



# THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

## **The Pastor's Voice Podcast Season 2: Episode 4**

### **Transcript: Gender Identity and Christian Worldview**

Does Scripture answer the questions of sexual identity? Is gender merely a social construct - and the Bible irrelevant to who we are?

Welcome to the Pastor's Voice. I am Reuel Sample - and I am passionate about Christian Worldview and the various ways we can proclaim the good news of Christ. I talk to Pastors and Christian leaders about the issues of the day to encourage all believers in Christ to live a Christian Worldview. On Sundays, I share my own thoughts on living out a life dedicated to Jesus - based on an ongoing study of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Listen to the Words of God from I Timothy 1: 14 -17:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

From the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

**Q. 2.** What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

**A.** The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Last week, the Shorter Catechism asked What is the Chief End of Man? What purpose does humanity have here on earth? The answer is simple - our chief end is to glorify God in all things - and to live in joy of Him forever. This purpose - this goal - is what should be driving our worldview. We are to live in all things - do all things - as Paul in Corinthians pointed out - to the glory and worship of God. There is nothing outside of that purpose. Whether it be going to work, school, relationships, political rallies, social media - our purpose - our worldview - must be driven by hearts and minds fully focused on bringing glory to God in all things. Just imagine the change in the world if even just all Christians started doing that.

With that in mind, we now ask - how do we know? How do we know what our purpose is? How do we know about God? How do we know God's rules and decrees? The answer - the Bible.

A few years ago I taught a series of ethics classes. One of the topics that I covered was standards - or where do we get our rules and norms and mores. The answer is that these standards come from only one of two sources - standards that are internal to our systems - and standards that are external to our systems. For example - as children - our rules - and the rewards and punishment associated with adherence to those rules - is determined principally by the family. If the family has no outside connection with the world - an impossibility I know but go with me here - then the rules and ethics are determined solely by those within in that system. The rules change, develop, evolve, devolve or disappear based only on the whims or outlook of those who make the rules - the parents. This is an extreme example of internal-based ethics. Of course the conflict in families always comes when the rules and ethics of the parents comes face to face with the often much different ethics of the social cultures their children interact within as they go about growing up.

The idea of an internal-based ethic is not just family related. I would say that right now - we are in a society that very much wants to say that our ethics - our rules - are based

entirely on what we have to say about things - on what our worldview is - and what our feelings on any given matter may be at any given moment. In other words - we as a society determine what is right and wrong. We as a society determine how we are to live - how we are to interact - how we are to see the world.

That is an incredibly dangerous concept. From the Romans who thought nothing of burning people alive to light a roadway, to the American view of blacks in slavery, to the Germans under the Nazis - whenever we let our own society, our own rulemakers, our policymakers, even our scientists make the rules concerning ethics - we always get in trouble.

Our current conundrum over sexual identity is a great example of how we are trying to make our own rules. Up until recently, it was clearly understood and accepted that there are two and only two genders - male and female. It was also clearly understood that sex and gender meant the same thing - you are either boy with boy parts or a girl with girl parts. However - today we live in a world where we make our own standards - and believe that we set our own goals and purposes. Because of that - society has separated the idea of sex - the parts bit - from gender. So at first - you could be born with boy parts (that is your sex) - but identify as a girl (that is your chosen gender). Having gained ground on that - society continued to make more "rules" and definitions - non binary, cisgender, nongender. According to healthline.com - at the time of this podcast there are no less than 64 gender definitions and identities - 64! And who knows what that number will be next year.

We already are seeing the tragedy of this new thinking. According to an Obama-era report based on a study made in Sweden - the physical and emotional effects of transgenderism is tragic:

The study identified increased mortality and psychiatric hospitalization compared to the matched controls. The mortality was primarily due to completed suicides (19.1-fold greater than in control Swedes), but death due to neoplasm and cardiovascular disease was increased 2 to 2.5 times as well. We note, mortality from this patient population did not become apparent until after 10 years. The risk for psychiatric hospitalization was 2.8 times greater than in controls even after adjustment for prior psychiatric disease (18 percent). The risk for attempted suicide was greater in male-to-female patients

regardless of the gender of the control. Further, we cannot exclude therapeutic interventions as a cause of the observed excess morbidity and mortality. The study, however, was not constructed to assess the impact of gender reassignment surgery per se.

We are also seeing the social impacts - where boys who identify as girls are dominating women sports. Boy and girls are faced with the prospect of going into bathrooms, changing rooms, and other intimate areas with people of the opposite sex. Since this gender-bender dystopia is just now starting to form - we are only just beginning to see the long-term tragedy of gender fluidity.

But - since we are making our own rules, determining our own purpose - such fluidity and redefinition is perfectly allowable. Since in this case Darwin is correct - the strong survive and make the rules - as long as those in power see the world this way - we will continue down this path of destruction.

On the other hand, the Shorter Catechism states that our rules and morals are not internal based - but external based.

The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Our Scripture verse from Timothy outlines it further - all Scripture is inspired by God, and is therefore to be used to teach, to reprove, to correct, to live.

There are two major parts here - the source of Scripture - and what it is good for.

Timothy says that all Scripture is inspired by God. In Greek - the word used is Theopneustos - or literally God-breathed. What Paul is saying here is that God breathed his Spirit into the writers of the Bible. He used the words, idioms, mores, and understandings of the various time periods to convey His rules, His thoughts, His purposes. In effect - we can look at Scripture in the same way we look at the Person of Jesus. Scripture is fully God - and bears all his authority - and fully human - as it was

conveyed by and written by men in various times and places that perfectly suited God. Scripture is God's Words - not just his ideas or outlines - but His words gifted to us.

One could say that could easily apply to the Old Testament - but what about the New. The Apostle Peter placed Paul's writings on the same level as other Scriptures (the Old Testament). Ligonier Ministries puts it this way:

Things are more complicated when it comes to the New Testament. Yet, church history shows that there was an early consensus about the New Testament canon. Certain books—including the four Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, 1 Peter, and 1 John—were universally accepted, with almost no one doubting their Scriptural status. Some early believers, however, had questions about books such as Revelation and 2–3 John. In the end, certain objective factors helped move the church to receive these books as Scripture: they had a credible claim to Apostolic authorship, taught in accord with the other unquestioned books, and were read in churches in all parts of the known world. By the middle of the fourth century A.D., the church had settled on the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, and the Protestant Reformers affirmed this canon just as the Roman Catholics did.

Yet this view seems to lend credence that Scripture - especially the New Testament - is the Word of God simply because a bunch of churches 2000 years ago said it was. So - why cannot we change it.

John Calvin answered in his Institutes:

These words [of Scripture] will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted.

In other words - the Bible is the authority of all things. That authority is both attested to by Scripture itself - and by the Spirit of God working in our hearts and minds. Scripture does not derive its authority by any earthly means or institution. Scripture - to use the terms from the ethics class - is the ultimate external standard. And because it is

external - it is not subject to change brought about by the whims of humanity. It does not change based on political elections or social media trends. Scripture is the rock we can hold on to - the never changing port in the storms around us. Any misinterpretation of Scripture is purely the fault of the individual or the church or the society - never that of Scripture. If we are to believe that God is Truth, is Love, is Mercy - that God can never be anything other than those - than his gift of Scripture to us must also be the same.

That brings us to the second part - what Scripture is good for. If we are to believe that it is the Word of God - the Scripture must be the bedrock of all that we do - to teach, to correct, to exhort, to live. In other words - Scripture is and must be the basis of our entire Worldview. How we interact, how we love our families, how we treat our parents, how we go about our workdays - are all addressed in Scripture. In fact, I would argue - as does Scripture - that there is absolutely nothing that Scripture does not cover for us. It is that powerful, it is that relevant, it is that essential to our Christian worldview.

Yet, far too many Christians spend little to no time reading the Word of God. According to the American Bible Society, we have seen a trend downward in daily interaction with the Bible:

This year's survey found that only 9% of respondents (Americans) read their Bible on a daily basis, the lowest figure in the decade that the research has been conducted.

"From 2011 through 2019, the percentage of respondents who claim to read the Bible daily has remained fairly steady, averaging 13.7%," the report outlines. "A decrease of 5% in a single year is unprecedented."

Now, while this survey asks All Americans - we can take a guess based upon these numbers that American Christians - at least - are not taking up the Word of God. We are not immersing ourselves in the calming, convicting, directing, saving Word of God. And since we are not able - or willing - to go to church and be surrounded by other believers - we are led to believe just one thing: many Christians are basing their worldview not on Scripture - but on their own views or understanding of the world, by views expressed by public policy, or by what they see and understand on social media, or what they learn or do not learn in college or in the workplace. Because they have

separated themselves from the Word of God - other things have crept in take over the foundation for Worldview. Again, from the American Bible Society:

Participants were also asked if they agree with the statement, "The Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life." 37% agreed strongly and 31% agreed somewhat. 32% disagreed with the statement.

In other words, fully 63% of respondents believed that Scripture is not fully up to the task of forming a cohesive, unified, intelligent worldview - and therefore must be supplemented by other things. That is a dangerous trend.

There are only three ways to approach the authority of Scripture. You can only chose one - and only one of them says you have to respect it.

First, you can look at Scripture as a bunch of writings made by men at various stages of antiquity. While they may or may not contain some wisdom, and give a good glimpse into the history and millieu of the time period - these words are just the writings of men. They may even have good intentions - but can be grouped alongside the writings for Plato, Aristotle, and other historical pieces. While they might have some good stuff - Scripture - because it is purely the work of men in ancient times - is not and should not be considered authorative in all - or any - of our approach to living. So - disregard part or all - it doesn't matter.

Second, we can look at Scripture as an intentional method of suborning one set of peoples - or genders - or classes - while keeping others in positions of power. This was the view of Karl Marx. It is also the view of many in the church who say that Scripture is nothing more than an attempt to keep women quiet and in their place, to promote the hatred of homosexuals, to justify slavery, and above all to make sure that males stay in power. The Bible - they say - is a codified tool of dispowerment and marginalization. At the very best - parts of the Bible can be salvaged and/or modified to fit our point of view. The other parts can be discarded. But again, the Bible is not authorative in and of itself and the actions of the Holy Spirit - so why listen to it?

The final approach is that Scripture is indeed the Words of God. It is the Special Revelation of God - given in various times and various methods to perfectly convey

what God had to say. They are authoritative - because God is the ultimate authority. It is perfectly suited for all aspect of our lives. It may anger us, convict us, make us uncomfortable. It will certainly challenge our status quo and our preconceived ideas. But - since it is the Word of God - we must listen to it, delve into it, and place it as the cornerstone of all we understand about God - his intentions for the world - and his intentions for us individually.

For a Christian interested in developing a faithful and honest worldview - there is only one choice. The Bible is authoritative - it is The Authority - because Scripture attests to its own authority and the Spirit of God confirms it.

Christians - we need to rededicate ourselves to a daily reading of the Bible. As a recent guest on the show suggested - Tom Vander Well - all it takes is just one chapter a day. Just one chapter. That is how powerful the Bible is - just one chapter can change your entire outlook. But if we just take the time to immerse ourselves in God's gift to us - our lives will be changed, and we will be able to develop a Christian worldview that is powerful and glorifying.

Scripture even helps us with the issues of gender and sex. From the very beginning, we are told that God created us in his own image, male and female He created us. From Eden - a place that was pronounced as good by God - genders were placed into two categories - male and female. Those genders are not purely biological - but a manifestation of the image of God himself. God is Spirit - and has no gender. But - Scripture tells us that this "binary" gender structure (to use the modern term) is not one of happenstance - but one of direct creational mandate. Gender is not assigned at birth - it is formed in the womb at the creational direction of God. There is no gender bending in creation. There is no need to - we are either male or female - because the Bible says so.

But even more - the whole issue of gender is not driven by wanting to become a male because I was born female, or vice versa. It is not an issue of breaking social norms and values.

It is the expression of one of the oldest questions in humanity - who am I?



Without the Bible, that question of Who Am I can never be fully answered. A non-Biblical approach puts us a simply a bag of not-really complex cells working together in often a dysfunctional body. There is no inherent purpose for us. There is no ultimate meaning in life - how can there be - as there is designer that we can know - if there is indeed one. Because there is no purpose - no goal in life - I can never really be happy and fulfilled - because I really don't know what I am supposed to do. Since my gender is the closest thing to me - I can modify or change that identity as I see fit - all in a desire to find ultimate happiness and meaning. "If only I was a woman - I would be happy and fulfilled" one might say. "Oh - to break the bonds of binary gender identity - then I would be truly free."

The problem is - they never are free. They are forever tied to the drugs and therapy that keeps the change permanent. If there is no surgery involved, they are constantly having to justify living as someone else - anything else - just not the sex that there were created to be. And because there is no afterlife - no God from whom joy is made manifest - there is no reason to be other than what they want to be. Joy is found in me - I create my own joy - be become who and what I want to be.

The problem - of course - is that apart from God there is no absolute joy. There may be times of happiness - sure. Happiness is a feeling - fleeting as it is. But Joy - the knowledge of being loved, of being saved, of being directed, of a guarantee of a life-eternal surrounded by love and joy - that is a state of being. Because the Bible - which is the only source of our knowledge of Jesus and what he did for us - and how we are to live in the light of his grace - because the Bible has been denied as anything other than God's authoritative Words of life and direction - there can be no joy whatsoever. The research numbers - suicide rates and psychiatric needs - bear that out. When we reject God's Word for us - which includes His design for even our bodies - we reject the God who can bring joy and meaning to every aspect of our lives.

Does our entrance into heaven depend upon us reading our Bibles? Does God expect a full book report? Of course not. There is nothing we can do to gain this grace - no amount of reading, prostration, self-sacrifice - nothing. We enter into God's joy only through the saving grace of Jesus - brought about by his horrible death on a cross. That empty pit in our stomachs that we have tried all our lives to figure out can only be filled by the good news of an empty tomb. Our identities are not tied to our boy parts -

or our girl parts - or our status - or our race - or any thing that is part of this internal system of ethics that we keep wanting to follow.

Our identities are determined by - and bound to - the unchangeable God who created us, who saved us, and gives us his presence every second of the day to grow and be faithful. This new identity is to be a son or daughter of the Living God - and to know that we have an everlasting and unbreakable relationship with him. We are daughters of God - because in His infinite and wonderful plan God fashioned some to be women. We are sons of God - for the same reasons. Our gender identities are not afterthoughts of God - and they certainly are not accidental. They are not assigned by society or parents. They are made - in the image of God - and in those identities we are to give God the glory and live in His joy forever.

Amen

If you are listening to this podcast, and are having questions about gender or sexual identity - please contact me at [podcasts@thepastorsvoice](mailto:podcasts@thepastorsvoice). I would love to pray with you, explore some questions and answers, and put you in touch with people who go deeper with you as you seek to answer the question of Who Am I.

You have been listening to the Pastor's Voice. I am Reuel Sample - thank you for listening.