

Jesus Speaks on
**MARRIAGE
& GENDER**

A Biblical View

by John H. Munro



THE VERDICT
WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO



*“For the word of God is living and active,
sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing
to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints
and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts
and intentions of the heart.”*

HEBREWS 4:12

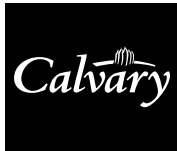


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CALVARY CHURCH

5801 Pineville–Matthews Road, Charlotte, North Carolina 28226
704.543.1200 | info@calvarychurch.com | calvarychurch.com

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“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”

ISAIAH 40:8

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

MATTHEW 4:4

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

AUTHOR'S NOTE

USUALLY PREACH CONSECUTIVELY THROUGH a book of the Bible. This forces me to deal with topics I otherwise might avoid. But my strong conviction is that the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore in a very real sense, God determines the subjects of my sermons.

Preaching through the Gospel of Matthew, I came to chapter 19, where the Lord Jesus gives foundational teaching on the subjects of marriage, gender, and sexual identity. Living in a culture that is increasingly confused about these issues, this is a very important passage. So I decided to study what Jesus says about marriage and gender.

As a follower of Jesus and a preacher of the Bible, my goal is not to give my views or personal opinions but to share what God has said in His inspired Word.

Every one of us is made in the image of God and created to glorify God. The glorious message of the Gospel is that God loves you and sent His Son to save you. Our Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again.

And for followers of Jesus, every aspect and dimension of our lives, including our sexuality, must be brought under His lordship and the authority of Holy Scripture. He has a plan for our lives.

I am aware of the pain and struggle of many who grapple with these issues. As we learn from the words of Jesus, I pray that God will bring clarity and peace as you seek to know and obey His Word with a humble heart.

— *John H. Munro*
June 2022

Who Is Your Authority?

THE TYPICAL MINDSET TODAY is that each person is his or her own authority in interpreting life and determining the right path. So although many people claim to believe in God and the Bible, they make themselves the ultimate authority in their life. The message is that God's truth doesn't matter.

Today we hear the constant mantra: *"Follow your own heart. Follow your intuition. Do what you feel is right for you! Be true to yourself. You deserve to be happy."* And in this way, God's truth and His authority are undermined, ignored, and replaced by our personal desires and feelings.

As we deal with these critical questions about marriage and gender, we must be clear about our authority. On what basis do we determine what is good and bad? What is right and wrong?

For followers of Jesus Christ, truth is not arrived at by cultural consensus, political expediency, or personal opinion. We believe that the Word of God, the Bible, is absolute truth. Inspired and inerrant, the Bible is God's revelation and our authority in faith and practice.

As we live our daily lives and hear the voices in our culture, it is easy for our hearts to become hardened and deceived. Therefore we desperately need an objective, uncompromising standard. We need truth! God's Word is described as being sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). It is so sharp that it cuts through our excuses, prejudices, and tough attitudes. This is why hearing and reading the Word of God can sometimes make us very uncomfortable.

It would be easy for us to have a Christianity on our own terms with beliefs and standards that mirror our culture. But a Christianity that is not true to God's revelation is no Christianity at all.

So as we focus on what Jesus says on marriage and gender, I ask you—are these matters of marriage, divorce, same-sex attractions, and gender issues merely matters of personal preference, or do God's commands and designs have to be followed?

As you answer that question, I invite you to read on, continue praying, and study Holy Scripture.



MATTHEW 19:1-12

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”

⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,

⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall

become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷ They said to him, “Why then did

Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Because of your

hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ But he said

to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs

who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are

eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

Jesus and Marriage

WE ARE LIVING AT A TIME of tremendous cultural shift. Marriage has been a cornerstone and building block of civilizations throughout the world for thousands of years. But now, marriage is under attack in western society. Some political and social revolutionaries want to demolish or fundamentally redefine traditional marriage in the name of personal fulfillment and freedom. But what does Jesus say?

Matthew 19:1–12 is an important passage in understanding biblical teaching on marriage, human sexuality, divorce, and gender issues. But before we go deeper, we must understand the context.

The religious leaders, the Pharisees, are jealous of Jesus. Despite their knowledge of Old Testament Scripture, they are spiritually blind and do not recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. So they repeatedly tested and challenged Him with questions on complex subjects, hoping to manipulate Him into saying something that would alienate the Jewish crowds or anger the ruling Roman authorities. Throughout the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Pharisees are skillfully routed by our Lord Jesus, who uses these opportunities to deliver brilliant, authoritative teaching.

In this situation, the Pharisees pose a controversial question about divorce, (which will be further discussed in the next chapter of this book). Instead of being drawn into the details of the controversy, Jesus refers to the original Scriptural account in Genesis dealing with the marriage between Adam and Eve. And as we carefully read and consider His reply, we will learn essential truths about marriage.

Marriage is ordained by God

Notice the statement by Jesus in Matthew 19:4: “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.” Marriage is not a social construct. Marriage is not a human invention. Marriage is God’s idea. Jesus is redirecting our attention back to God’s original plan.

God graciously created a helper for Adam “fit [suitably corresponding] for him.” God provides Adam with a perfect fit! Eve will provide what is lacking in Adam and will do what Adam by himself cannot do. Eve complements Adam physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Eve is equal with Adam as she is also made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Scripture teaches that husbands and wives stand equal in the eyes of God: joint heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7).

Eve is made from one of Adam’s ribs (Genesis 2:21–22). She comes from his side. Matthew Henry writes in his commentary, “The woman was... not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.” The marriage relationship is one of intimacy, closeness, and harmony.

It is essential to grasp that the man and the woman are brought together by God. The first marriage between Adam and Eve has God as a witness. Jesus says, “What therefore God has joined together” (Matthew 19:6). Marriage is not just a human contract between a man and a woman but a holy covenant entered into between three persons: the man, the woman, and God (Malachi 2:14). Christian marriage is where a man and a woman are individually committed to Jesus Christ and to one another.

Marriage is between a male and a female

Look again at the first statement by Jesus in Matthew 19:4, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.”

In the beginning, God created two sexually distinct human beings: male and female (Genesis 1:27–28). “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Then God commands male and female to “be fruitful and multiply.” God’s plan for marriage is one man and one woman — not two men or two women, but a man and a woman! The man “holds fast” not to another man, but to a woman (Matthew 19:5).

The woman complements the man, but the woman is different from the man. The physical, emotional, and psychological differences between men and women are God-given. They demonstrate their perfect fit when “they (man and woman) become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). So from the beginning of creation, there is a clear distinction between male and female.

Our culture bombards us with the view that same-sex unions are normal and to be applauded. But the teaching of God’s Word is clear. Marriage is not just a private matter between two consenting people who love each other. Marriage is ordained by God as between a man and a woman.

Marriage is the formation of a new family unit

Jesus continues, “Have you not read that He who created them... said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh” (Matthew 19:4–5).

In marriage, the man leaves his father and mother. The most important relationship for a husband is not his relationship with his parents, siblings, or friends but with his wife. In marriage, a new family, a new societal unit, is being formed. Two people of different sexes become an indissoluble union of “one flesh.” God glues them together. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6).

The man and woman need to form a separate home: a new family unit where the psychological and emotional apron strings are cut. It is true that they are still to honor and respect their parents, but their primary responsibility is now to each other. The “leaving” comes before the “cleaving” (holding fast). Sexual union is to be within marriage, not before marriage. It is not God’s plan for couples to live together before they are married.

In a truly Christian marriage, the couple love one another, respect one another, are kind to one another, pray together, forgive one another, laugh and cry together in the closest of all human relationships.

Marriage is an exclusive and permanent relationship

The Lord said, “and the two shall become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5). This “becoming one flesh” refers to the sexual union that consummates the marriage symbolizing the love between a man and a woman who are abandoning themselves to each other in the most intimate, transparent, pleasurable, and mysterious of all relationships.

Once the choice of husband or wife is made, all other men and women are out of bounds (Hebrews 13:4). The vows are not only to love each other but to be faithful (loyal) to each other. Marital unfaithfulness cuts at the heart of the marriage, violating this holy covenant. It is a very serious thing to intrude into someone’s marriage. It is destructive and against the commands of God.

“What therefore God has joined together let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). In God’s perfect plan, marriage is for life. It represents a serious and important decision that should not be rushed. The Lord said that the man is to “hold fast” (cleave) to his wife. This word expressed as “hold fast” means to be glued or welded together. Marriage is not a temporary arrangement. We don’t get married until we fall in love with someone else. We don’t get married until we meet someone who (we think) is more exciting or makes us happier.

The marriage vows emphasize that husbands and wives are to hold fast through joys and sorrows, through sickness and health, for richer or poorer. In the marriage vows, there is a recognition that tough times may come. But the marriage bond is so strong that it is only separated by death itself.

■ For prayer and personal reflection

Remember that marriage is God's idea, so we must follow the wise commands of God. If you are married or engaged, humbly ask God for His help and blessing. This is the path of joy, peace, love, and blessing. The first recorded miracle by Jesus was at a wedding. When you follow Jesus and His teaching, joy overflows.

Are you experiencing problems in your marriage or relationships?

Take them to Jesus. God is holy and perfect, but we are imperfect and sinful. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Admit your need for help and forgiveness. Pray for a fresh outpouring of Christ's love in your heart. If you are married, make a fresh commitment of love, respect, and faithfulness to your spouse.



Jesus and Divorce

WE LIVE IN A THROWAWAY SOCIETY. If something doesn't work, and often it doesn't, we can just get another. Sadly, marriage is often seen as just another disposable item. Divorce is now so woven into the fabric of our society that marriages are easily dissolved. Many couples head for the divorce courts rather than working out their problems, thinking, "I deserve to be happy" or "God wants me to be happy."

Divorce is the specific topic that the Pharisees raise with Jesus in Matthew 19. They ask whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause. The Rabbis hotly argued the subject of divorce, so this controversial question was designed to draw Jesus into the debate.

The Mosaic Law allowed a man to divorce his wife if he "found some indecency in her" (Deuteronomy 24:1). Some interpreted this to mean that sexual immorality was the only legal grounds for divorce. Some Rabbis interpreted this more broadly to include other reasons such as burning a meal or having displeasing physical features or habits. When divorce did occur, a divorce certificate was to be granted as a public announcement.

Remarriage by the couple was prohibited after an intervening marriage (Deuteronomy 24:1–4).

But in Matthew 19, Jesus is not drawn into the rabbinical debate and does not answer the question directly. Instead, He goes back not to the Mosaic Law but to God’s plan for marriage.

Jesus reaffirms God’s plan for marriage

Divorce is not a part of God’s design for marriage. Jesus reminds the religious leaders that God’s plan “from the beginning” (Matthew 19:4) is that the marriage bond is indissoluble. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (v 7). Divorce is a tearing apart of what God has glued together. No wonder divorce is such a traumatic and painful experience for everyone involved.

Jesus emphasizes that marriage is a divine covenant: one man and one woman making a lifelong commitment before God. Followers of Jesus are familiar with Christian marriage being a symbol of the relationship of Christ and His church, where there is love, respect, forgiveness, and joy.

Once Jesus replies, the Pharisees try to counter and ask, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce” (v 7)? Jesus explains that under the Mosaic Law, divorce was “allowed” because of the “hardness of heart” (v 8). This was a concession, not a command, and certainly not God’s plan, “but from the beginning it was not so” (v 8).

Jesus narrows the grounds for divorce

Jesus’ reply might surprise many people. He clearly states that divorce and remarriage are unlawful and amount to adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Divorce is a breaking of what God has joined. Therefore, to divorce and remarry, is to go against God. It is adultery, a breaking from God’s purpose and pattern. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6).

Ultimately we must reject the view that divorce is a good option if you are not happy, are unfulfilled in your marriage, or fall in love with someone else. God brought you and your spouse together—a marriage in the Lord.

Jesus reiterates the exception clause

In this passage, Jesus references the exception to the rule that the marriage bond is indissoluble. The exception is for *porneia* [a Greek word]. Porneia refers to destructive, immoral sexual acts, including adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, incest, and pedophilia. So the one-flesh marital bond is violated by sexual unfaithfulness. Sexual immorality strikes at the sacred marriage covenant. It is a sin against your husband or wife and a sin against God.

The story of Hosea in the Old Testament is an example of an adulterous wife being forgiven. God's grace and forgiveness are greater than any sin. But if the offending husband or wife does not repent or the breach is so flagrant that the spouse cannot move forward, he or she may pursue divorce. Jesus is not commanding divorce in these circumstances. Divorce is permitted but not prescribed.

In 1 Corinthians 7:10–15, the apostle Paul writes that divorce may also be permitted when a believing spouse has been willfully deserted by an unbelieving spouse and reconciliation is hopeless (perhaps the unbelieving spouse has remarried). In this situation, the unbelieving spouse initiates the separation and divorce, not the believing spouse. These two exceptions (immorality and abandonment) flow from the violation of the covenant of marriage: leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh.

At the end of the passage, Jesus speaks privately to His disciples, setting out the high standards of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:10–12). The disciples ask, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry" (v 10). In these circumstances, the Lord explains that not "everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given" (v 11). Followers of Jesus must be different from the secular culture.

■ For prayer and personal reflection

This is not an exhaustive treatment of the biblical teaching on divorce. It is essential to remember that all of us have sinned, and we all need God's forgiveness and transforming grace.

I also want to make it clear that I am not advocating that a wife continue to live with a man who is abusing her. Wives who have abusive husbands

need to separate for their own safety and the safety of their children. They should obtain biblical counsel and, in a safe context, determine whether reconciliation is possible.

What about those who are already divorced and remarried? What are you to do now? Go back to your first spouse? No! Divorce is not an unforgivable sin, but you must repent and claim God's forgiveness. Praise God that there is always more grace in the Lord Jesus than there is sin in you and me. Then, live as one forgiven, and honor your marriage covenant with your current spouse.

What are you to do if your marriage has problems? When you are lost in life, do as you would if you were lost in a forest. Retrace your steps! Are you willing to retrace your steps? That takes humility, an acknowledgment you are off course, and a desire to change. If you have wronged your spouse, repent and humbly ask for forgiveness. Get back to Christ—back to the cross—back to your first love. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you" (1 Peter 5:6). Your focus should not be on the grounds of divorce but on how your marriage may reflect the love of God the Father, the humility of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Feeling unloved, unappreciated, unhappy, unfulfilled, or misunderstood in your marriage? These feelings do not entitle you to end your marriage. Instead, get on your knees and pray for help, strength, guidance, and wisdom. Open your heart, your home, and your marriage to Jesus Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit of God to renew your love for Christ and your love for your spouse.



“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

EPHESIANS 5:22–33



Jesus and LGBTQ+

WE WHO FOLLOW JESUS AND BELIEVE that the Bible is the Word of God have not changed our views on sexuality or gender issues. But we are now being bombarded with the view that homosexuality is perfectly acceptable. We are told that homosexuality and lesbianism are good and viable alternatives to the straight lifestyle and must be affirmed by everyone. After all, gay marriage is about love, happiness, and acceptance. How can anyone be against these things?

Children and students face these issues on a daily basis. Theirs is a generation growing up to believe that sexual preferences are defined by the individual. Scripture makes it clear that we are far more than our sexuality.

As Christians, we are to speak the truth in love, showing compassion as well as conviction. Unfortunately, some professing Christians show hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community and are uncaring, harsh, and obnoxious. Such behaviors and attitudes are wrong and the very antithesis of Christianity.

However, freedom of speech is not only for those who agree with the viewpoint of the powerful LGBTQ+ lobby. Opposition or contrary views are widely labeled as bigoted, prejudiced, and homophobic. Christians must not

be silent in declaring the truth of Jesus and displaying His love. We must be able to provide an accurate and appropriate biblical response.

Foundational truths from the teaching of Jesus

God created two sexually distinct human beings: male and female (Matthew 19:4, Genesis 1:27–28). At creation, we see the equality of males and females and their differences. We are created as sexual beings. There is a clear distinction between male and female—equal but different. This is the divine design.

God’s plan for marriage is one man and one woman in a monogamous, permanent union (Matthew 19:4–6, Genesis 2:23–24). Marriage between one man and one woman is the most important and intimate of all human relationships, “they shall become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5). All other sex outside of the marriage bond is sinful. This includes casual or committed affairs between consenting adults, adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism.

Sexual experiences that do not follow God’s design lead to brokenness, despair, feelings of being used, and persistent frustration. It is only by following God’s design that we have the ability to procreate and the opportunity to experience lasting joy and fulfillment.

Communicating God’s truth with love and grace

The LGBTQ+ community poses many questions and arguments. But, as followers of Christ, we are to communicate God’s truth with love and grace, dignity and respect, always remembering that all of us have sinned, and each of us is created in the image of God.

“ *My homosexuality is part of who I am. It’s wrong, even cruel, to expect me to change.* ”

Sexual orientation is much more complicated than genetic factors. All of us have sinful desires which manifest themselves in all kinds of ways. The fact that someone feels inclined to pursue certain behavior does not mean the conduct is good or right. Seven of the Ten Commandments begin with “You shall not” (Exodus 20).

Human beings are not predetermined robots. We are people who make choices and can exercise self-control. Our personalities, family backgrounds, and environmental factors may make us susceptible to certain temptations, but they do not excuse our conduct. God created us with the capacity to choose. And God holds all of us accountable for our choices.

“ *My same-sex relationship is my business. My partner and I aren't hurting anyone.*

Homosexuality is contrary to God's commands and His divine design. Even some churches called to proclaim God's truth have compromised God's standards in a vain attempt to be seen as relevant and cool. Ultimately, those who persist in sin and do not repent and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ will experience God's judgment. But God is gracious and gives us time to turn from our sin.

“ *Jesus is love. He would never stop two men or two women who love each other from expressing their love and commitment to one another. And if you stand in my way, you don't love me!*

Loving someone does not mean that we always affirm what they do or say. Loving and approving are quite different. As followers of Christ, we can and do love those who pursue same-sex relationships or queer lifestyles, but we do not affirm what they do.

Being an authentic Christian means following Christ's teaching. Speaking of love, Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Loving God and loving others means humbly obeying God and seeking the best for others. Jesus calls His followers to be different, to be counter-cultural. We are to be light and salt in a dark and corrupt world. When we are following Jesus, we are not to be conformed to what others say and do. Rather, our lives are to be transformed as we love and obey Him.

“ *Jesus never explicitly condemned homosexuality. He condemned the hypocrisy and self-righteousness of the Pharisees and was the least judgmental of people.*

I believe in Jesus and the New Testament, and I reject the outdated, judgmental teachings of the Old Testament.

Many people are familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures which clearly indicate that same-sex relationships are contrary to God's design and result in His wrath and judgment. These passages include the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1–5, 14–17, 23–29) and the prohibitions given to Israel regarding homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20. However, the biblical condemnation of homosexuality is not confined to the Old Testament.

The position of Jesus

Jesus knew the Mosaic Law and came not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17–18). The silence by Jesus on the particular subject of homosexuality would have been understood by everyone as an acceptance by Jesus of the Mosaic teaching against homosexuality, not a rejection of it.

In Matthew 19:1–12, Jesus refers to the creation ordinance (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). Jesus clearly accepted that from creation there was only one type of sexual union permitted by God. Rather than broaden the grounds for divorce and remarriage, Jesus narrowed them. This is hardly consistent with the position of those who say that Jesus was totally tolerant of all kinds of sexual behavior. Jesus' teaching on sexuality was stricter than the Judaism of His day. To argue that Jesus would be tolerant of homosexuality and lesbianism is not consistent with Jesus' teaching on marriage and gender.

It is clear from the teaching of Jesus that human sexual relationships are to be monogamous, lifelong, heterosexual unions as ordained by God before the Fall, "from the beginning." Jesus certainly welcomed sinners, but He never compromised God's holy standards. To the woman who had committed adultery, He said, "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

The writings of Paul

In Romans 1:26–27, the apostle Paul discusses that homosexuality and lesbianism are acts of unbelief and a rejection of God's good design for those He created. When there is a breakdown of a godless society, the distinction in male/female relationships is blurred and confused.

In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 that there were those prior to their conversion who committed a list of

various sins, including “men who practiced homosexuality.” Yet, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). The Corinthians were not trapped in their past sins such as homosexuality. They were converted to Jesus Christ and now washed clean, sanctified, and justified. Their lives were totally changed!

■ For prayer and personal reflection

All people are made in the image of God and are to be treated with dignity and respect. Followers of Christ should never use derogatory names or labels when talking to or about the LGBTQ+ community or any other group. Christ commands us to love others and to display Christ to everyone.

Without compromising His holiness and righteousness, Jesus loves the sinner. In Jesus Christ, there is the perfect combination of grace and truth, peace and righteousness, conviction and compassion.

In a fallen and broken world, our sexuality may be confused and mixed up. Are you struggling with same-sex attraction? Are you a single man or woman having a heterosexual affair? Praise God that in Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness of all sins, including sexual sins. Others may struggle with sins of self-righteousness, covetousness, or pride, all of which are devastatingly condemned by our Lord Jesus.

Isaiah writes, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool” (Isaiah 1:18). Perhaps you have fallen into sexual sin. I want to point you to Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He will completely cleanse you of all your sin and indwell you, giving you a supernatural power to live a life of holiness and purity. Surrender all to Him. Live in the power of God the Holy Spirit. In Jesus, there is hope for you—for all of us! In Jesus, there is a new beginning.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17



Jesus and Transgenderism

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER is follows the deconstruction of marriage. The generation now coming of age is being taught that transitioning from one gender to another is acceptable. We are told that we can self-diagnose our gender, and no one can question it. Some people claim to be gender fluid and do not identify as either male or female.

A survey in 2016 estimated that 0.6% of US adults identified as transgender. But now, transgenderism seems to be all around us and is even being touted as the next civil rights frontier. What are we to make of all this? How should followers of Christ respond?

One of the marvelous things about the Bible is that because it is eternal, it is always relevant. So when we are asked about transgenderism (or any other topic), we can turn to the Word of God, which gives clear teaching regarding matters of gender identity.

God, our Creator, decides our gender

At the heart of transgenderism is the decision that each person is his or her own authority. Truth is determined by me. Self-fulfillment is the goal. You

cannot question my feelings, my reality. This spirit of radical individualism is rooted in our rebellious hearts. In the Garden of Eden, the devil said to Eve, “Did God actually say?” (Genesis 3:1), encouraging her to question and reinterpret God’s clear command. When there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25). This is not freedom but idolatry of self.

For followers of Jesus, authority is not rooted in our individual desires, prejudices, feelings, opinions, or traditions but in the inspired Word of God. Your feelings can’t always be trusted. But you can always trust God. He is our Creator, the ultimate authority, and we are accountable to Him. “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

God, our Creator, assigns our gender. He made us, male and female. Your gender is not a matter of your personal choice but a matter of God’s creation. Transgenderism and queer theory deny the fixed nature of gender and so challenge the authority of God.

God is sovereign and does not make mistakes

It is significant that when Jesus is asked about His views on marriage and divorce, He goes back to the creation account, referring to God’s original design. “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female?” (Matthew 19:3–6).

God made you either a male or female. And God does not make mistakes! Don’t try to change God’s plan. You are uniquely made by God—made in His image. Your gender is not something you choose at some point in your life based on your wishes, or how you feel, or how other people regard you. Your gender is the sovereign choice of God.

To believe that a person’s gender identity does not correspond to their biological sex assigned at birth stands in direct violation of the creation account in Genesis and the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels.

Don’t be deceived. Pansexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and fluidity of gender are attacks on God’s design. Satan always seeks to destroy what God creates. Gender is not a social construct (contrary to queer theory) whereby

we choose and change our gender as we please. The Scriptures are clear: God created us, male and female.

■ For prayer and personal reflection

Life is sometimes hard. But don't listen to those who say that you find it hard because you are really a male (not a female) or a female (not a male). Not only are you a creature made by God, but you are also an individual made in the image of God. You are a unique person, you are a certain size, you have a certain color of eyes and color of hair—all made by a good and gracious God.

God loves you. He is wiser than you, and He decided whether you are male or female. He did not make a mistake! To go against God leads to pain, brokenness, shame, and guilt. But fulfillment, joy, and meaning in life are found in following God's design and His will for your life.

Jesus came to forgive you, heal you, save you, and empower you to be the kind of person God wants you to be. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Your greatest joy will be found when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and accept who you are in Christ. That is your identity.



Jesus and a Fresh Start

IN DISCUSSING SEXUALITY, GENDER, and various struggles, our culture suggests that we identify ourselves and others in these categories with these labels. No wonder so many people despair! Don't buy into the lie that your struggle or sin is your identity; no struggle is an inborn definition for which there is no alternative and no hope. Our behaviors and feelings do not define who we are.

In Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness and freedom for all

The apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Everyone does not enter the Kingdom of God. Paul gives examples of the "unrighteous" people actively practicing or characterized by these sins. But the Corinthians are no longer associated with such people or sins. They have

been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” They have chosen to repent of their sins and follow Christ. And now Paul emphasizes the washing off of the defilement of their sin.

Do you feel dirty and soiled, or perhaps bruised and scarred because of your sin? Come to the Lord Jesus and experience this spiritual washing, this total cleansing. Jesus Christ died for all of your sins on the cross. He takes away the sin of the world. All of your sins can be washed away!

In Jesus Christ, you have a new identity and a fresh start

This washing—justification and sanctification—are the foundation of the Corinthians’ identity as followers of Christ. They are no longer to regard themselves (and we are no longer to regard them) as sexually immoral or adulterers or drunkards or swindlers or homosexuals or thieves. Their identity is no longer in these sins—and yours isn’t either.

Don’t allow your past to define who you are. By making a decision to follow Jesus, you are now “in Christ.” This is your identity. A fresh start!

Our identity is not based on our sexual desires, conduct, drinking, drug addiction, skin color, or nationality. Instead, our identity is who we are in Christ, rooted and grounded in the Gospel of the grace of God.

So don’t think that if you are an alcoholic or homosexual or an adulterer or greedy, you can’t be changed. Your past sin is not your identity. And don’t label people as alcoholics or homosexuals or drug addicts! In God’s grace, there is forgiveness, cleansing, and freedom for all—even for the chief of sinners.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

ROMANS 8:1

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 JOHN 1:9

■ For prayer and personal reflection

Humble yourself like a little child (Matthew 19:14). This is the opposite of prevalent philosophies centered on feelings and self-fulfillment:

“ *If it feels good, do it. Everything is permissible as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else and makes me happy. No one is going to tell me what to do.* ”

Don't be trapped by these lies. If you come to Jesus in humble repentance, whatever your sin, He will save you, cleanse you, forgive you, and empower you to live a holy life through His Spirit. Do not despair!

Christ came to save us, redeem us, deliver us, and transform us into His image. In a well loved hymn, there's a line: "The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives!" There is always more grace in our Lord Jesus than there is sin in you.

Have you messed up? Are you struggling? Are you living with regrets? Are you a follower of Christ who has drifted away? No matter who you are or what you have done, there is hope for you at the cross of Christ—a new beginning and a fresh start. So today, begin a new life in Christ!

Do You Know Jesus Christ?

WITHOUT OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, the unique and perfect Son of God, we cannot have a personal relationship with the living God. Without Jesus, we are without purpose, without hope, without joy, and without peace. His great love compelled Him to die for your sins in God's plan of salvation. His resurrection conquered fear and death!

Place your faith in Jesus

Jesus is the only One who can save you and transform your life. Turn from your sins and place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Experience the living hope and personal security that come from knowing Him.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

JOHN 3:16

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

JOHN 8:12

“Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

ROMANS 10:9–10

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

JOHN 10:28

Do you have questions?

Would you like to talk with a pastor or have someone pray with you or for you? Contact us at **theverdict@calvarychurch.com**.



“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

TITUS 3:3–7



THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

"Where the Gospel is preached, the lives of men and women and boys and girls are transformed. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us peace with God, present power for living, and future hope for eternal life." — John H. Munro

The Verdict is a daily radio program featuring the expository Bible teaching of Pastor John Munro.



Born and raised in Scotland, John graduated from the University of Edinburgh and practiced law in Scotland before God called him to full-time ministry. He and his wife, Gudny, moved to Texas, where he attended Dallas Theological Seminary.

For more than 30 years, John has dedicated his life to pastoral ministry, preaching and teaching the Word of God. Since February 2006, he has served as Senior Pastor of Calvary Church in Charlotte, NC.

On The Verdict, listeners are challenged to turn to the Bible and render a "verdict" as they consider their personal response to the truth of God's Word. John Munro presents a clear examination of Scripture, offering insight and application for all backgrounds, from those unfamiliar with the Gospel to mature believers following Christ.

Discover the many ways to hear The Verdict, including the daily program and John's weekly Avizandum podcast. Find full details, including how to partner with our ministry at calvarychurch.com/theverdict.

The Verdict is a media ministry of Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. At Calvary, our mission is to be and make authentic followers of Jesus Christ.

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The logo for Calvary Church. The word "Calvary" is written in a white, elegant, serif font on a black rectangular background. Above the letter "y" is a small, white, stylized cross or crown-like symbol.