

# BIBLICAL FAITHFULNESS IN AN AGE OF GENDER CONFUSION

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**BRIAN CHESEMORE**

*"Gender, designated by God through our biological sex, is therefore neither incidental to our identity nor fluid in its definition, but is essential to our identity as male and female."*

*(The Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith, "Creation, Providence, and Man")*

A few years ago, the American public received the startling update that a major department store determined to make transgender preferences, rather than biological realities, the basis for access into their bathrooms. Around the same time, the Boy Scouts, who already decided that a homosexual man could lead a troop, now concluded that restricting girls was sexually biased—yes, in the *Boy Scouts*.

The social scene of the West has undoubtedly changed—especially as it relates to the topic of sexuality.

Today issues surrounding sexual identity, preferences, and practices, which were formerly debated in academia and championed on the social periphery, have successfully made a collective charge into the cultural and political center. Meanwhile, biblical views of marriage, family, and sexuality have been

swiftly escorted to the fringes. Standing on the outer edges of culture's idea of relevance, they are tagged as oppressive constructs which hinder a person's "expressive individualism," or worse, demean an individual's personhood.

### **Facing the Strange**

In 1972, David Bowie was officially introduced to American rock n' roll with the song, "Changes." "Ch-ch-ch-changes," goes the chorus, "turn and face the strange." His bold declaration to all that the mainstream was under direct assault. But it wasn't just music he sought to transform. His biographer, Buckley, described Bowie as one who "plays up the self-made myth of his butterfly nature, his innate ambivalence, and his endless musical, sexual and political vacillation."<sup>1</sup>

All that was traditional was put on notice.

For Christians, our goal is not to hold on to cultural tradition but to conform to biblical truth. This means we must be willing to have God's Word challenge traditions that are wrong, including male superiority, the mistreatment of women, and contempt for those who sin sexually.

*We have seen the rapid erosion of God's design for manhood and womanhood.*

And yet, there is no denying that we have seen the rapid erosion of God's design for manhood and womanhood, marriage, family, and sexual purity in recent decades. Here are just a few examples:

- Marriage, unless redefined, is relegated to a by-gone age.
- Family, as defined by a husband and wife and children, is considered an oppressive construct.
- Pornography continues to defile beauty and detach intimacy from the safety of marriage, corrupting the viewer and those viewed.

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1. DAVID BUCKLEY, *STRANGE FASCINATION: DAVID BOWIE, THE DEFINITIVE STORY* (LONDON, ENGLAND: VIRGIN, 1999).

- In today's hook-up culture, a sexual partner's name, gender, and commitment are considered arbitrary or irrelevant.
- Denials of distinction between men and women emerged from an egalitarian interpretation of Scripture.

And now a lie has gained footing, and it is devastating our generation. It purports that our ontology, our very physical being, is up for grabs. What your biology tells you carries no authority and is irrelevant to your personhood and identity. Sexuality is no longer fixed but fluid—a means by which we express our ever-changing personhood.

Are we simply to turn and face “the strange”—life as it was never supposed to be?

### **Who is Sovereign?**

Such a turn is the natural effect of one taken long ago. Mankind took their “turn” away from God and his authority, and the result was a unified effort to establish the rule of the created rather than the Creator.

John Stuart Mill, the English Philosopher and Founding Father of Western Liberalism, declared, “Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.”

The Creator and Sovereign have been exchanged for a new king. Now we are sovereign—humanity rules. Go ahead and crown our desires as King because our ultimate turn is not upward but inward.

Now, even the English language must submit and “face the strange.” It must develop. It must adapt. Terms like cisgender, sexual dysphoria and gender fluidity illustrate a revolution that has swept through our dictionaries, schools, social settings, and counseling offices. Even in churches, we find terms like gay Christian and sexual minority.

This is our contemporary landscape.

Despite the confusing impact of these developments, the Bible speaks clearly and authoritatively, convincingly and compassionately on sexuality. It ministers to those who submit to it, and it positions its adherents to care for others. It reminds us that only a correct understanding of God's character

and Christ's grace produces joy, hope, cleansing, beauty, and peace.

Might it be that Paul's chorus should drown out the innumerable voices of our culture?

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Phil. 4:8)

Into the strange change of our day, what could be more timely, what could be a more starkly refreshing sight, than a statement of faith that reiterates the biblical view of what is true and unchanging?

*We Believe*, the Sovereign Grace *Statement of Faith*, positions us to obey Paul's command to think rightly, purely, and carefully about our sexuality. The section *Man as Male and Female* reminds us of what is true and fixed, as revealed by God himself:

"Gender, designated by God through our biological sex, is therefore neither incidental to our identity nor fluid in its definition, but is essential to our identity as male and female."

From what authority do we suppose we have the audacity to pen such words? (The battle over sexuality is ultimately a question of who is in charge.) Our authority is neither culture nor politics nor personal autonomy. It's much higher and more trustworthy.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).

Purposefully and intentionally, God created every man and woman.

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:13-14a).

Made in God's image, formed by his hands, identified biologically, we are the beneficiaries of divine and purposeful design. Genesis 1 pictures nothing that is haphazard, nothing that is arbitrary, nothing about our design that is left for debate.

And our *Statement of Faith* captures this beautifully and succinctly.

Implications abound in our culture's desire to elevate our desires above all competing authorities. Gender is downgraded to changeable or irrelevant. Desire rules without direction. Pornography and promiscuity are increasingly normalized—because both are seen as healthy sexual self-expression. Modesty and self-control supposedly oppress rather than reflecting deep purpose in the preservation of that which is beautiful. Ironically, in all this, the body is dishonored as merely a means to the end of fulfilling one's desires.

All other authorities, parental or political, linguistic or legal, must adapt. Into our culture's failed pursuit of freedom and individualism, into the inevitable story of deep darkness, confusion, and shame, we carry the light and life of truth.

### **A Loving and Purposeful Design**

What is this truth? Nancy Pearcey writes, "Scripture teaches that the creational differentiation of male and female is a good thing ...The question is, do we accept that created structure or do we reject it? Do we affirm the goodness of creation or deny it? Do we see the body as a reservoir of meaning, a source of moral truths? Is there a teleology of the body that we are called to respect?" <sup>2</sup>

In the realm of sexuality and gender, we ought to be known more for what we are for than what we are against. In the Scriptures, we encounter the beauty of equality and diversity. In God's economy, gender is essential. The body is esteemed. Singleness and marriage are filled with purpose.

God's Word shares about a Creator's loving and purposeful design. God's Word brings the powerful message of a Savior who entered our rebellion, marked by darkness and confusion, and folly. God, in His love, sent Jesus to redeem us through the Cross, remove our shame, forgive our sin, and restore the beauty and sanity of intentional and fixed design.

Through Jesus, I experience true and radical change...not in just a "part" of me, but at the very core of my being, in a transformed heart. By the power of the gospel, I am born again. All the shame I rightly carried for all the

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2. NANCY PEARCEY, *LOVE THY BODY* (GRAND RAPIDS, MI: BAKER BOOKS, 2001), 156.

wrongs I have done, in word, thought, and deed, is covered by the blood of the Lamb. Now I have a spotless righteousness, not my own. Now I have the experience and hope of change.

To him, we turn. In him, we know true change.

To those who were lost in the mire of sexual sin and confusion, the gospel alone enables us to declare the beautiful reality, “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 Cor. 6:9-11).

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**BRIAN CHESEMORE**

Brian Chesemore is an elder at [Sovereign Grace Church Louisville](#) (Louisville, KY) and also serves on the Sovereign Grace Executive Committee.