God's Good Design for Life: God's Design for Sexuality

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0:00] Okay, Genesis chapter 1 verse 26.

Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.
So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And then chapter 2 verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat of it, you will surely die.
The Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air.
[1:21] He brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. And while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.
Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.
She should be called woman. For she was taken out of man. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.
The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?
[2:25] The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.

You must not touch it, or you will die. You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.
When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.
She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
Thanks very much, Kim. So we're on our fourth talk on our series, God's Good Design for Life.
[3:30] The first talk, all these talks, by the way, are on the church website. You can look them up there, and other resources relating to the same theme are up there as well.

The first talk that we looked at was just setting a foundation. We looked at Genesis as well, Genesis chapter 1, and looked at God's design and order in creation. Then we looked at God's design for marriage.
Last week we looked at God's design for family. And this week we're looking at God's design for sexuality, and in particular the issue of transgender.

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And we're looking at these issues, these subjects or topics, in the light of the discussions that will be taking place this year with the referendum to come in 2015 on marriage, the redefinition of marriage and the effects that may have on family and children.
So we're just trying to get a big idea of God's design for life in terms of all of these things. Again, in preparation for this talk, I was challenged by it.
[4:40] It's something that I don't necessarily know a huge amount about, so please don't stone me during the talk if I say something completely out of hand, but do talk to me afterwards, or if you have any further questions, please do that afterwards.

So let's pray and ask for God's help. Father, we thank you that you are a creator God, and not only are you a creator God, but you are a God who has spoken to us your creation.
You have sought to communicate to us and to reveal something of who you are. To tell us about your plans for life and to tell us about our lives and the world in which we live.
We thank you that your words, that your spoken words have been recorded for us in the Bible, and we thank you that we can trust it, and yet we ask for the power of your Holy Spirit to speak to us through it so that what we read in these verses would challenge us and shape us to live according to your good design and your good order for life.
Please help us, Father. We want to be sensitive and careful, and yet we want to know your truth. So we pray, Father, that the word spoken will be spoken with grace and with compassion.
[6:22] And we ask for your help in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, what if your daughter came to you and said, I don't want to be a girl anymore.

I want to be a boy. Or what if your teenage son came to you and said, I don't want to be called James.
I want to be called Mandy. Maybe you've had that discussion with somebody else. Well, this was a recent issue discussed on Drive Time.
That's the RTE radio program around tea time. Three young people were interviewed. These three young people were born with a female body and now identify themselves as male.
All three now have boys' names and all three have begun to transition, which simply means they dress like boys and are beginning to take hormone treatment so that they look like boys.
[7:39] Here is how Tyler, who was born female, described it. For me, it was at a very young age.

I was about five at the time. I tried to tell my parents, but they said it was just a phase. I told them I was in the wrong body, that I'm a boy and I don't have the right parts.
Well, this is what is now called gender dysphoria or GDI, gender disorder identity.
It's the term used to describe someone who's born as a male but now feels like a female or is born as a female and wants to be treated as a male.
And presently, those who have gender dysphoria do not have their preferred gender recognised by the state, which means that their official documents such as birth certs, passports, can't be altered to reflect their preferred gender status.
[8:56] But change has been promised. When the Gender Recognition Bill comes into law, it will allow transgender people who are over 18, they're trying to reduce that down to 16 so that they can have their preferred gender legally recognised by the state.

So, for example, somebody who is born, a boy is called James, but in later years wants to be called Mandy, can have that then changed on their birth cert or on their passport.
And if all this goes into law and if the referendum on the same-sex marriage is passed, then what that will mean in terms for children, it means that they can be raised not just by two men or two women, but by two men, one of whom was perhaps born as a woman.
So it's a very complex issue, to say the least. But yet these are very real issues and there's no point in trying to stick our head in the sand and pretend that they aren't there.
It's what young people are trying to cope with within our schools. It's what parents are trying to understand as their children ask the questions.
[10:11] So we need to be aware, but we also need to know what the Bible has to say on this issue so that we can be people who can communicate God's truth, but to do so with grace and compassion, with sensitivity and understanding.

So with all that in mind, let me just go through a few definitions first. So as we go through the talk, you'll understand what we're talking about.

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So the first one there, transgender, is simply a person whose gender expression or identity is different from the sex they were born with.
transvestite or transvestite is a person, male or female, who wears clothing not usually associated with their birth sex.
Transsexual is a person who feels trapped in the wrong body or will describe themselves as being trapped in the wrong body and who changes their gender identity physically through hormone treatment or through an operation.
[11:23] And then there's transitioning. Transitioning is the process undertaken to change their gender identity in three different ways. Legally, as they change their name on their passport or birth cert.

Physically, as they undergo hormone treatment and surgery. And socially, as they come out to their friends and family. So these are the issues.
These are some of the understandings of what we're looking at this morning. And with all this in mind, we want to hear what God has to say about sexuality and in particular those with gender dysphoria.
We're going to look at three things. First, created by God. Look at chapter 1, verse 1. Chapter 1, verse 1 of Genesis. So we're going to be looking at Genesis 1 to 3 over these first few points.
Genesis 1, verse 1. It reads, In the beginning, God. So before there was anything else, before there were any planets, or before there was any people, we were told there was God.
[12:38] So in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep.

The picture here is one of chaos and disorder at the very beginning. These words, formless, empty, and darkness give the sense of chaos and disorder.
But then God spoke into that and he began to create and out of the disorder he brought about order and out of the chaos he brought about design.
And we can read through chapter 1 and see how that all happened. Now the pinnacle of that good order and that good design was the creation of a man and a woman.
So in chapter 1, verse 26, we read, Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.
[13:38] Verse 27, So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. So while every person is created unique and every person here is different, we are created, God tells us, as either a male or a female.

We are not created gender neutral. We're not created half man or half woman so that in the course of life we have to somehow choose which one we would like to be.
No, God in his design and in his order has created us male and female. And when God made us, look at verse 31, God saw all that he had made and it was very good.
He wasn't looking at his creation and thinking, oh, I've made a mistake or I'm not quite sure how this one is going to work out. He looked at his creation and he looked at man and woman and he said, this is very good.
Now maybe you struggle with your sexuality and I think we all struggle with our sexuality. perhaps you identify with this gender dysphoria or maybe you know somebody who struggles with it.
[15:02] But here's the wonderful truth that whatever we may think about ourselves, whatever the world may tell us about ourselves, God says, our creator says this about us, you are very good.

The way in which you've been made is very good. Keep your finger there in Genesis and jump to Psalm 139.
Psalm 139, it's almost smack bang in the middle of your Bible. Psalm 139 and verse 13. Here the psalmist is reflecting that he is not just a nobody but he is somebody who has been created wonderfully by God.
Psalm 139 verse 13. Listen to these wonderful words. For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.
[16:24] When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

They're some of the most beautiful verses in the Bible because they are reminding us and telling us that God's creation of us is wonderful.

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We are not mistakes. We are not here by chance. We are made male or female and it's all part of God's amazing good design. And as part of God's good design, men and women are different. Socially, we're different. We act in different ways. And men are created physically and sexually different. Men are created with a penis.
They have the ability to produce sperm. Women are created with a vagina and have the ability to produce an egg. So physically, we're different. Sexually, we're different.
[17:30] And part of that amazing order and design of God is that the male and female come together. So in verse 28 of Genesis chapter 1, sorry, go back to Genesis chapter 1.

In verse 28, having made man and woman, God says to them, verse 28, he blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number.
So the context for this sexual union or this relationship is man and woman coming together, but the context for that is marriage. So chapter 2, verse 24.
Well, let's read from verse 23. The man said, this is one of these great impassioned romantic verses. Maybe you could change it a little bit to make it a little bit more contemporary.
So here we are. The man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.
[18:41] They will become one. And the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame. Do you see that last verse, verse 25?

They were both naked and felt no shame. There is no hiding of their identity. There is no embarrassment in their nakedness.
There is no unease. There is no struggle. There is no striving for a need to change. It is completely open and transparent. This is good and beautiful.
God bringing man and woman together was a good design, a good purpose. No wonder Eden means delight.
It's good. So, we are created by God. Second, we are also created in God's image. So, chapter 1, verse 27.
[19:47] God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him male and female. So, it's telling us there that something of God's likeness, something of God's image is reflected in us.

We reflect something of who God is. but not physically. It's not as people look at us, they kind of physically, this is, I physically look like God. No, it's not that.
But relationally, we reflect something of God relationally. And the clue for this comes in verse 26. Look at the beginning of verse 26.
Then God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness.
So, do you see that? God is describing himself as an us. Let us make man in our image. And as we read through the Bible, it becomes clear that this God who was presented at the beginning is three persons, but yet just one God.
[21:03] It's what theologians have come to call the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. That's the us, that's the our, that created man in his image.

So, before anything else or anyone else was created, there was God. But get this, God was not alone. God was in a relationship with himself.
He existed in a complete and perfect community of Father, Son, and Spirit. Each expressing love one to another. Each communicating one to another.
Each serving, each giving. So, God didn't create people because God was somehow lonely and he needed somebody else. No, God was in a complete relationship with himself.
So, when God created us, he created us to be a part of that community. He created us in his image and in his likeness so that we could relate to him, so that we could know him, enjoy him, and love him.
[22:15] He created us so that we could be complete in him. So, let's work this out.

Let's see how this is true. So, when God made the man and the woman, what was the first thing he did? After he had made man and woman, what does he do? Well, look at chapter 1, verse 28.
God blessed them and said to them. God begins to talk to them. He begins to relate to them because God is a relational God and we're made in his image and in his likeness and so we can relate to him.

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And God doesn't do this with any other part of his creation. Animals aren't talking to God. Plants aren't talking to God. They do not have that capacity to relate to God.
We are unique in the created order to have a relationship with God, to talk to him. And so God has designed us as a male and a female so that we might be in a relationship with him.
[23:19] To join the Father and the Son and the Spirit in that complete community. That's what we were made for. Being in relationship with God is what fulfills us and satisfies us.

Our relationship with God makes us complete. And that means then that we don't need to change our gender or our sexuality to find contentment and fulfilment.
That means we don't need to change who we were born to be to fit in or to be accepted by other people. Those who struggle with gender dysphoria will often describe themselves in this way. They say that I'm trapped inside the wrong body. Which usually leads to perhaps living as a transvestite or taking action to become a transsexual.
In other words, the only way to relate to themselves and to be able to relate to other people is to change their gender identity. But God has created us to join the ultimate relationship.
[24:34] He has created us to be in this complete perfect relationship. So we don't need to be tampering or changing God's design and order.

God has designed each one of us as we are, male and female. And it's in relationship with our creator, God primarily, not with each other, but primarily in our relationship with God, that we find our joy and happiness.
So whether we're single or whether we're married or whatever our struggle in life may be, it is in relationship with that perfect community, Father, Son and Spirit, that we find our joy and happiness. That is where we're complete. So we're created by God, we're created in the image of God, and then third, we are created new in Christ.
Now the fact that we're having to talk about the subject of transgender means that God's created order and design has somehow fallen apart.
[25:43] The cogs in the wheel have become twisted, they're grinding against each other rather than going in the right way. And our experience of life, perhaps even for ourselves and within the communities in which we live, our experience today is so different to the original creation that we have just read.

It's not like that anymore. It's different. So why is it different? Well, Genesis chapter three tells us what happened.
We read from those verses in chapter three where the first man and the first woman rejected God's design for life. They rebelled against his good order and they began to replace the ultimate relationship with God for which they had and replace that relationship with God with other things and other people.
They began to look to other places for their joy and their hope, their satisfaction and look at the consequences of when the first man and first woman rejected and rebelled.
Look at verse seven of chapter three. it tells us there that the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked and with the realisation they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
[27:13] It's the complete opposite. If you compare chapter three verse seven with chapter two verse twenty-five, it's the complete opposite. In verse twenty-five, they were naked and they felt no shame.

In chapter three verse seven, upon rebelling, they were naked and now they're hiding and covering. They're no longer open and transparent with one another.
Instead of accepting one another, instead of the pleasure of one another, they are now filled with guilt and shame, covering, hiding, trying to cover up.
Their freedom has now been replaced with fear of one another. You see, because we have turned away from God, our whole life, the whole world, the whole universe, has become flawed, including our sexuality.
It has become disordered. So, you and I, we don't function in a way that fits in with God's order and God's design. that's why we have gender dysphoria, that's why we have same-sex attraction, that's why we have dysfunctional marriages, that's why heterosexual people struggle with all kinds of issues.

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[28:37] So, whoever we are, and however we would describe our sexuality, whether it's transsexual, homosexual, or heterosexual, we are all of us, we're no different, we are all sexually flawed and broken people, we don't live and behave and act as we should do.

That's why there is the disorder, but thankfully God has made it possible for this to be made new. Look at 2 Corinthians in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians chapter 5.
2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. You see, God didn't want to leave us as we were, living life the way that we do, breaking our own lives and breaking the lives of one another.
God intervened, the whole story, the whole plan, the whole picture of the Bible is about God coming to us through Jesus Christ to renew us and to restore us, to bring us back to that new creation.
So in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 15 we read this, it's talking about Jesus and he, that's Jesus died for all, people like you and me, people who are broken sexually, he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, for their own desires, their own wants, but for him to live for Jesus who died for them and was raised again for them.
[30:29] Verse 17, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come.

Jesus Christ, when he walked on the earth, was the perfect human being. He was the one who lived all of life as it should be. He was perfect and pure in his sexuality.
There was no flaw in his sexuality. And so he came, he was the only one who could come to deal with our sexually flawed and broken lives. And part, or the way in which he ultimately did that, was to take our sin, to take our failures, our mess ups, our brokenness on himself, to forgive us of the past, to deal with the past, and to give us a brand new beginning, a new way to live life.
Verse 17 of chapter 5, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come. You see, no matter what our sexual orientation may be, all of us, all of us in this room are called to come to Christ because Jesus is the one who's come to redeem our lives.
He's come to bring about a new creation in our lives, to bring order out of the disorder, to bring design out of the chaos, to deal with our old life and to give us a new life.
[32:09] I want to finish by sharing a testimony. This is the story of Mandy. She explains her old life and her new creation.

Listen carefully to this story. She describes it like this. Growing up as a boy, feeling I was in the wrong body, fascinated with women's clothes, the relief of discovering others who felt the same way, increasing cross-dressing and joining the transvestite community, a growing sense that perfect fulfilment could never be achieved without the operation, the counselling which encouraged this course of action, eventually undergoing the operation, and the triumphant sense of having arrived with a new identity and a new gender.
She goes on having been introduced to Christ and meeting a Christian community. Mandy explains how she was now beginning to regret what she had done.
She had believed a lie about her identity. She now realised that what she had done had been an act of rebellion against her creator.
She had now confessed her sin to God and was beginning to renounce in her heart all that it involved. Her pastor counselled her and spoke to her.
[33:47] He said to her, whatever your past, whatever you are now, male or female, what matters is who you are in Christ.

As far as I am concerned, God has intervened in your life and he has placed you in Christ. He now gives you your identity. This is who you are.
This is therefore how I regard you. If God has accepted you, so do I. Her pastor continues the story. He says we began to notice changes.
The makeup became less obvious. Feminine dresses were making way for trousers and loose jumpers. Hesitantly, I began to pray that Mandy might consider a change back to the male lifestyle. It was such a huge step. Did I dare to suggest to Mandy that I was thinking this way? Well, true to form, at our next meeting, Mandy herself raised the subject.
[34:52] Just 18 months after her baptism, Mandy became James, reverting to the name his parents given him at birth.

In the following month, she made preparations at the hospital, and 15 months after that, James met a young lady and got married. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation.

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The old has gone, the new has come. that story may finish well, but the wonderful news is that even though that process, that transformation may take time, listen to these words, for those who come to Christ, for those who are the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness.
We are being transformed into Christ's likeness every day. as God does his work. All those who are in Christ are a new creation.
Let's pray. Father, we stand back amazed at your created order, and your design of this universe, but especially we are amazed at the way in which you have created us as human beings, so unique, so different, and you look down on each one and say you are very good, fearfully and wonderfully made.
[36:47] God and we have God and we have followed your order or design, and therefore we are people who need Christ.

We thank you that through Jesus we find that new creation, that new beginning, the past being dealt with, the future being made bright.
we thank you that those who trust in you are now treated as God's own child, and even with all our struggles, and even with all of our issues, you are continually gracious to us, day by day, transforming us to be more like Christ.
We thank you too that one day we will be in the new creation, where we will no longer struggle with any gender issues, we will no longer struggle with our sexuality, we will no longer struggle with anything, for we will be as you intend us to be.
We look forward to that, and we thank you that you have made it all possible through Jesus. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.
[38:11] words that I think pick up on that verse has gone, the new has come. I once was lost in darkness night, yet thought I was lost.

I was lost. I was lost. I was lost. I was lost. I was lost. I was lost. I was lost.

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