

Yes – And  
Week 2: Gender

I. We're in a series of messages called "Yes-And" in which we're considering the values or principles that define us as Christ followers. We could simplify that and say:

**Christian Ethics**

A. What are the behaviors that define the community of faith? Should we even have such a thing? I would answer with a resounding, "yes!" This isn't about proving our worth to God. It's not about showing how religious we can be. Our behaviors or values as Christ-followers really does boil down to:

**Love!**

1. When we come to realize what God has done on our behalf. When we begin to realize just how much God loves us, we respond by giving our lives back to God. We submit our lives to Him and He infuses His abundant life back into ours!

1 John 4:10-11 – 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loves us in this way, we also must love one another.

2. Love is the center of the Christian ethic. God has demonstrated His love for us through Jesus Christ. The only proper response we can therefore have is to submit our lives back to God by living out His word through the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Here's where the struggle gets real. There are numerous issues on which the world and the word don't always agree. Many of the world's behaviors (what is right and what is wrong) don't always align with the principles laid forth in God's word. We have two paths before us today: One, we bend our lives to the current culture, or two, we bend our lives to the book! God's word will always cause tension within any human culture because God's word is from above. It transcends all cultures because God's word wasn't derived from man! It cuts and reforms us, not the other way around! And it is the love of God that it is so!

II. The topic today has many specific areas that we could get hung up on. Please listen to my heart on two things. One, I am doing my best to understand God's word and point us in that direction. Two, God's ideal is for our good. God doesn't hate anyone. Please be open to the counsel of God's word.

Today we're going to begin looking at God's ethic for:

**Gender**

A. How should we value and think about gender? What does the New Testament say about gender and about gender roles? To get there we need to go back to the beginning. I can't stress enough how important Genesis 1-3 are to the entire biblical narrative because these chapters present God's ideal for His design of creation before sin entered the world. Jesus, along with the New Testament writers, go back to Genesis 1-3 often in giving us a clear understanding of God's call to holiness.

B. Let's look at some key passages in Genesis 1-3 and then we'll see this carryover into the New Testament ethic for Christ followers.

Genesis 1:27-28 – 27 So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. 28 God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."

1. Genesis 1 is a panorama view of creation that culminates in God's masterpiece He calls, human beings. There is nothing to compare in all of creation to that of man because we are created in:

**God's Image**

a. We're not God but we reflect the holiness or perfection of God like nothing else in the created order. God has bestowed this gift upon us! What this means is that we don't derive our identity from ourselves or the culture around us. Our identity is anchored in who God has declared us to be. His unique set apart creation that reflects the character of God and the holiness of God throughout the rest of creation. This is our God given identity before sin ever entered the world.

b. Human beings came from God. We were created in the image of God. We were created male and female. From the onset of our creation, there is an inherent equality built into humanity in that we're all image bearers of God. There is also an inherent distinction in that God created us:

**Male and Female**

(1) Before sin corrupted all of creation, there was in the beginning a God-given design for a dual sexuality which was assigned when? At puberty? After you begin exploring your sexuality and experiment?

No, God built into creation a dual sexuality in the way a human was:

Created

2. We see God's design in Genesis 1 even though this is a panorama view of creation. Wide lens! But in Genesis 2 starting in verse 4, God is like, "this is so good!" I've got to slow down and peel back the layers on the creation of My masterpiece: humanity!" Genesis 2 is another creation account that focuses in greater detail on the creation of humanity. Don't think of Genesis 2 as sequential chronologically to Genesis 1. Genesis 1 and 2 are two separate creation accounts aimed at two different goals.

a. What additional information do we receive in Genesis 2? A lot!

Genesis 2:15-18 – 15 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die." 18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him."

b. God created man to do what? Walk around naked and eat pomegranates all day? Nope! The fall hasn't happened yet, and God still declares to the man that he is to work and watch over the garden. Man was to be God's overseer and steward the creation in which God had placed him. Man receives the command from God to enjoy the garden and honor God through obedience.

c. It's at this point, God declares something is still missing. It's not good for the man to be alone and God makes a:

helper corresponding to him.

(1) Does God then create the woman? No, God doesn't. God lines up all the animals and brings them in front of the man for the man to:  
name them.

(2) After the roly-poly rolls by, the man concludes what God had prior:

Genesis 2:20-23 – 20 The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. 22 Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called "woman," for she was taken from man.

3. There is an equality of male and female given to us in Genesis 1. Both male and female are created by God to reflect the image of God. To display the glory of God throughout creation. The equality of male and female doesn't in anyway deny the distinction between the two! God wouldn't have created a helper corresponding to the man if another man would have done the job. God created the man to be a man. God created the woman to be a woman.

4. Not only is there a clear distinction between male and female, God has designed marriage to be a covenant bond between one male and one female with the designation of male:

Headship

a. Here's what that means:

God designed male and female to be a partnership of two spiritual equals with the male primarily responsible for leading the couple in a God-honoring direction.

b. We have a pandemic occurring in our culture today and it's a pandemic of grown men who are still acting like boys. This is where many of our gender issues are stemming from. Our homes are breaking down because we've got men that want the authority but not the responsibility! We have a visceral reaction to male headship in a lot of our culture today because there are a lot of deadbeat males in the world. We are propagating this culture. We don't teach an 18-year-old how to be a man. There's an appropriateness to training male and female according to age, but the younger the better. And they won't learn it on the PlayStation or iPad.

5. The man was placed in the garden to work it and watch over it. The woman was created as a suitable help mate for the man. Both were equal in the eyes of God and at the same time distinct. In their partnership or

union, the man was to lead them in a God-honoring direction, the woman was to help the man, and together they jointly demonstrated God's Image over creation.

6. The woman gets the bad wrap over the fall, but a few things in the text caution me about placing primary blame on the woman. The man has negated his responsibility of keeping watch over the garden. He's sitting back passively allowing the serpent and the woman to have a conversation. It was the man who had been instructed by God to not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After the fall, God comes looking for the man! The Apostle Paul also places primary responsibility for the fall on Adam in Romans 5.

a. I don't want to go too far beyond the scope of our conversation of gender but there is a tension that is infused within the gender roles as a part of the fall. In Genesis 3:16 we see within the curse a desire of the female to experience the God ordained union of male and female where the male is leading in a spiritually responsible way, but because of sin, males natural pull is to replace responsibility with dominating authority. The partnership between male and female in the covenant bond of marriage doesn't fare well throughout the Old Testament.

C. We've looked at Genesis 1-3 as the ideal for God's design. We've seen the equality of male and female and we've also seen the distinction between the two. So what does the New Testament say about gender and gender roles?

1. Gender duality, both male and female, were God's design in creation before the fall. That's an important note. When sin entered the world, it impacted all of creation. Even our physical bodies are corrupted. There was a false belief in the 1st Century Jewish world that a person's individual sin or that of their parents led to defects. Here's how Jesus responded to the disciples:

John 9:3 - 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him."

2. This isn't an easy answer, and we should always treat people with compassion and lead with love. But sin has impacted everything. Are there people who could be born with gender dysphoria and other struggles? I'm o.k. saying "yes" to that question. But it does not change God's ideal. I would point to Jesus's words in Matthew 19 for the basis of this. Jesus affirms gender, gender roles, and adds a caveat to express that even in the most difficult of situations our identity is ultimately in who God has declared us to be in our unique role that we still have to display God's image in creation. The context is one about divorce. I've preached on divorce in the previous series, "Going There," if you'd like to go back and listen. In this passage Jesus doesn't go back to Moses or the Law; Jesus goes back to creation!

Matthew 19:4-6 - 4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that he who created them in the beginning made them male and female, 5 and he also said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

3. Jesus states that Moses made concessions, but these concessions were never a part of God's original design. Jesus goes back to the beginning to affirm we are created by God, we're created male and female, and the man is to leave his previous home, be joined to his wife, and they are to be in covenant bond or union until they die. That's the unchanging standard of God. Humanity has failed to measure up to God's standard in all types of ways but that in no way negates the standard!

4. So what's the caveat? God creates male and female. Gender is binary and determined by God. God created them male and female! Humanity, apart from Christ, has rebelled against God in every way so it should not be surprising that gender is yet another way to declare our way is better than God's way. This isn't to deny that our sin nature could impact one's views on gender in the same way it does sexuality.

D. Here's where I think the Big C Church has gotten off track and needs to repent. We turn real people into an "issue" and cast the verbal stone at what Jesus says can be a real distortion of one's flesh. Our physical bodies are marred with a sin nature. Jesus affirms that a person's identity doesn't ultimately rest in one's gender or sexuality but in reflecting God's glory.

1. In the culture in which the disciples and Jesus lived, God's standard was viewed as ridiculous. That should encourage us. God's standard has always been in opposition to the world. The disciples say against this difficult ideal that it's better to just stay single.

**Matthew 19:11-12 – 11 He responded, “Not everyone can accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb, there are eunuchs who were made by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to accept it should accept it.**

**2. These words of Jesus go contrary to the idea that gender and sexuality reign supreme. There are distortions of every kind in our fallen world. We all have our pulls that are stronger on us than perhaps others when it comes to our sin nature. But to say that God is cruel to not make concessions on His ideal is to deny the holiness of God and the ability of God to meet us in our brokenness (no matter what that specifically is) and fill in those painful gaps with His goodness and love.**

**3. One of God’s gifts to His Church is the 20th Century Dutch theologian Henri Nouwen who struggled with these very issues and wrote some of the deepest theological gems of the 20th Century out of his depth of relationship with God. The primary issue for us today is that we have too weak of a view of God!**

**4. Jesus affirms both God’s ideal for gender, the duality of gender, and gender roles in that the male is to leave the home of his father and mother and form a new home within the covenant bond of marriage with his wife.**

**III. We need to take another week to look in more detail at gender roles within the family unit and within the household of God. That’s the terminology used to describe the local body of believers. God has an ordained structure in the home and God has an ordained structure in the Church. The New Testament ethic for gender roles is anchored in Genesis 1-3. It just can’t be denied. We’ll take another week to look exclusively at some of the key New Testament passages and the implications for the home and church. It’s not exactly popular but when has the godly thing ever been popular?**

**Ephesians 5:22-26 – 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word.**

**A. In the beginning God designed them male and female. The union between male and female was to be a covenant bond between two equal image bearers with the male given responsibility to be the spiritual leader.**

**1. The spiritual responsibility of the male has often been abused as authoritative. That isn’t God’s design! That’s not properly stewarding your responsibility as the male. That’s a man who is still acting like a little boy. Leadership in the New Testament is equivocal to service. But it must be servant-leadership. It’s not the wife’s role to determine the spiritual climate of the home.**

**2. I look around at our culture and it seems like we’ve strayed so far from God’s ideal. We’re paying for these consequences today. And this is where I’d like us to conclude. God has created us and as His unique creation desires that we thrive. He has designed all facets of our lives including our gender and gender roles so that we thrive. As we erode gender and gender roles in our culture are things improving? We’ve ceased to understand Biblical manhood and womanhood and what’s occurring? Mental illness is increasing at an alarming rate, sexual exploitation is through the roof, and domestic abuse is increasing.**

**3. If I’m out of vogue so be it. I’m going to make the choice to take God at His word. God has set up the home and the church family in an intentional way. And with the resources God has given us, starting with the Holy Spirit, both your home and our church can thrive bringing glory to God!**

**B. We need at least another week to keep the conversation going. Next week Pastor Mike is going to look at an ethic of work, but we’ll circle back around the topic of gender roles in two weeks.**