

1. THE BIBLE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

As we saw in the Introduction, one of the areas that most draws our attention, that most consumes us, is our sexuality. This has always been a reality for humanity; but in 2020, we are encouraged in a special way to focus on our sexual identity and ‘orientation.’¹ We hear many things today about our sexuality. On the one hand, we hear that it is fixed and unmovable. Think of the ‘I can’t change’ narrative of recent years; one hit song by the rapper Macklemore became a global anthem for articulating just this line. No doubt many people continue to think this is true. Their sexuality is who they are, foundational to their existence, shaping every part of their being.

How interesting, then, that our contemporary culture also says exactly the opposite as well. Different voices—many of them also associated with the

1 An ‘orientation’ as is commonly understood refers to our pattern of attraction.

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‘LGBT’ movement—tell us that our identity is not at all fixed. Instead, it is fluid. It’s not nailed down; it’s ever-evolving. The ‘genderqueer’ category seeks to capture this experience, as does the ‘+’ in some LGBT formulations. There is no male and female ‘binary,’ and as such, there is not even a defined sexual pattern, whether heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex) or homosexual (attracted to the same sex). Such thinking is old-school and outmoded. My sexuality, friends tell us today, is beyond categorization. It transcends existing paradigms. It is not tied-down; it is shifting, moving, dynamic.

Wherever people land on the changeableness of our identity, we cannot miss that our culture seeks to persuade that our identity fundamentally is sexual. We remember, for example, what Michel Foucault once said: sex is ‘more important than our soul.’² But what does the Bible teach us about our sexuality? In a previous book, we looked closely at the issue of lust; specifically, we focused on the issue of opposite-sex lust. In this book, we want to look at the area of homosexuality. What does the Bible teach about it? How is the Bible’s teaching supposed to impact our thinking? How does knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

2 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 78, 156.

affect same-sex identity, thinking, attraction, and behavior? In the pages that follow in this chapter, we will walk through the Bible's presentation of same-sex attraction and homosexuality. We will see that the Scripture has a fundamentally different word on these matters than our modern culture.

The Good Design of God: We Are God's Image

The Bible's first words that help us understand homosexuality do not speak explicitly of it. Instead, in Genesis 1 we learn two major truths: firstly that every human person is made in God's image, and secondly that God has made all people either a man or a woman. We have traced these ideas in *The Grand Design* (and in book one of this trilogy), but we must consider them briefly once more. Genesis 1:26-8 tells us crucial material about our identity as human people:

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.*

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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.’

The first truth about humanity is not that we are sexual beings. By this I mean we are not taught here to construe our identity in terms of our sexual preference. Instead, we are taught that the human race is the race that images the glory of God. In a very distant way, we look like God, and point to God as our Creator. The image of God isn’t a quality one has—like eye color or intelligence or skin tone or relational status—but rather is who we are. We are the image of God (see 1 Cor. 11:7 on this point).³ We can’t change this or alter it. It’s true of us, of every single human person, no matter what.

We need to see that this is a very different starting point than secular starting points. The human person has a fixed identity in the biblical mind. We’re not a mere collection of cells. We’re not a cosmic accident. We haven’t randomly evolved into the human form we possess. No, God made us specially for His glory. We exist because

3 See Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn: Ross-Shire, Christian Focus, 2019), pp. 7-50.

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He wanted us to exist. We have shape and form because He wanted us to have shape and form. We have dignity and purpose and worth—every single human being does—because God is our Maker. This is true before the fall, and it is also true after the fall. We are fully human as God-made beings. Nothing can change that.

The strikingly spiritual nature of humanity stands out in Genesis 1:26-8. Our culture tells us that we are a sexual being above all, but Scripture tells us that we are a spiritual being above all. This is true of everyone. The human race was made to know God. We were not made for ourselves. We were not made for sin. We were made by God for God. We do not gain or exude value when we become sexually desirable or sexually active. Our culture teaches us this, but not the Bible. In the teaching of Genesis 1, we have value and worth and dignity because God made us. He made us so that we would live for His glory and fulfill His purposes in the earth.

This is the very opposite of what we so often hear today. We are enmeshed in cultures that tell us that our sexuality is who we are. This is especially true of our non-Christian contexts, in which it is basically assumed that we will engage in sexual activity at the earliest possible opportunity. Men and women who instead choose chastity

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before marriage, and gladly remain virgins, seem shockingly weird. But such a choice is in no way weird. We may be called to marriage or not, but sex is not what makes us human. God forming us in His image is what makes us human. Our ‘imageness’ is the first truth about us. We are in our being the likeness of God. He is our Maker; we are His image.

In learning this first truth about our humanity, we gain an absolutely vital truth about our identity. In the Bible, you don’t make up your identity from scratch. In the Bible, our personal identity is created by God. True, there are elements about ourselves that we learn over time – that’s a great part of life. Yet in biblical terms, human identity is not a great project by which we choose, from scratch, who we wish to be. In God’s design, we have a certain body, a certain family background, eye color, hair color, genetic predispositions, and much more from our debut on the earth. Our identity is not self-created, but is God-given.

The Good Design of God: We Are Men or Women for His Glory

We learn a second glorious truth in this section of Genesis 1: that God made men and women. Right after the first truth of humanity, our image-bearing nature, we learn that manhood and womanhood