

God Gender & Grace B

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[0 : 00] It has a good outcome, actually. I might quickly be able to find it, or I might not. Yeah, he says, in case you're wondering, Jordan got through that frightful evening with the leaders at his church.

He ended up forgiving all of them for making him feel less than human. And today he actually has a very good relationship with people at his church. Jordan is one of the most amazing Christians I've ever met. In fact, he's one of the most life-giving humans I've ever hung out with.

So there can be happy endings, but in spite of this kind of behaviour, not because of it. And I want to encourage you to think about this wisely, and to be like the Lord Jesus in his compassion for sinners.

Because you're a sinner, and you need compassion, and everyone has their own struggles. And that's so important that we react helpfully, rather than in ways which could have pushed him away in God's grace.

He showed more maturity than anyone there, and worked through that, and lived through that, and came out the other side. But it doesn't happen with everyone that way. So it's crucial that we take that seriously.

[1 : 07] So, we've seen the crucial biblical balance, truth and love. We've seen a crucial distinction. We're talking about people, not simply an issue. And if there's this kind of one thing I want you to take away from this, it's that.

And those sort of case studies are, I think, very important for thinking those things through. And there's more we can cover here. We'll see how we get on. But these are the crucial things. And then to pick up on what we were thinking about last time, here's a reminder, a crucial reminder.

We must learn how to tell a better story. And I'm not ashamed to kind of repeat some of the things here. But this quote from Glyn Harrison is helpful, I think. He's been saying how, you know, basically the gospel was entrusted to a band of incompetence.

You know, people who had failed, who were not particularly great or noble or significant in society. And yet, quote, 2,000 years ago, the belief that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead inspired this small band of Christians to create a culture so attractive to pagans by the way they treated women, children, the sexually exploited, slaves, and the poor, that by the end of the 4th century, an empire was on the verge of belief.

For the sake of the gospel, for the life of the world, the biblical moral vision is a story we must now be prepared to tell all over again. Yeah. Are we going to be in groups again?

[2 : 25] A bit later. Yeah. So maybe you want to... Good idea. Just get back into your seats so you're more comfortable not craning your necks. Thank you, Peter. Yeah. Yeah. Great.

So the rest of this is kind of a bit of a whistle-stop tour, but I hope it will be helpful. By all means, of course, respond with questions. Even now, if you want to stop me and put up your hand and go, but hold on, what about this? Don't be shy to do that, though that will take a bit of kind of doing.

But that's fine if you want to do that. Certainly write questions and put them in the question box for later. Let's look at just some foundations and some applications. That's the structure of this. The big foundation to all of this, it's not actually directly about homosexuality or transgenderism, but it's about the bigger, better story of biblical masculinity and femininity in general and marriage as a good thing and as a picture of Christ in the church and that whole positive, what's good, what the Bible teaches positively rather than what it's against, what it's for, as we were touching on last time. So the key thing is, God created men and women equal, not identical. And that's really important to grasp. If we get that, a lot of the stuff will work itself out.

Equal, equally dignified, equally in his image, equally to know him. There's no hierarchy between men and women or anything like that, but they're not identical. We're different, men and women. [4 : 08] And we should revel in that difference and make the most of those differences. So, as a very kind of broad statement, there's the pattern of Genesis.

We've seen something of that already. Majestic. God creating man and women in a majestic way, in a dignified way, in holy righteousness.

And yet, through the fall, the pattern is marred. Majestic but marred. There's still majesty about it, and yet, because of sin, that corrupts what is good.

And you see that in the curses given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. I'm not going to be doing kind of detailed Bible exposition here, but I'm kind of assuming that you know that and you can certainly go away and read what happens after the fall that Adam and Eve, their relationship is messed up by the fact that they've sinned against God and against each other.

And ever since, there's been this kind of, almost a war going on, a competition between men and women, which was never designed that way. So the pattern is majestic but marred. Then, fast forward thousands of years through to God in the flesh, to the example of Jesus, and you find him being what Adam always should have been, the true Adam, the true man, the real man, the proper man.

[5 : 27] So on the one hand, you've got him showing us what is true masculinity. And in a way, in an indirect way, you're seeing something of what true femininity is as well.

Of course he was a man, not a woman. And yet, in him, you see what it is to be male and female. So, he had true manhood. look at Christ, what it means to be a man.

And thinking about those case studies, the first one I think where there's a sort of stereotype of masculinity projected onto somebody. So you have to be like this to be a man. You don't find that in Christ.

There's this perfect balance of courage and strength and power, but also gentleness and care and wisdom towards the vulnerable and broken, a man who had perfect relationships as well as being a mighty leader.

And in that one person, those two things are combined. So the things which our culture has tended to say, well, that's typically mannish and that's typically womanish. Well, actually in Jesus, just read his life and find those things.

[6 : 37] That's what masculinity is. It's not a particular stereotype. He is the perfect man. And it's particularly in those things where he behaved in ways which our culture might say, well, that's weak and not like as a man should be.

That's where men should learn how to follow him all the more. So, when he's on trial, Pilate says, remember, behold the man! You could interpret that in a number of ways but I think there might be an element of sort of sarcasm in that.

Here's this man in a culture which prizes kind of athletic manhood. Here's this guy who's been beaten up. He's got a crown of thorns on his head. He's blood dripping from his face and he's clearly weak.

He's being mocked. He's been in a purple robe and all the rest of it. Huh, a man? Behold a man. Is that really a man? Is that what you call a man? And yet, ironically, in John's Gospel, John is always talking kind of pointing out certain ironies.

Ironically, that really is manhood. sacrifice, service of others, willingness to suffer so that others may benefit. That's real matter. So you men, you be ready to sacrifice and lay down your life so that the women and the children can benefit.

[7 : 43] There's something Christ-like about that and it's not to undignify women or children by doing that but there's a Christ-likeness about that which is wonderful and to be followed.

sacrifice as leadership. But then in his attitudes to women as well, you see something of his value placed upon women and often, particularly in Luke's Gospel, Luke seems to have this thing about showing just how valuable women were in the life of Christ.

They supported him, they gave financially to him, they provided for his needs, they were often the followers who were closest to him, the first at the tomb on Easter morning and so on and so forth and Luke often pairs men and women in his parables and in other instances, so for example, you get not just the parable of the lost sheep where the man going out to find the sheep but then you get the parable of the lost coin with a woman looking, sweeping around the house for her lost coin and

you get often that in Luke, men and women treat completely equally in his stories and his parables and in his narration of real events as well showing that in his eyes, in the eyes of Jesus that women have this enormous value and dignity completely equal to men.

Jesus elevated women as examples of what true Christianity should be, of spirituality and women, you have great models then in the Gospels and in the letters of women who were workers and servants and who were sacrificial and who were godly and who were strong and not kind of like the only thing they did was make the tea.

That's not what the Bible is like in the New Testament so don't be fooled if somebody tells you that's what it is you read it for yourself and find that the women were often the key people and they're a different role to men and yet equal still not identical equal and then pattern of Genesis then example of Jesus and then the parable if you like of marriage so you can spend a whole session on this but marriage itself this unique union of male and female is a parable if you like it's a scale model of something bigger it's not something in and of itself it's to show the love of Christ for his church so Christ is the husband the real one and husbands like me and other men who are married are little scale models and they should be pointing to him and wives are like a scale model of the church in their relationship to Christ and that's why the roles are as they are and it's because it's because [10:26] Christ is exclusively committed to his people that the union of sex is exclusively for married couples it's not that God kind of thinks up some arbitrary law and says you're only allowed to have sex if you're married no it's because of what that points to sex is actually in all its beauty and pleasure and joy that is a picture of something which is even more pleasurable and wonderful and joyful the union of Christ with his church and because that's an exclusive relationship the only place where the model for that sex is to be found is in a similarly exclusive relationship where you're committed to each other for life that's why sex is only for marriage because of what it points to so it's about a big picture then you understand what's going on in the small picture which is marriage and Jesus himself talks about that in a sense indirectly by talking about himself as the bridegroom on a number of occasions you've got one reference there

Luke 5:34 also John the Baptist talks about Jesus being the bridegroom who's come in John chapter 3 he's the bridegroom he's the great groom and so that's how we should see him as the true groom the true husband but more famously Ephesians 5 Paul expounds this idea of the husband and wife being a picture of the church in that reference you've got Ephesians 5 and you can think about that you can read more on that in other books and so on but that's just a brief kind of picture of that that's where we find this great picture of Christ in the church in marriage and then that has consequences for why sex is for marriage between one man and one woman only different and yet equal and exclusive because Christ is different to the church it doesn't work if you have a man and a man in a marriage because that's like having a Christ and a Christ that doesn't happen in the real big picture do you understand because it's got all points to the big thing so you don't have Christ in Christ you have Christ and someone who's different to him the church very different to him similarly you don't have the church in the church you don't have the church going to save the church so you can't in a real marriage have a woman and a woman see because that doesn't magnify the real thing out there which is Christ dying for his people that's why marriage is only for one woman and one man together am I making some sort of sense see where we're going with this ok great and it's interesting that you might say well it's just you might say it's just about anatomy that men and women sort of fit together biologically well there's that certainly and yet it's not just about anatomy and there's this fascinating quote I came across from a lady called Melinda Selmis who is the same sex attracted Christian woman and this is quoted by Ed Shaw in an excellent book I haven't put on the list but excellent book about homosexuality and the church response to it called the plausibility problem here's what she says it is because of and not in spite of the tensions between the sexes that marriage works masculinity and femininity each have their vices and their strengths the difficulty when you have two women which is what she experienced for much of her life she was in a lesbian relationship the difficulty when you have two women or two men together is that oh there's a typo there is that they understand each other too well and are thus inclined more to excuse than to forgive

I find that really interesting is that she's saying it doesn't work with a woman and a woman or a man and a man because they're too much like each other marriage works when there's give and take and where you have to forgive you don't just say well I can understand why she did that because I would have done that myself but you need a readiness to say I haven't got no clue why he did that

what is going on in a woman's head or what is going on in that man's head you just can't understand it because you're not a woman or because you're not a man and therefore you have to work hard on saying I forgive you and I want to try and understand you and I want to try and get to know you better which is not what happens she's saying when you have two men or two women I think that's interesting at the very least and I think powerful and important to consider if you turn over the sheet it's this I'm kind of going on about this because it's this male female distinction equal but not identical which people who are arguing from the bible trying to argue from the bible that gay marriage is right and acceptable it's this principle that they have to deny and they quite openly do it because there are christians out there evangelical christians but I will believe in christians who are trying to say no the bible is not against homosexuality it's not against gay marriage you have to understand the bible like this and there are books written like this there's the most well known one or kind of out there book at the moment is by

Michael Matthew Vines called God and the gay christian presents this argument for this and in many ways it's quite a strong argument I disagree with it but the reason is because he has to kind of deny this idea of men and women being equal but different he wants to say yes marriage is based on christ and the church yes but what he does is he says well the way that it patterns christ and the church is because of its commitment and its exclusivity so it's okay to have a man and a man married if they're committed to each other and if they're exclusive to each other they're monogamous and it would be wrong it wouldn't picture christ in the church if they went off and had affairs but it's still okay to still be committed because that still pictures christ in the church but what he conveniently avoids is the other element of how marriage pictures christ in the church is that the two partners are different there is difference between the parties and so it's not in balance if you like if you have a man and a man and a woman and a woman so you can't pick and choose how you want marriage to picture christ in the church you have to go with what the bible says in its wholeness which the revisionists christian revisionists have to kind of ignore in order to make their case now just onto something else in terms of foundations between the pattern of genesis example of jesus the parable of marriage now the mind body relationship and i was talking about someone just over coffee about this and in 2017 the bbc made a documentary about what which they call transgender kids and as part of this and it made this really interesting statement at the heart of the debate is the idea that your brain can be at war with your body as you can think that you are something which is not consistent with what your body is take two minutes talk to the person next to you or two people either side of you and just talk about that and see what you think and how you might respond to that at the heart of the debate is the idea that your brain can be at war with your body do you agree do you disagree what do you think the bible says about that space■■ you