

Week 3: The self, gender and sexuality

1. Biblical Framework on Gender and Sex

- What does Romans 1:18-32 teach us about the how what we do with our bodies connects with our minds and hearts. What does Paul say about nature?
- God made male and female: Gender is defined at creation
 - Equipped for different roles but not simplistic gender descriptions (e.g. sewing)
- Marriage is defined at creation (Gen 2:18-25), not a social construct
 - One man, one woman in an exclusive and lifelong relationship
 - Marriage reflecting Christ and the Church as redeemed people
 - Going against this is dishonouring the body (Rom 1:24)
- OT teaching on sexual ethics is then re-iterated in NT as part of the moral law.
- All sex outside the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman goes against God's plan to fulfil our role to rule the world under God, misuses the intended purpose of sex and cannot reflect the covenant love of God for his church
- When we make sexual decisions, we are not just deciding to follow a few rules we are working with the designer of the universe

2. Homosexuality

a) Cultural Climate

- Combination of post-modernity: consciousness decides what is real
- Personhood theory our real self is separated from our body
 - our identity is determined by our feelings and desires not by body design or external laws
- Arguments less these days about physical reason but more simply this "who I am" or "who I want to be"
- No evidence that anyone was "Born that way" but even if there was, that does not make it inevitable. Most agree possibly genetic predisposition coupled with environmental influences and habitual practices – neuroplasticity (e.g. pornography responses). Strongest correlation with same sex eroticism is not a genetic or physical trait but behaving like the other gender in childhood
- Recent studies shown attraction much more fluid than previously thought much more influenced by culture and context – we interpret whether to pursue our desires through a moral grid
- a gay person acting out has discovered their authentic self and will be most happy by openly affirming their identity: Our flesh is a random assignment by nature.
- Very recent trend to use homosexuality as an identity rather just the practice. Greek/Roman culture added it to heterosexual sex. Considered dishonouring a man by treating him as a woman

b) Christian Response

- God commands and promises to bless sex and marriage as he intended
- Our bodies are designed to reflect God's plan for marriage
 - Male and female bodies are clearly designed to fit together in sexual intercourse
 - Male and female sex is clearly designed as the normal way to produce children
 - Males and female complementary roles are ideal for serving and parenting
 - It follows that homosexuality must deny the body's "natural" design and create a new morality based on the person distinct from the body
- We need to make the same argument for being who we are by embracing the life and the body God has given us and but our identity in Christ
- We are pro-body and root our sexual ethic is rooted in the creator's design
- What are the common biblical objections?
- What are the common secular objections and how to answer

3. Transgender

a) Cultural Context

- Basic idea: we can define our own gender by how we feel
- a new and contested ideology has never been so uncritically embraced
- "Gender dysphoria" was until recently recognised as a psychological disorder, now an identity to be embraced. Gender is said to be assigned at birth as if it was entirely random choice. It is either different to your birth gender, or just fluid.
- 80% of children who were referred for gender dysphoria before adolescence returned to identifying with their birth gender in adulthood
- amongst those who present with gender dysphoria there is an elevated prevalence of other psychological disorders, especially mood disorders, anxiety disorders and suicidality
- N.B. Not Intersex – which is a chromosome disorder
- When mind disagrees with body – which one wins?

b) Christian responses

- We are made male and female and we are to embrace and enjoy the differences
- Sin has distorted the good creation including our bodies and our minds
- Avoid gender stereotypes which push people towards thinking they are in the wrong body
- gender affects every cell not just sex organs
- does it hurt anyone:
 - major attack on women's rights
 - No basis for human rights without definition of humans
- How to respond lovingly, gently, faithfully?