**MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM**

**PART III**

**GENDER COMPLEMENTS WITHOUT COMPROMISE**

**Genesis 2:4 – 2:25**

**INTRODUCTION**

Please open your Bibles to Genesis 2. Today we continue our series on “Male and Female He Created Them”, where we explore what the Bible teaches about gender and sexuality. Last Sunday we looked at Genesis 1, where we saw that the creation and distinction of mankind as male and female was part of what made creation *very good*, meaning that it both promoted human flourishing and displayed the goodness of God himself. Today we’re going to look at the origins and purpose of gender.

A couple months ago, the Metroland family of newspapers published a series on gender identity. One article, titled “Gender lines blurring between male and female”, featured a family with a 16 year old named Micah. The article begins with the complication of buying underwear for a child who is unsure which gender fits. This is how the story unfolds:

Mandy Klein made a big mistake when she picked a pack of undies for her teenager Micah from the girls’ section. Turns out, one pair was pink.

Micah was so upset thinking about the girlie pink pair donned that morning, her parents say, that by the end of day she’d cut the underwear into tiny pieces and tossed them in the trash.

It’s unclear from the article whether Micah was born a boy or a girl, since the article refers to Micah with Micah’s preferred pronoun – “they” and “them” – so out of respect for Micah I will use the same pronouns. The article continues:

Micah prefers “they and them”, dresses generically and considers themselves male or female depending on the day, and sometimes the time of day.

“I avoid using pronouns when I can,” (father) Randy says. He uses Micah’s first name when he thinks of it, but it can get confusing and sometimes, emotional.

“I tell her – them – ‘when you correct me…don’t yell. I understand you’re passionate about it, but I forget. It doesn’t mean I’m being disrespectful.’”

In my opinion, this story highlights not only the new reality of our times, but the tragic reality of our times. It is heartbreaking to see young Micah and their family not only struggling to understand their gender, but being told that this struggle is completely natural. I can only imagine the unceasing turmoil of such an uncertain existence. Micah is told that gender is fluid, and can change not only day to day, but minute to minute. Micah is told that gender is a matter of choice, and is completely determined within the confines of one’s mind. And Micah is told that gender is without purpose beyond the meaning one finds in self-expression.

Our text today in Genesis 2 will show us that gender is not fluid. It is solid and unchanging. Gender is not a matter of choice, but is determined by one’s physical biology. And gender is not without purpose, for maleness and femaleness are intended to exist in wonderful complementarity.

I will not read our text, as it was read before the break, but please keep your Bibles open to Genesis 2. At the heart of this message is the truth that **Gender Complements without Compromise**.

We will have two points today from our text:

1. Gender is Physical
2. Gender is Complementary

(1) **GENDER IS PHYSICAL**

The question for everyone who tries to understand gender is, what is the relationship between our gender and our physical bodies? Is there no relationship, some relationship, or such a close relationship that one determines the other? The way that you answer this question will have a profound impact on not only how you view yourself, but how you view others.

For example, it affects how you raise your children. Those who say there is no relationship would raise their children in an environment that promotes gender neutrality. Many of you may recall the Toronto family profiled in the media that intentionally gave their children gender neutral names: Jazz, Kio, and Storm. With their third child, Storm, they decided not to disclose to anyone what Storm’s birth-assigned sex was, including Storm. They wanted Storm to grow up in an environment in which Storm was completely free to determine his/her gender and not told what he/she was born to become. That reflects the view that there is absolutely no relationship between your physical body and your gender.

Others would say that there’s some relationship between our bodies and our genders. They would raise their children to believe that they are the gender that they were born with, but if one day they decide to change, that’s ok too. Gender may start off as determined by one’s body, but it may not end that way.

The last category of people would say that there is an inextricable link between our bodies and our genders. If we are born male, then we are male, regardless of how we may feel in the future. If we are born female, then we are female, regardless of what our minds may tell us.

Our text today tells us that option three is correct. Look at verse 7: “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” From the very beginning, God made us physical beings. God formed *the man* from the dust of the ground. Similarly, in verse 21, it says: “And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.” God made the *woman* from the man’s rib. Our physical bodies are an integral part of who we are. God gave Adam a male body, and therefore he is a man. God gave Eve a female body, and therefore she is a woman.

If there were no connection between our bodies and our genders, then we would expect a very different creation account. We would expect verse 7 to say: “then the LORD God formed the man, *and then* gave him a body formed of the dust of the earth.” And we would expect verse 21 to say: “And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a body, *and then* gave the body to the woman.” We would expect a separation between the man himself, and the woman herself, and the bodies that they would “live in”. If God had created us like that, then one could make the case that gender is therefore distinct from our bodies.

But that’s not how God created us. God formed *the man* from the dust of the ground. The making of man was the making of his body. His body is tied to his very identity as a man.

Now it’s true that he is not *just* a physical being. The second half of verse 7 tells us that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”, imparting an element of the divine to him – giving him a soul, giving him God-like characteristics like creativity, reasoning, and the ability to understand concepts like love and justice. But this does nothing to diminish the significance of his physical body: he is given a male body, and therefore he is a man.

Those who would say that gender is separate from physical body have really minimized the fact that we are physical beings. They have maximized the priority of our *minds*, and diminished the significance of our bodies. Many of you will be familiar with the well-publicized story of Caitlyn Jenner, formerly Bruce Jenner. A former Olympic gold medal winner in men’s decathlon and the father of one or more of the Kardashian clan, he announced to the world last year that he was no longer a man. He was now a woman. He was no longer Bruce. He was Caitlyn. This is what he tweeted after this announcement was made:

“I’m so happy, after such a long struggle, to be living my true self.”

The assumption behind this declaration is that one’s true self is confined to one’s mind. It doesn’t matter who you are according to your body. That’s not part of your true self. All that matters is who you are according to your mind.

In his helpful book *Transgender*, Anglican pastor Vaughan Roberts contrasts this kind of thinking with what the Bible teaches in Genesis:

Caitlin was expressing this way of thinking: my feelings are my true self, my psyche. But in the Bible’s understanding, because God created everything, the body and the whole material world is very, very good. Our bodies are an essential part of our true selves. So what I feel about myself can never be the whole picture, because God made us embodied souls. Our bodies are essential in determining and revealing who we truly are.

Think about the implications of saying that our true self is defined purely by our own self-perception and has no connection to our physical bodies. I could say that I am a black man, notwithstanding that I have Chinese origins, and you wouldn’t be able to say otherwise. I could say that I’m a cat and not a human, and you would have to respect that (I should note that I didn’t just make up these examples. They come from real world examples). When self-identity is divorced from our physical bodies, the possibilities of self-definition are endless.

But the more disturbing concern here is what is being done to children who express some sort of gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is defined as a “marked incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender, of at least 6 months’ duration.” Studies have shown that 80% of children who experience gender dysphoria have it naturally resolved by late adolescence. And yet, children who experience gender dysphoria are being treated with puberty-suspending and cross-sex hormones in order to conform their bodies to their perceived mental state at the earliest stage possible. In some cases, children are even being sterilized or surgically altered. If the mind has pre-eminence over the body, then all of this makes sense. It is logical to make the body conform to the mind. You could even say that it’s *compassionate* to do this as early as possible so that these children don’t have to go through the trauma of trying to change genders when they’re older. But if our bodies are an essential part of who we are, and if our bodies are part of the goodness of creation that God made for the flourishing of mankind, then this practice is nothing short of evil.

These aren’t just concerns expressed by Bible-believing Christians. They are concerns expressed by medical professionals. The American College of Pediatricians and the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, along with the Christian Medical Association and the Catholic Medical Association, which together represent over 20,000 health physicians and professionals in the US, all express concern about gender-corrective therapy and surgery amongst children. Indeed, the president of the American College of Pediatricians stated as follows:

“We live at a time in which social agendas often bias the results of research and lead to the development of false medical standards. Those who honorably speak out against this are chastised. Young children are being permanently sterilized and surgically maimed under the guise of treating a condition that would otherwise resolve in over 80% of them. This is criminal.”

This is the sort of future that waits for us if our society continues to believe that self-identity is separate and independent from physical biology. The stakes are higher than just seeing a few people here and there changing genders or raising their children in a genderless environment. It’s this kind of thinking, this kind of worldview, that will ultimately turn the basic order that God created upside down.

And it is into this precise issue that the gospel speaks powerfully. The gospel gives us an unprecedented view of the dignity of the human body. It’s true that the human body has dignity simply by virtue of the fact that it was formed by God himself. Verse 7 says that the LORD God “formed” the man of dust from the ground. The Hebrew word “formed” is most often used in the world of pottery. If you’ve ever seen a potter making pottery, you’ll know that it is a labour of love. The potter has to shape the pottery over and over again, carefully paying attention to every detail, running over the pottery again and again to make sure it’s just right. God made our bodies with the same loving, careful, and patient attention. Our bodies are valuable to him. And if God views our bodies as valuable, then we must as well.

But the dignity of the body takes on a whole other dimension in the gospel. In the gospel, we learn that Jesus Christ the Son of God, became the Son of Man. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God himself took on a human body, the Creator dwelling in created flesh. And in doing so, he made the ultimate declaration that the human body is good.

We know that when Jesus became a man, he took on a fully human nature. He was a man just as much as I am a man. But we forget that this meant that Jesus had to take on a human body. The human body is part of human nature. The two are intertwined. Therefore, to minimize the significance of the body is to disregard a fundamental part of who we are. To do so would neither be faithful to human nature nor healthy to human identity.

So when we are tempted to believe that our bodies are irrelevant to human identity, and that gender is merely a question of the mind, let us remember that the Bible tells us that our bodies aren’t irrelevant. Jesus didn’t see the body as irrelevant when he came to save us. Taking on a human nature meant taking on a body. Anything less would not have been human.

(2) **GENDER IS COMPLEMENTARY**

So we’ve seen how masculinity and femininity are separate and distinct. Now we want to look at how they are meant to come together in beautiful complementarity. For God didn’t just create the male and female genders to co-exist as independent islands. He created them to fit together like puzzle pieces, so that they’re better able to fulfill God’s mandate on mankind than they would by themselves. God made masculinity and femininity in order to *complement* one another.

We see that in the distinct roles that God gave to men and women in the context of marriage. God made the first man to lead the first woman, his wife. We see that in verse 23, where God allows the man to name the woman: “she shall be called Woman”, he said, “because she was taken out of Man.” The right to name something implies authority over the thing named. God names the light “day”, the darkness “night”, the skies “heaven”, the earth “land”, and the water “seas”. God names them because he has authority over them. And then God gives mankind authority over all that he made in 1:28, where he tells mankind to have “dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living creature that moves on the earth.” This authority is then expressed in God allowing Adam to name all the living creatures in 2:19: “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.”

Just as God made man to lead his wife, he made woman to help her husband. We see that in verse 18, where God says “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” The man must lead, and the woman must help. Those are their distinct roles.

Before we go any further, it’s important to note that the context of verse 18 is one of marriage. We see that in verse 18, “I will make him a helper fit for him”, but also in verses 22-25, where it’s clear that God brought the woman to the man to be united in the emotional, relational, and sexual union of marriage. Therefore, the role of a woman as a helper is reserved for marriage. Her job is not to help men in general, but to help her husband. Similarly, the role of men as leaders is reserved for marriage. His job is not to lead women in general, but to lead his wife. Single men and women should be disposed the same way, but not to the same extent as their married counterparts.

What does it mean for a woman to be a helper? It’s common in our day and age to look at verse 18 and say that it undermines the dignity of women. We think that “helper” implies that she is man’s maid, cook, and cleaner. That’s not what is implied here. Indeed, you could say that if anyone’s dignity needs to be undermined here, it’s the man’s. After all, he’s the one in need of help, and the woman is the one to provide it. But no one’s dignity is being undermined. The point of verse 18 is not who is superior, but what is superior about what the two are able to accomplish together.

We see the biblical concept of “helper” function in multiple, non-degrading contexts in the Bible. In the book of Joshua, Joshua instructed some of the tribes of Israel to “help” the other tribes in the form of military support:

“[A]ll the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them.” (Joshua 1:14-15)

The emphasis here is not on the inferiority of the helped tribes or the inferiority of the helping tribes, but on their increased ability to accomplish more together than they could on their own.

And of course, the ultimate helper in the Bible is God himself:

* “Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield” (Psalm 33:20);
* “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1);
* “Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life (Psalm 54:4);
* “The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me” (Psalm 118:7)

As Jesus was preparing to go to the cross, he promised his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit. Four times, Jesus calls the Spirit “the Helper”:

* “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.” (John 14:16)
* “But the Helper*,* the Holy Spirit…will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14:25)
* “But when the Helper comes…he will bear witness about me.” (John 15:26)
* “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you…he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” (John 16:7-8)

If God himself is our helper, it is no indignity to be called a helper. It is the greatest of honours to be called what God calls himself.

In addition, if we look carefully at our text, the emphasis is just as much on the equality of men and women as it is on the distinction in their roles. In verse 18, God says that he will make a helper “fit for him”, which literally means “matching him” or “like opposite him”. Eve was made to “match” Adam, to be his equal. She’s not identical to him, for she’s different in disposition and role – she’s “opposite him” – but she is no less his equal.

We see this even clearer in the way that God prepared Adam for the coming of Eve. God brings the animals to Adam not only to be named, but for him to see if any of the living creatures could be a suitable helper for him. Just picture Adam studying each animal, understanding their characteristics, and then giving them a name that fits their unique attributes. As he does so, he’s wondering if that animal will finally be the one to be his companion. But he is disappointed again, and again, and again, until finally the last animal is named and Adam sends it on its way. None were the right fit. None were his equal. And so verse 20 says, “for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”

But God has a surprise for Adam. He tells Adam to close his eyes while God performs the world’s first surgery. And when Adam awakes, God presents the first woman to the first man. He “brought her to the man” as verse 22 says, like a father presenting his daughter to her groom on her wedding day. In absolute delight, Adam gives the world its first recorded human words in verse 23, and they are sheer delight expressed in poetry: “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.” Finally, Adam had met one who is like him. She is “bone of his bones” and “flesh of his flesh”. She is his equal. He may have enjoyed spending time with the animals, but none of them were his equal. He was superior to them all. But this woman, she is superior to the animals in the same way he is superior to them. Therefore, she alone was a companion, a helper, and a lover who was fit for him.

This “fittedness” of men and women is displayed most vividly in the joining of a husband and wife in sexual union. They become “one flesh”, as verse 24 tells us. Woman was taken out of man, and in sexual union, they are brought back together again. It is not so much a *union* as it is a *reunion*. And in that reunion, their bodies fit together in beautiful harmony, giving a physical picture of the way in which their maleness and femaleness are meant to complement one another.

And it is this union, and this union alone, that enables mankind to fulfill the mandate given to us by God in 1:28 to “be fruitful and multiply”. Men and women do more together than they can by themselves, none more important than their mandate to bring children into the world and raise them in the love and care of a complementary relationship. Sexual union between one man and one woman is the only way the world can be filled with those who are made in the image of God, for the good of the world and the glory of God.

This is what’s at stake in these days when the concept of gender is being revolutionized. Gender identity theory completely breaks maleness and femaleness down, blurring the lines between the two and making gender an infinite spectrum of self-definition. We need to understand that this undermines all the building blocks of society: human identity, the dignity of the body, the centrality of the family, and the well-being of children.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I want to address two groups of people. The first is for those who embrace gender identity theory, either because you’ve applied it to your own life or you are supportive of those who do. What we just studied in Genesis 2 may have just rocked your world. I’ve been talking about how gender identity theory undermines the way in which Christians understand the world, but I also understand that what the Bible says about gender and sexuality undermines the way in which you understand the world.

If that describes you, then I would encourage you to look not only at what the Bible teaches on this topic, but to look to Jesus as well. Jesus is the reason why any Christian believes the Bible in the first place. We don’t believe in Jesus because we believe the Bible. We believe the Bible because we believe in Jesus. No one will trust the words of the Bible if they do not trust the Word who became flesh. And so I would encourage you to consider Jesus’ life: the power of his teaching, his loving example, his miraculous works. And I would encourage you to consider Jesus’ death: his death on behalf of sinners like you and me, done in loving sacrifice to pay the penalty that we could never pay on our own. My prayer is that you would find him trustworthy and good, and in finding him trustworthy and good, you would find his word trustworthy and good.

I also want to speak to those who are afraid. You’re afraid of what the future holds for society, for your children, for your grandchildren. It can be tempting at this point to feel a sense of hopelessness and dread at the direction our society is going. It seems like we’re on a downward spiral into a world that is empty of the goodness of God that he imprinted on creation. If this is how you feel, remember that God is not afraid. He is not surprised at what is happening. He is sovereign over all things. He was sovereign at the beginning of creation, and he is sovereign now.

These are not the darkest of times. There was a time when mankind was so evil, so corrupt, that it crucified the perfect Son of God. But what man intended for evil, God intended for good. He was totally in control when evil men spat on his Son and beat him, when they hammered nails through his flesh and hung him up to die. And it was through that evil that he saved the world. So let us not doubt that he can, and he will, do the same in this generation.