about the male and the female union in marriage that's unique and specific that God's designed male and female gender for the sake of marriage, that they might be united and we're going to talk some about what that purpose is.

But what we see is that there's an inherent incompleteness in a soul gender that is not good. And we can extend that even to say within a marriage, if we can even call it that, of a man to a man or a woman to a woman, there's an inherent incompleteness that does not picture what God's designed it to be and does not meet up to his model or his design for marriage.

And really, biblically speaking, we cannot define as a marriage union at all. And God created the female as the answer to this. And together, they complement one another and complete one another and then God declares it good.

He says at first it's not good for a man to be alone and then with the marriage union of the male and female, he says that it's good. Now, why? Why has God done this?

[16:10] Well, I think part of it is that this makes humans necessarily relational. And there's something about our bearing the image of God that's incomplete with a man by himself or a woman by herself.

There's something that bearing the image of God is done more proficiently in marriage. And I think part of that is we understand that God is triune.

God corresponds himself. I've been really moved by this. I'm going to put this on the book table soon and give a little summary synopsis, but I was really impressed with a recent book by Michael Reeves that's on God and the Trinity.

And it's called Delighting in God or Delighting in the Trinity. Delighting in the Trinity. And from that, one of the things he argues is that God is always Father. and from the beginning he has loved his son Jesus.

And that his reason for creating wasn't that he was desperate for someone else to love him, but that his love for the son overflows into his creating of the world. And I think we have this beautiful picture in that as well as we understand that the Trinity exists in love for one another and that the marriage

union is meant to help us better communicate the image of God in ways that we cannot do alone. [17:27] And so God has designed male and female because man by himself or female by or woman by herself cannot rightly and fully communicate the image of God in a way that marriage helps us to do.

And even in that we fell in perfectly communicating the image of God. And we know as well that it communicates the relationship between Christ and the church. I'm going to talk more about that in just a moment but we see that in Ephesians 5.

That the marriage relationship meant to communicate to us Christ and his love for the church. It speaks as well in this passage of the sexual union that the two become one flesh.

I want to be very careful very generic I don't think any of you guys are going to miss this but God biologically has designed male and female to be complementary together in physical forms.

Male and female are made to fit together we're made to be together. Maybe in some sense this is alluded to as spoken of the rib the idea that the man and woman are to be there side by side but we understand there are other physical realities sexual realities that male and female are made to fit together.

[18:36] And part of the struggle with this is to question how the confusion of gender and even homosexuality can exist as we think of biologically we understand that's not the way God's designed things to fit to work.

And there's a reality to how God's designed this sexual union this one flesh union. Genesis 1.28 tells us that a part of our purpose is the creation mandate from God that we be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and have dominion.

And so we understand that even that the idea of homosexuality works against the idea of being fruitful of multiplying of filling the earth of really bearing God's image and having dominion to the very ends of the earth.

So maybe if I can say it again a different way procreation requires a male and a female a mother and a father even the sexual organs as I've said are designed to correspond to the opposite gender. So in marriage and its consummation two individuals become one flesh there's this union that supersedes anything else that we can experience in this life. And our gender is an essential part of our God-given identity and should be embraced.

[19:44] I mentioned already Ephesians 5 I want to read through this again because I think we see in this not only the idea that God has made gender but there's also distinctions that God has made in gender there's roles that God has given there's even qualities that God's given to male and female that help us identify them.

Now I wanted to quote that great theologian Phil Robertson but if you'll permit just a little bit of humor he's famous for Duck Dynasty if you're not familiar with that theologian but I saw this video one time and he says it's easy to tell a male from a female he says whiskers you know he's big on his beard you know he's like you just look for whiskers now sorry for any of you men who are fully shaved but that's his argument and just in humor but let me say it goes beyond that and God shows that there are other distinctions that are important so Ephesians 5 25 through 32 husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word 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 in the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies he who loves his wife loves himself for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes it nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church because we are members of his body therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh this mystery is profound but I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church

I spoke on this last Sunday I won't belabor the point but there at the end we see that they're leaving their father and mother becoming one flesh is meant to point us to a great mystery that mystery is Christ and the church and so as we think about the destruction really of marriage in our culture the confusion of gender part of it is taking away the identity the reality of the beauty of Christ and the love for his church that even unbelievers were communicating through the process of marriage but we see as well in this the idea of gender distinction there are given roles and responsibilities that are touched on here in Ephesians 5 and elsewhere in God's word I just briefly will summarize this is what John Piper says he says I define manhood or masculinity like this at the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead provide for and protect women in ways

appropriate to a man's different relationships

I define accordingly womanhood or femaleness or femininity like this at the heart of mature womanhood or femaleness or femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships so there's even distinctions in roles that God has given within gender and part of the if I want to call it an attack on gender in our culture I think is partly to remove these distinctions and maybe even the removal of those distinctions preceded this in our culture with the push of feminism even preceding this by a long period of time but the Bible is clear in its presentation of gender there being a male and female and even the role of gender even the place of marriage being between one man and one woman and it's also clear in its opposition to gender confusion transgender behavior and homosexuality

I've tried to present to you a positive view I don't want to belabor the negatives but I think there are many places we could go to where God condemns sexual immorality and homosexual behavior you're probably well aware of those I didn't try to get those Leviticus there's specific bans or laws against that in particular saying that God counts this an abomination homosexual behavior but we know as well things like Sodom and Gomorrah and other again I don't want to present all the negatives Deuteronomy 22 5 says a woman shall not wear a man's garment nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God I think it's speaking more of just being humorous and portraying the opposite gender I think it's specifically dealing with transgender issues here and the idea that we're not to pretend to be what we're not we're not to confuse the separation the identity that God has given to us that God counts as an abomination there's something beautiful about

[24 : 32] God giving gender that confusing it or mixing it or in any way diluting it takes away the beauty of what God's created and demeans that and God counts that an abomination so if this is true as God presents it why then is there this confusion well I think there's a few reasons for this I think probably the most obvious one is the fall the way that sin has affected us I would even go as far to say that one result of the fall is what's called the noetic effects that's not referring to Noah but to the mind the noos psychological effects of the fall have distorted even the way that we think how we view reality how we understand the world that God's created what we know though is that gender existed from the beginning and it's been distorted by the fall if I said this another way if Adam and

Eve had not sinned there would not be this confusion there would be no need for such a sermon would there but it's a result of the fall and how we confuse many things in our life so this confusion is part of the effects of sin and the fall the original assertion and I think this is important the original assertion that we saw in this text that from the beginning God made them male and female he created them is repeated for us in Genesis 5 1 through 2 so after the fall and after man's sin God says again when God created man he made him in the likeness of God male and female he created them and so again after the fall this is repeated for us so this wasn't just a pre-fall issue and then after sin well who cares it's all it can be whatever you want it to be God repeats this same issue I could have said as well with Adam in the naming of the beast and him calling the woman woman there's a distinction between the male and the female the man and the woman but likewise in Hebrew we have distinctions in every other gender that we could imagine every other gender distinction in relationships that we could imagine so father and mother are different Hebrew words brother and sister aunt and uncle husband and wife these are all different Hebrew words it's not as though there's some confusion being said there but again after the fall this is repeated but the fall has affected us in many ways I would even argue that the fall has affected us biologically and genetically also Jesus I think even brings this up in verse 12 he speaks of units in this passage so in very rare instances a biological anomalies a child can be born with their sexual organs ambiguous or damaged non-existent even that can happen at times we now have genetic testing that can even tell you regardless of what damage can be there biologically can tell you if this person is a boy if this child is a boy or a girl based on genetic testing and that may be one instance in which we could use surgery or medical assistance to establish what's right and what God has established but the reality is and I want you to understand this that because of sin and the fall disease exists brokenness exists in our world people are born with defects and so it is possible that someone could be born ambiguous in terms of their biological appearance that doesn't demean the fact that God's intended purpose from the beginning was male and female and there may be ways

that we can even help to reestablish that that isn't changing what God has established and so there could be room for that and I think

Jesus is even bringing this up he says there are units who have been so from birth and so there are people who are born this way now the larger argument that Jesus is getting at is more in terms of choosing not to marry that there are some people who will not marry and that's okay and we can understand as well that even in light of all that I said that singleness can be used for the glory of God it's not that singleness is inherently evil or wrong but God has made gender for the sake of marriage but we see for the sake of the kingdom of heaven some have made themselves units for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and so some people would choose not to marry and even what's being spoken of here is even possibly they could choose to have a surgery to remove sexual organs we talked about that if your eye causes you to sin gouge it out and I said some Christians have taken this literally I should have gone back and looked I think it's Origen who actually has this surgery done to himself to keep him from lusting that he might not sin for the sake of the kingdom I think that's a bad interpretation of God's word but Jesus is acknowledging that some people may choose to become a eunuch and this may be physical or otherwise they may choose to do so and I think what he's getting at primarily is they may choose not to marry that they can better serve God in his kingdom without the distraction of a spouse or the distraction of children that's not the primary calling that's not everyone's calling that's few who may be called that way but all this doesn't deny the fact that God has created gender in fact in the Bible everywhere that a eunuch is referred to he's always referred to as a male there's not a eunuch whether he was born this way or who was made this way by men or chose to be this way who's ever referred to in some ambiguous way or even as a woman they're always referred to as males in the Bible so again why are we dealing with this well the effects of the fall have confused things biologically and genetically that may cause people to struggle with understanding God's purpose but also the effects of the fall we see more clearly in passages like Romans 1 so I want to look at Romans 1 you're welcome to turn there verses 18 through 28 this is a larger passage again

[30 : 41] I'm going to read it please try to either follow along or listen carefully and I'm going to make some comments in response to this that I think will be helpful for us for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth for what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so they are without excuse for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened claiming to be wise they became fools and it changed the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things therefore God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever amen for this reason

God gave them up to dishonorable passions for the women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature 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 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 so why this confusion for me I think Romans 1 gives us the most clear answer there is to why this confusion exists and there's this whole sequence and if you'll bear with me I'll preach a whole separate sermon on Romans 1 right now but I'll try to quickly work you through this passage it's positing it first there's a reality that God by nature has revealed his own existence so that everybody's without excuse to know that there's a God but people have suppressed the truth in unrighteousness now you may remember when I preached in Romans what I said but let me quickly summarize what I think this means is that we all know that God exists some people say God does not exist because they love their sin more if God exists and they have to obey God they don't want to obey God so we just play like he's not there right you can imagine a child who knows his parents exist but the babysitter comes over and they act like the rules no longer apply mom and dad are not really here we play that way with God sometimes and so we suppress the truth we try to lie to ourselves and say there is no God that we can continue our sin and God correspondingly says if that's what you want have it he gives them

over to the desires if we're going to play that way then fine pretend that there's no God and live how you want to live and so the corresponding result of that is that claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of God for worshipping other things other than

God now I think if we had some way of summarizing our culture today this is it claiming to be wise we became fools and if you can't look and see some of the stuff that presented to our culture as being truth or what's right is foolish I don't think you really have rightly grasped what's going on and so claiming to be wise they became fools and part of what that resulted in is not only the worship of other things other than God but we also see that God gave them up to dishonorable passions and he even explains that women exchange natural relations for that which is contrary to nature I think those words are important he's already argued that God has revealed himself through nature but we rejected nature to deny God's existence I think he's also arguing here that God has revealed through gender and other distinctions that I've already spoken of in terms of sexual organs and other things what's natural and we reject what's natural for what's contrary to nature and so there's a corresponding relationship here with what's going on with gender and homosexuality that corresponds to our denial of God's existence we know how God has biologically made us but we suppress that truth because we don't want to obey

God there's this desire and God's given them up to that and God's given them over to these homosexual and gender confused ideas further results in and since they did not see fit this is verse 28 since they did not see fit to acknowledge God God gave them up to the base mind to do what ought not to be done and so the further the final step in this is God gave them over not just to their idolatry not just to their gender and sexual confusion but finally he gives them over to the base mind to do what ought not be done and where would you put us in this continuum today I think we're living today in the culture in which God has given us over to the base minds to call what's true false and we'll call what's false true and our culture is attacking these things I think today so the base mind means that you cannot distinguish the obvious reality you can't no longer discern what's obvious to other people what's true doesn't seem true to you any longer and so

I want to be clear that part of the effect of the fall is not just that people are opposed to God but that some people are really confused confusion is legitimate why because it's part of the effect of sin in our world and so we ought not be surprised when there are these kind of struggles and also not to look down upon them because in some ways some people at least this isn't so much an intellectual issue as it is a moral or even a result of the fall issue for them that they cannot see for themselves any longer what's true and what's obvious to others so if someone looks at what's natural they look at nature and they choose to worship the creature rather than the creator it says he's without excuse I think so too we can conclude that again with this other natural revelation of God if we reject it that we're without excuse God's revealed gender naturally that in ways we ought to understand and if we choose to reject it then we're without excuse

[37 : 15] God has given us his revelation he's given physical and biological realities to reveal his design and purpose and in addition that he's given his word as we've seen to understand these things so these rejection of these realities and the mind that cannot distinguish between these realities is an example of the outpouring of the wrath of God on us so how do we respond to this that this is why this is what's going on and this is what the reality is by God's word how do we respond well I want to say first off that I think we see this in Romans 1 even that the arguments over gender and over truth excuse me the arguments over gender are really an argument over truth and reality right that's what's really at stake here not just gender but what's being attacked is how do we define truth and how do we define what's real and we're already on the other side of post-modernity or post-modernism and one of the big arguments of post-modernism was that absolute truth or truth doesn't exist truth is how you define it and so

I think when I was in college this is what I was being presented with primarily by college professors truth doesn't actually exist we define what's true for us we have our own meta-narrative that we decide what's true in our reality and you decide what's true in your reality and who are you to judge someone else's reality well that was maybe a first step maybe there were steps beyond this but to get us to the point where we no longer can say homosexuality is wrong that there's actually any definition of what's right and wrong that gender confusion or surgeries to change the gender of your child are wrong who are you to tell me that's wrong and so what precedes this is there's an attack on truth and reality and I think what we as Christians have to understand is that God defines truth God defines reality God defines our identity who we are and we don't have the freedom the ability to

go against what God has defined we cannot change that reality we can pretend to do so but we're lying to ourselves we're suppressing the truth and unrighteousness that God ultimately is the one who determines truth each of us is who God created us to be and in some way how God has created us to be whether we like it or not gives glory to God and the diversity that he's created and the way he's made us to function and work together and the union and marriage and all these things they're meant to give God glory and so this effort this push to get rid of definitions to get rid of truth is really in some way an attack upon God now that's not to say everyone who is persuaded by these things is attacking God what I'm saying is that the arguments initially what's being driven at here is we want to as much as we can suppress the truth of God his existence his attributes well if God establishes gender and if God establishes marriage let's attack these things let's get rid of anything in our culture that points us to God but we have to understand as Christians that we have to submit ourselves to his reality we're not autonomous

God determines these things so first and foremost if you're here today I would say you need to understand or if you're listening from home you need to understand that God has established reality we're not free to change that reality and I understand and I want all of you who are listening to understand that there are probably real ways that some people will struggle with gender confusion because of the effect of the fall just as we struggle with other sin issues but that doesn't allow us the freedom to change how God has designed or how God has made us God's word also tells us that no one who lives in that lifestyle will inherit the kingdom of heaven so one of the big arguments today is can Christians live openly and freely as homosexuals or as a different gender than they actually were born as and I think God's word makes it clear that that's not an option for a Christian 1 Corinthians 6 9-10 John MacArthur says

I think he says it rightly he says that they are not the enemy they're the mission field and I think we have to understand that to understand that those people who may be living in homosexual lifestyles or in gender confused lifestyles are not our enemy they're the mission field and so what we see in this passage is that that this is a sin that will keep us out of heaven but do you notice also let me say it this way there's not homosexuality is not a greater sin than other sins even though maybe it's more prevalent or more visible in our culture but you notice also it's not just homosexuality sexually immoral people idolaters adulterers thieves greedy drunkards revilers all these things will keep us out of the kingdom now we talked about before there aren't like mortal sins that if you just commit this one time you're out of the kingdom you're kicked out but what it's saying is that there's one sin that will keep us out of heaven it's rejecting Christ it's not trusting in him one reflection of that is if we reject Christ we no longer conform to his image we don't want to we don't desire to and living this lifestyle is one reflection of that and so though it may be hard what

I see presented here is that God is encouraging us that people who live in these lifestyles can after this whole list of sins 1 Corinthians 6 11 says and such were some of you but you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God so Paul writing to the church in Corinth he gives this whole list included our sexual immorality adultery and homosexuality he says and such were some of you but God changed you he sanctified you he's washed you by his blood and so I think we have to understand that and see again not as an enemy but as a chance to take the gospel the gospel can change people but I think as well our expectation ought to be that if someone is a Christian they're not living in that lifestyle any longer that God would bring them out of that lifestyle to live for him now the pressure I spoke of our culture and

[44 : 08] Christians is from the enemy now I said the people who are involved in this aren't the enemy they're in the mission field but we have to understand that I do think that it's Satan it's our enemy who's behind all this ultimately but we don't view those who are deceived we don't view those who are confused as our enemy we want to love them we want to point them to Christ we must take the gospel to them we need to pray that the Lord will save them it's not so much an intellectual issue it's not that if I can convince my my child my friend my neighbor that they're wrong about this even my whole sermon in some ways we can't argue with them on an intellectual basis there's a moral issue at stake here and so the best thing you can do is present the gospel to them and pray that God would change their hearts that God would show them a different way of life that he would point them to Christ and I want to encourage you as well that regardless of the cultural teaching or preference

Christians must live by the word of God we're not free to adapt to our culture to even go along with our culture we conform to our culture in as much as our culture conforms to the word of God and so that may mean that there are churches in California that are worshiping God today when the culture says they cannot we have to take a stand for what God has stood for but for us as well that may mean that we stand for gender issues that we stand for marriage being defined by God and his word even if our culture calls us judgmental or bigots or even to the point that we are arrested for it we stand by the word of God and we have to conform our life to the word of God Ephesians 4 17 through 18 says now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds they are darkened in their understanding alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart there is ignorance there but why because of hardness of heart it's a moral issue ultimately in it but do you hear what he says what said for the

Gentiles he really is speaking of those outside the church unbelievers we understand it as well for our culture no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds there's a futility to their thinking doesn't mean they're stupid don't misunderstand me there's a futility because there's a moral dilemma that's going on and there's a moral problem going on that causes them not to be able to process correctly these kind of moral issues so that they're darkened in their understanding and they're alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them due to the hardness of their hearts and so what do we need if we want to see our culture or people that we love and care for changed a softening of hearts we need them to know the gospel but see as well that Paul and God through him prescribes we have to reject our culture when our culture rejects Christ and then as I said already we want to seek to minister to a confused and hostile culture we want to love them we want to send that as a message it's fine to state and understand that we do not agree but we have gotten to a point in our culture where we think disagreement means that we don't love or care for people and there are probably ways in which Christians we're communicating that even through political arguments on Facebook and other such arguments we act like if someone disagrees with us we've got to hate them that's not true there's a time in which people could talk about issues that they disagreed upon and still love one another I think we have to be able to express to someone I disagree with and we as Christians have to believe that God can change homosexual desires that God can change gender confusion in a person we want to help those who are struggling with these things as they seek

God we want to point them to God we want to point them to Christ and I want to say as well that we want to create an environment in our church where it's okay for a homosexual or someone who's gender confused to walk into our church and worship with us and not think that they're not welcomed here we want to welcome such people and I even want to say that it's possible knowing what we've just talked about with the pressure from our culture and as well the effects of the fall that there may be people in this room who struggle with this question we want to be elders who say come talk to us we want to talk to you we love you we care for you we're not trying to condemn you as a person even if we disagree with your decision or even the struggle you have biblically we see a different path but we want to love you we want to help you with that and we want to encourage you come talk to us to argue against gender confusion or argue against homosexuality what we want to do is present something more beautiful something more glorious in our roles as male and female and in our marriages you may remember though it didn't work out this way this was meant to be a sub point in my sermon on marriage and divorce this is where

[49 : 49] Jesus is dealing with this issue of male and female and so how well I think if we rightly understand marriage and rightly understand divorce if we live as Christians in marriage if we live out our identity as male and female we can show something more beautiful in God's design we can show something more glorious and so we want to set forth the beauty that God has designed in gender as he designed it and for his glory let's pray together dear heavenly father we thank you for your word and even how clearly it speaks we know that this is not a very clear issue in our culture we know that there are struggles futility of the mind and thinking there's ignorance that's out there and Lord we we come to you not as those who think we've got it all figured out but we thank you for your word for your your purpose in gender Lord help us to be a witness to our culture our community our families our co-workers in ways that are loving and appropriate but also that do not compromise speak of your truth and point people to you

Lord we thank you that you have designed good things in creating male and female Lord we've known those blessings and purpose we pray that you would help those who are confused with it that you would bring them out of that confusion that you would help them see truth that they know and experience the beauty that you've given in the way that you designed male and female in marriage we pray this all in Christ's name Amen