

God Gender & Grace A

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[0 : 00] It's a good idea to keep on talking about what we've been talking about now, but hopefully in that mind-sale way. So that's the idea here. I have a handout of this one, so if you'd like to take one of these and pass the rest on.

I apologise, some of the copies are a bit broken because my printer is playing a bit, but I think it should still be eligible. Just to give you an idea of where we're going with this, there's a lot of material, there's lots of things to think about on these subjects, and we're not necessarily going to get a chance to cover everything, but we'll see how we go.

Now, Kath was going to do... Have you got the book list? Do you want to do it now? Is that appropriate to do now? So, okay. So while you're getting those handouts, let me just flag up a few books.

So Barry and Kath asked me to, or asked us to, wave a few books around and recommend some books which might be helpful if you're interested in pursuing these sorts of subjects, and so you can pick up a book list afterwards, I guess.

Or they're on the seats already. Oh, they've been given out. Okay, great. Oh, I see. I see what you mean. Fine. So let me just give a sort of verbal plug for these.

[1 : 28] James, you had another one, didn't you? The Melvin Tinker one? Is that on the list? No. Okay. Do you just want to talk about that for a second? If you've got it, you haven't got it right there, I guess. Do that. Do that later. Do that later. Fine. So Evangelism as Exiles.

This is a new book by a guy called Elliot Clark, who was a missionary in Muslim country in Central Asia for a number of years, and now has come back to the West from the States, and has written this really excellent, really excellent book, tackling these very things we're talking about, that actually our relationship to the world is not done from the point of view of sort of insiders, but we are exiles, we're strangers here, and we're not to be worried about that.

We speak into the culture from outside, if you like, and he brings a really helpful perspective on the things that are happening. And this is kind of a, it's guided by, it's not a kind of verse-by-verse exposition of, but it's guided by the book of 1 Peter, as James today and me tomorrow morning will be speaking from, so that's rooted in that letter, which is really, really helpful, excellent, lots of good things in that.

Another one along similar lines is by Matt Chandler, who's also an American pastor, called Take Heart, which just encourages us to have courage and to know that our God is a great, big God, and is able to cope, if you like, with the challenges of living today.

As Christianity becomes more on the fringe of society, we're not to be worried about that, but we can have, as he says in the subtitle, Christian courage in the age of unbelief. So that's a really easy read, that's only kind of 120 pages or so, very good stuff.

[3 : 01] In terms of some of these issues, telling the story of the gospel and a better story, this is, I lifted this up already, but a better story by Glyn Harrison, who's a psychiatrist, but has written this book particularly on sexual morality, and analysing the cultural shifts of the last 40 or 50 years in a very helpful way, and then encouraging us to know the Bible story on these issues well, and to tell it well.

It's quite a convicting book, but it deals with the issues in a kind of an astute way, an analysis of where we've come to in our culture on these issues, and it's very helpful. That's a bit kind of more, it's not technical, but it's kind of more, slightly more advanced than those other two, but it's very worth reading, if you're a reader, certainly.

On issues particularly to do with homosexuality and transgenderism, which we're going to look at more in this session, this book by a guy who rejoices in the name of Preston Sprinkle, which I think

is a fantastic name, but he is, again, an American pastor, Glyn Harrison is British, an American pastor, this is specifically written for young people, it says on the front, it's for teens, well I think it's for teens, 20s, and actually I'd give it to 80-year-olds, because it's that good, in terms of, I think it's the best introduction to these issues, both in terms of what does the Bible really say about these things, but crucially, how do we kind of treat those who disagree with us, how do we respond to people who are homosexual, who are transgender, with compassion, with love, but holding fast to the truth, living in a grey world, it's called, and he says that because not all issues are black and white, they're greys, and it can be hard to navigate, but it's just really good, and it deals with very practical things like, you know, what do I do if somebody asks me about homosexuality, or should I use the name he or she for a transgender person, should I go to a gay wedding, those sorts of practical questions towards the end of the book as well, really, really excellent, quite expensive sadly, published by Zondervan, who were quite, it's about 10 quid for a book like that, and I think it's always a bit too much, but if you can get someone to help you buy that, do that.

And a bigger book by a woman called Rebecca McLaughlin, who's a British academic essentially, living in the States now, who was converted later in life, she's not old, but she's not converted like as a child or something, and she was and is same-sex attracted, so she's, she wouldn't call herself a lesbian, she's, I'll let you read it, but that is a helpful perspective on many of the issues, but she's not just dealing with that issue, but this is called *Confronting Christianity*, and it's tackling 12 hard questions that are often asked about Christianity, doesn't it crush diversity, isn't it anti-women, isn't it anti-gay, what about suffering, those sorts of big questions, and she just handles them in such a helpful way, with lots of kind of real world information, statistics and things, to say some of the things I was saying in the last session, that actually we have the better story to tell, and if, so if you just got one of those questions or two, which you could pick and choose on a chapter, you don't have to read it from cover to cover, hasn't science disproved Christianity, how can you take the Bible literally, doesn't religion cause violence, really, really helpful, excellent, and worth reading, again it's a hardback, so it's perhaps a bit more expensive, but worth having, so those are some books I really recommend, and really, really thankful for those, so we'll crack on then, with this session session, which is kind of a second session of mine, which tries to build on the first, and as I said, less of a kind of preach, and more trying to get into the nitty-gritty, of these issues, when we're thinking about, particularly God, gender, and grace, issues to do with gender, to do with sexuality, to do with transgenderism, we need to achieve, if possible, a crucial biblical balance, we've got truth and love, need to be in good balance, so on the one hand, truth, a lady writing a long time ago, I think in one of these books, is quoted, and I find this helpful, if I profess every portion, of the truth of God, except precisely that little point, which the world, and the devil, are at that moment attacking, I'm not confessing Christ, however boldly, I may be professing Christianity, so do you see what she's saying, she's saying, it's all very well to say, I'm a Christian, and I hold to this, and this is great, but if I kind of conveniently, ignore the issues of the day, which are challenging, the biblical worldview, then actually, I'm not really confessing Christ at all, I need to be clear, on the things, which people are actually attacking, where the battle really is, and so that's where truth is important, we need to be clear, about these things, not because we want to plunge, into a debate about homosexuality, or whatever, we'd rather just be telling people, the gospel of Christ, wouldn't we, and yet those are the very issues, which is the kind of connecting point, and where the fight has come to, we need to have some, way of, of understanding those, and responding graciously, to those issues, and fighting, not in an aggressive way, but fighting in a courageous, and sensitive way, for the truth, so we need the truth, but we need love, and at the same time, truth and love, always go together, and I find this, quote from Preston Sprinkle, in his book, really helpful, he's been talking about, the example of Christ, and how in Jesus' life, he was always found, with the people, that were rejected, or vulnerable, or, you know, you might have thought, were the enemies, of true religion, the prostitutes, and the tax collectors, and so on, and from that, he draws out this, this point, he thinks that today, until Christians develop, the reputation, of being far too friendly, with the LGBT community, we fail to imitate Christ, because it was that, for which Christ was, pulled up on, by the religious, authorities of the day, you're too friendly, with sinners, and we're only going, to imitate Christ, he says, if that's the problem, not that, the world looks at us, and says, you hate the LGBT,

[9 : 14] LGBT community too much, it's that, that we love them too much, you know, we should be going, all the way over, almost overboard, to say, we see you, as people made in the image of God, and we love you, and we accept you, and there are issues here, as Jesus never just, condone and

say, oh it's fine to be a prostitute, it's fine to be a tax collector, and rob people of their money, but at the same time as that, speaking the truth, we show, more than anyone in society, we are those who love, those who are otherwise, thought of as being rejected, by perhaps the Christian community, or even the community, generally, so we need to be, asking ourselves, have we got that reputation, or what is our reputation, with regard to those, who are different, on these issues, or who, are living an ungodly, lifestyle, over these things, but then as soon as I've used that word, these issues, it's important to come back to this, again, crucial distinction, that on these matters, we are not just talking theoretically, about some kind of like, belief system, we're not talking about issues primarily, we're talking about people, real people, and that's a crucial distinction, because it can be very easy, especially if, maybe this is more true, of the generation above you, than your generation, especially if you, you don't know any, gay people, or don't know any, transgender people, it's easy to talk about, people as if they are them out there, and it's kind of, treated them as if, it's just a kind of thing, but actually, once you know someone, who is gay, or, who is, involved in, these kind of ways of thinking, then, you realise they're real people, with, with real needs, and sins, and, things which are good, and to be rejoiced in, and they can be your friend, and, we're talking about people, and that's crucial,

Jesus treated people as people, not as issues, to be kind of, argued out, but people to be loved, and, to be respected as, human beings, even, if part of that respect, means, means pointing out, where they're going wrong, and, so, we need to distinguish between, the ideology, and the individuals, the ideology is something, to demolish, and break down, and destroy, as Christ, as Paul says, I destroy arguments, and, bring every thought, captive to Christ, that's fine, destroy that, without destroying the individuals, he doesn't say, I destroy people, in fact, one of the ways, of building up the people, is by destroying the ideology, so we've, but we've got to keep that, the section, careful, and wise, and, and clear, that we're not, that we can never be accused, of actually attacking, human people, real people with, with needs, and lives, and sorrows, and joys, and the need of Christ, that we need to be those, who clearly love, people, even while hating, a destructive, system, they maybe have, found themselves, in, so, with that in mind,

I want us to get into groups, at this point, and talk about a few, real people, so I've got three, real, live people, it's not made up, these people really exist, and, on each of these sheets, is a different person, and, something of their, life story, and how they have, been treated, or not treated, by Christians, or others, and, I want you to, to discuss them, in groups, now I don't have one, for everybody this time, if we're in about, ten groups, or so, there's probably one, of these for each group, so there are three different, sort of scenarios, people, and, so you can have, three sheets of paper, for a whole group, does that make sense, now you're, probably not going to get time, to look at all the scenarios, so I suggest, I suggest you pick one, person, and talk about that for a while, if you've got time, pick another one, so there's one, two, and three, but you now have to start, with one, okay, am I making sense, cool, so get yourselves into groups, doesn't have to be the same groups, you might be sitting, in a group,