

Equipping Hour: Feb 8

Feb 8: Sexuality and Gender (pt3)

We have spent the last two weeks doing some hard but necessary work. In Week One, we asked: How did our culture come to believe what it believes about sexuality and gender? In Week Two, we asked: What does Scripture actually teach about the body, identity, sexuality, and gender? Today we come to the most difficult question of all:

“Where do we go from here?”

Why is this question difficult? Because understanding culture is easier than resisting it, and affirming biblical truth is easier than living it out faithfully in a confused and hostile world. Scripture reminds us that knowledge alone is not the goal. I like knowledge. I like information. My most regrettable and persistent superpower is the retention and recollection of movie quotes. This is tremendously useful literally nowhere. For some inexplicable reason I am far more adept at remembering the lines of some idiotic movie I watched once twenty years ago than I am remembering Scripture I've read hundreds of times. Information without good use is, in fact, useless information. I'm going to say something rather controversial now, so bear with me: biblical information without a heart transformation use is useless information. Don't get me wrong: biblical information is the most valuable information you could ever acquire, but that doesn't mean acquiring it will have an impact in your heart and life. I've said it many times; I have debated atheists who have more of the Bible memorized than me. That's useless information because it wasn't received in the heart. When biblical information finds a receptive heart, Christ-like transformation at the heart level begins to grow before it is expressed outwardly in our lives. We can have all the right answers, but if this knowledge doesn't lead to us loving God and others more, being convinced of the gospel more, then that knowledge is useless information. The goal is transformation not behavior change. The behavior change is a byproduct of a renewed heart and mind.

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Knowing God's Word becomes Spirit-empowered transformation leading to holy motivations to make godly choices. This progression is important.

James 1:22

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.

Application is not about winning arguments and having all the right answers; it's about becoming more Christlike. So why is application the hardest part? Because application is where most Christians quietly stall. The commitments fade over time, revealing a lack of conviction and perseverance. We may agree with biblical teaching, defend it intellectually, even vote according to it, but still embrace cultural assumptions that shape how we speak or remain silent about certain issues that make us feel uncomfortable, even repulsed. We can still be motivated by sin, rather than love, even when we have all the biblical truths. We

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can still mistreat others made in the image of God like us. Worldview repentance means more than changing opinions. It means receiving the Spirit of God into areas of your heart you have kept off limits by using Scripture to faithfully reorder your reality.

The question today is not, “Do I know the truth?” It is, “Am I willing to obey God even when it will cost me?”

In other words: “What is loyalty to Christ worth to you?”

Matthew 10:34-39

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

I’m setting a serious tone because this is serious stuff. It’s the difference between life and death. It’s the difference between slavery to sin and freedom in Christ. Last week we ended on a few questions we need to include in our application discussion today.

The first was regarding gender roles described in Scripture, essentially the distinctions mentioned between husbands and wives. Scripture affirms that men and women are equal in worth, equal in dignity, equal as image-bearers, equal as co-heirs with Christ, but equality does not require sameness. The Bible never presents distinction between men and women as a result of sin. It presents it as part of God’s good design. When Scripture speaks about gendered roles, it does not speak about competence, capacity, intelligence, or value. It speaks about responsibility and calling. Because of sin, both husbands and wives fight against and fail to fulfill their engendered responsibilities and calling.

Husbands are repeatedly called to sacrificial, accountable leadership:

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.

How does Christ love the church? Sacrificially, selflessly, with compassion and care, but also as the shepherd who leads and protects from both physical and spiritual threats.

1 Corinthians 11:3

I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

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Consider for a moment the last part of this verse: the head of Christ is God, meaning God the Father. Since Jesus and the Father are one, eternally existing, equal in every divine characteristic, what does this mean? Well, it means even in the Trinity we see distinct but harmonious responsibilities. Those harmonious responsibilities create order, not chaos, and the divine harmonious responsibility includes the headship of the Father over the Son. We see this over and over again in the gospels.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son...”

John 8:28

“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.”

John 12:49-50

“I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

The Father possesses a harmonious headship over the Son, and this brings them both glory. Jesus glorified the Father His entire time on this earth, and because of His submission, because His equality with the Father wasn't a right He had to fight for, the Father has glorified the Son above all like we see in Philippians 2. There's no contention here. Zero one-up-man-ship between the Father and the Son. Distinct in responsibility, harmonious in execution of said responsibilities. The Son, then, exercises His headship over His disciples because He has been given all authority.

Matthew 28:18

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

John 20:21

“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

Just like there is headship of the Son over husbands, in the same way husbands are responsible for applying harmonious headship over their wives. This is God's design, and it's a huge responsibility, and yet all men take after their first father, Adam, who abdicated his responsibility and calling to lead and protect his wife, Eve, when she was in the garden. His failure is everyone man's curse, and only Christ can redeem that failure.

Women, wives, are called and responsible for being strong, wise, indispensable partners in God's purposes. Pay close attention to this familiar passage in Proverbs 31 describing a godly wife.

Proverbs 31

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An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. ¹³ She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. ¹⁴ She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens...²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ²⁹ “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” ³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Trustworthy. Strong. Undaunted by uncertainty. Abounding with wisdom and instruction. Filled with the fear of the Lord. Those are essential and indispensable characteristics. This is a mighty calling. God’s design for wives is harmonious submission, a partnership mirroring the unity we find in the Trinity when Jesus the Son submitted Himself to the Father. But of course, sin gets in the way for us. Just like Adam failed to uphold his calling and responsibility as a husband, so did Eve by engaging in selfish desires and inviting her husband to participate in her sin. We are still experiencing the consequences to this day in the way husbands and wives fight against their calling and responsibilities as reveal in the relational curse in Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:16-17

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ [Because you knew the right thing but didn’t do it, Adam! James 4:17: So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. Adam knew God’s word and failed to lead his wife, failed to protect his wife, and ultimately ate the fruit, because of all that] cursed is the ground because of you.”

The whole earth is cursed because of Adams sin. So at just the right time, Jesus came to redeem our sinful, rebellious hearts. For husbands, a redeemed heart means rejecting passivity, accepting responsibility, and leading courageously. For wives, that means demonstrating trust in the Lord, humbly submitting even when it’s hard, and participating in the good works God prepared for you before the first words of creation were uttered.

The secular worldview says: “Roles are oppressive.” The biblical worldview says: “Roles are vocational.” Different does not mean deficient, nor does design imply domination. Both husbands and wives are called by God to fulfill their given responsibilities for His glory. Neither husbands nor wives can fulfill their relational calling apart from God’s blueprints. Both husbands and wives are invited by God to fulfill their given responsibilities by faith. “God, I trust you. I trust your design. I trust your wisdom. Even when my husband is

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struggling to take responsibility, I trust you. Even when my wife is contentious and argumentative, I trust you.” When God’s glory isn’t the motivation, these roles will be impossible to embrace. But let me make this abundantly clear: men, it starts with you because you have headship. You set the tone. You lead. Or you don’t, and chaos ensues.

We could do an entire series on this, and we will in future class opportunities, but for now let’s move on to a second question from last week, this one involving a significant theological error. The claim is that God’s self-revelation can be adjusted to match cultural discomfort. You may hear: “God is neither male nor female” or “God can be spoken of however feels most affirming” and “Gendered language for God is outdated.” But Scripture makes it clear that all such thinking is foolishness because:

John 4:24

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

God is not biologically male or female, but God possesses all the perfect qualities of masculinity and femininity. God is mighty, protective, initiator and also gentle, comforter, and nurturing. In Him exist all perfection, and as fallen image bearers, Christ came to redeem us from both toxic masculinity and toxic femininity. But Scripture also makes something unmistakably clear: God has chosen to reveal Himself using masculine names, titles, and pronouns. Such as:

Father — Matthew 6:9

King — Psalm 47:7

Son — Romans 8:29

Jesus did not teach us to pray, “Our Parent in heaven.” He taught us to pray, “Our Father.” That choice was not a cultural accident or a random linguistic faux pas. It was divine revelation. To change how God reveals Himself is not an act of compassion – it is an act of theological rebellion. When we reshape God to reflect our preferences, we lose confidence that He speaks at all.

Now let’s slow down a bit because this may be the most sensitive section of the entire series. When Christians speak about sexuality, especially same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, what we currently call transgenderism, we often rush past crucial distinctions. Scripture, however, is careful—and so must we be. The Bible makes clear distinctions between:

- Temptation
- Desire
- Identity
- Behavior

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Confusing these categories leads either to cruelty or compromise. Scripture avoids both. We begin with temptation. Temptation is real and not sin. The Bible is unashamedly honest about temptation. In fact, Scripture tells us something remarkable about Jesus:

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

That means temptation itself is not sin. Jesus experienced real temptation—pressure, pull, and enticement—yet He never sinned. Read Matthew 4. So we must be very clear: experiencing temptation does not place someone outside the grace of God.

What about desires? Well, Christians are not those who never experience disordered desires. Christians are those who do not let desire rule them. Scripture does not teach that some people struggle and others don't. It teaches that everyone does because desire is universal.

James 1:14

Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Consider the worldview implications with me. Notice what James says:

- Desire arises from within
- Desire itself is not neutral because it lures and entices
- Desire must be discerned, not obeyed

The Bible never assumes that what we want is what we need. It never treats desire as self-authenticating truth. Why? Because:

Jeremiah 19:9

The heart is deceitful above all things...

That includes heterosexual desire. That includes same-sex desire. That includes every desire shaped by a fallen world and fallen hearts. Here is where the biblical worldview sharply diverges from the secular one. The secular worldview says: "Your desires tell you who you are."

Scripture says: "Your desires reveal what needs redemption." The Bible never names disciples by their temptations or desires. Instead, Scripture consistently names believers by who they are in Christ. By their identity.

2 Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

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This matters deeply. Same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria may describe a real struggle, but Scripture refuses to call it an identity. Why? Because identity answers the question, “Who am I?” And Scripture insists the answer begins—not with desire—but with creation and redemption.

This is where many conversations stop too early. We don’t want to offend. We don’t want to hurt feelings. Well, the gospel offends, otherwise repentance would never occur. Scripture names sin clearly and the consequences of it:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

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,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

But Scripture does not stop there.

¹¹And 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.

Notice the past tense. The gospel does not say: “This is who you are, so make peace with it.” It says: “This is who you were—but God has acted.” That does not mean temptation and desire disappears overnight. It means temptation and desire no longer defines destiny.

Galatians 5:24

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Crucifixion is not instant. Those condemned to die this way typically hung there for days. It was decisive but slow and painful. That’s what it means to crucify your flesh with its passions and desires. It’s going to be painful, and it’s going to take time. But your sinful desires are still under a death sentence. They gotta die. That’s important. Crucifying your sinful desires isn’t about suppression but rather transformation. A common accusation against biblical Christianity is that it promotes repression. Scripture reveals that the true disciple doesn’t pretend desire doesn’t exist but is committed to reordering desire under Christ.

Colossians 3:5

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Put to death. Crucify. That language is strong—but it is hopeful. Why? Because God never commands what He refuses to empower.

Galatians 5:16

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Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Notice the solution is not stronger willpower. It is deeper dependence.

This is vital for the people in this room and the people you love. To struggle does not mean:

- You are less faithful
- You are uniquely broken
- You are outside God's grace

Struggle means you are human in a fallen world. What Scripture calls us to is faithful obedience and perseverance.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

That means don't give up hope. Don't quit. Remain steadfast. Press on. The church must be a place where temptation can be named honestly, sin is not celebrated, and grace is never withheld. So where do we go from here?

Before we talk about faithful engagement, meaning how we are to respond to fallen people in a fallen world, we must confess unfaithful reactions and responses. In Luke 6:37, Jesus said:

Luke 6:37

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven."

A sinful judgmental response looks at a fellow being created in the image of God and says, "You are irredeemable because you said or did or believe x, y, and z. I dismiss the possibility that you can ever be saved or ever change." We don't have license to walk through life and pick and choose who God has or will redeem and who He has and will not redeem. We are all impacted by sinful desires. Imagine for a moment if everyone judged your eternity by the existence of your current struggle. As such, we cannot do the same with those in the world because when we do, we are trampling on God's right to judge and determine. We don't have that right, so confess a judgmental attitude swiftly and repeatedly.

But neither should we respond with fear-driven silence. As Christ's ambassadors, we are to be salt and light, to declare the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His glorious light. When Peter and John were brought before the Jewish leaders and commanded to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, they responded:

Acts 4:19-20

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“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Silence born of fear is not love – it is self-protection. Just like truth without love reveals a heart that wants to be right rather do right. I can have all the right truth, all the right spiritual gifts, all the right knowledge, but 1 Corinthians 13 states:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Ephesians 4:15

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...

Truth used as a weapon dishonors Christ. But love without truth is abandonment.

Jesus declared to the Jews who believed Him in John 8:31-32:

John 8:31-32

“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Then in John 14:6 Jesus declared:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Then He goes on to emphasize the preeminence of love in the next two chapters. Jesus never separated truth and love. Neither may we.

So what does a biblically faithful Christlike response look like? [Cadell]

Good morning, everyone. I have the privilege today of sharing my personal testimony on responding to someone who struggles with gender and sexuality. For context, I want to share some family history.

From 2003 to 2015, I grew up in a household with three boys and one girl—until, tragically, my older brother took his own life when I was 11. Before that, our home was fairly typical, filled with the chaotic noise that three boys bring. Among us was our youngest brother. When we would say grace at my grandfather’s dinners, he was always the first to volunteer, eager to pray.

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Fast forward to today: he is now engaged to another man, refers to himself as female, and has run from Christ. I have lost both of my brothers to Satan's lies.

Since about the age of six, there were signs of femininity in my brother. None of this was addressed or confronted by our parents until he was around twelve, when he was encouraged not to be afraid of "who he is." Over the following years, as he "lived his truth" without any pushback from our family, he became increasingly anxious, bitter, angry, depressed, suicidal, and paranoid. Ironically, he seemed to crave persecution.

Recently, we were at the hospital for a family matter, and he became confrontational with a stranger simply for looking at him. In that moment, I realized that even in a family where he has been almost entirely affirmed, he still feels threatened. I have had front-row seats to the destruction this lifestyle can bring, and it grieves my heart deeply.

When I came to Christ in the summer of '24, I was shouting from the mountaintops that God exists, that He loves us, and that He died for us. When my brother came over, I shared the gospel with him, bought him a Bible, and addressed the elephant in the room. I could tell he was uncomfortable, fearing that now that his brother was a Christian, he would experience persecution and "hate."

By the grace of God, I approached the conversation as organically and delicately as I could. I told him that although we sin differently, sin still leads to death. As true followers of Jesus—grateful for what He did on the cross—our love for Him should lead us to turn away from our sin. I explained that my own sexual immorality, though different in action, was just as deadly in nature. He was no more a sinner than I once was.

The room fell silent, and shortly after, the subject was changed.

Since then, my brother has told false stories about my grandfather and me to justify the way he has treated us. He did not attend my baptism, my child's baby shower, or my wedding. When I see him from time to time, he pretends everything is fine. I respond by forgiving him, serving him—bringing him lunch, helping with his car—and by being the brother I always wanted.

This past Christmas, I said something he took as a jab at being gay. I apologized and explained what I meant. That conversation led him to share that he had experienced hate from a church he attended. I told him that true believers should only address sin out of love, not hate. As Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Since none of us are without sin, we cannot. Too often, people skip the part where Jesus also says, "Go and sin no more."

My relationship with my brother is far from perfect, and it has led to difficult conversations with my parents. Recently, though, I have accepted the division that Christ brings. I have grown bolder in my faith. I have suffered for my brother's sake and experienced the

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persecution from him that he so deeply craves—all in the hope that one day he would repent and come to Christ.

And if that prayer is never answered, I pray that I will still have run the good race, for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, our almighty God. The intent of my heart has never been spite or malice, or simply being against something. Rather, it is that I am for something—for redemption, for peace, and for Jesus, our beloved.

Thank you.

[Ben] So what does a biblically faithful Christlike response look like?

We speak the truth, not opinion, clearly, which is that God created humanity male and female, that sexual expression belongs in covenant marriage, and identity is found in Christ, not desire. Clarity is not cruelty. Going along with confusion is not compassion.

We love without compromising doctrine. Jesus demonstrated love to sinners by spending time with them, touching the unclean leper, receiving a worshipful foot bath from a prostitute. But He never affirmed sin as anything other than sin. He refused to withhold truth to keep peace.

We practice costly hospitality. Faithfulness requires proximity, and proximity means seeing people in need of redemption, seeing broken hearts, rather than withdrawing because of offending behavior. This means relationship with intentionality, hospitality without conditions, and patience without panic.

We walk with people, not argue with them. If someone refuses to hear, don't talk louder. Walk away and pray for them. If they are sometimes listening, be patient because discipleship is slow. We must prepare for the long game with lingering struggles and repeated repentance. Just like us.

Above all else, guard your heart and mind. This lesson is not about "them" or "those people." It's about you and what is in your heart. What reality have you embraced, by faith, concerning the body? Identity? Sexuality? Biblical roles? Do I see the body as meaningful? Do I trust obedience to lead to joy? Have I absorbed cultural definitions of freedom? Worldview drift happens quietly. It's influence permeates every aspect of our being. But the world desperately needs our testimony as redeemed sons and daughters of God. We are called to be a people of truth in chaos, a people of grace in shame, a people of hope in despair. Some will reject our message. That does not release us from faithfulness. Jesus did not come to affirm us as we are. He came to make us new, and none of us have arrived. Yet. That is the hope we hold. That is the hope we offer. That is the change remaining to take place in all areas of our worldview.