

Summernar Three: What About the Issue of Gender, Sexuality, and Human identity?

Issue raised by recent news:

Caitlyn Jenner
Transgender Discrimination Act, access to restrooms, etc.

Underlying questions for Christian thinking:

- What does it mean to be human?
- What does it mean to be male and female?
- What does it mean to love and be loved?

Some thoughts about gender, sexuality, and human identity:

1. Human beings are created male and female in the image of God.

God's intention—Gen. 1:26, 27 (cf. Gen. 5:1, 2)
Two synonymous terms, image and likeness
Man as male and female
Points to intellect and creative ability
Points to ability to relate and to know God
Points to dominion over all creation (see Psalm 8)

Basis of human dignity—Gen. 9:6; James 3:9

Still evident after the fall, but man needs restoration in it

2. Marriage between a man and a woman is a creation of God and his intention for the entire human race.

God's intention—Gen. 2:18-24
Intention of companionship
“Helper fit”—not underling but counterpart
Woman for man brings joyful celebration
Abiding directive for humanity, v. 24
Underlying basis of other human relationships

Jesus' commentary on marriage—Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9
Declaration of God's intention
Quotation of both Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:24
Importance of the permanence of marriage (covenant)

The Apostle Paul—Eph. 5:31, quoting Gen. 2:24, marriage, Christ and the church

3. Marriage is the God-given context for sexual expression, and violation of God's norm is a serious matter.

1 Cor. 6:15-16

Quotation of Gen. 2:24

Impact on one's psyche

Reason for warnings against all immorality, 1 Cor. 6:18; Acts 15:20, 29; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3, etc.

4. Singleness is neither a curse nor a second class. Sexual relationships are only a part of human identity and intimacy (see 1 Cor. 7:6-8; Matt. 19:11-12). Friendships can meet many needs for love and intimacy (cf. 2 Sam. 25b-26).

5. Behind transgender issues and rights is a legitimate longing to love and be loved.

- Gender confusion is not a sexual behavior and does not in itself compromise immorality.
- The pain and suffering can be excruciating. Christians need to show empathy and compassion.
- The created order must be respected.
- A problem appears when transgender questions are tied to other sexual issues that involve sexual behavior. A related problem is the pressure to celebrate it as an acceptable alternative.
- We must question whether calling it an acceptable alternative will be truly helpful in helping a person get in touch with who he or she is called to be.
- We must all acknowledge our brokenness and need to be restored to what God wants us to be.

6. In Christ we find true love and acceptance and we learn what it means to be truly human.

1 Cor. 6:9-11—cleansing from the past

2 Cor. 3:17-18—transformation to image of the Lord's glory

Col. 3:9-10—new man/self being renewed in the image of its creator

Rom. 8:29—conformity to the image of the Son

We are looking to Christ to learn what it means to be whole. This is the hope that we have to offer to the world.

(A useful recent article is Mark Yarhouse, "Understanding Gender Dysphoria," *Christianity Today*, July/August 2015, 45-50.)