

Practicing Truth and Love (Part 1)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 September 2024

Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Well, just a reminder that we are addressing a topic today which can hit close to home for some of us. We're looking at transgenderism today and then homosexuality next week.

Please, if you've got questions or issues, I can't cover everything, but do feel free to send me an email and we can make a time to chat and catch up. On the next slide is a reminder that we've got our monthly prayer night coming up this Wednesday evening at 7.30 to 8.15 here in this room. And there's one which isn't on the slide and that is, it's in your pew sheet, so it's the BCA Victoria Spring Gatherings. So there's one coming up on Monday the 16th of September at Glen Waverley. That's the closest one to us. And I've been meaning to put a slide up about that, so I'm sorry about that. But the details are there in your pew sheets at that bottom notice.

We're going to pray briefly for Ronald and for Ridley, who are our mission spot this morning, both Bible colleges that seek to train people to preach and teach God's Word.

[1 : 17] And then I'll pray for us as we're about to hear God's Word read to us. So let's pray for those things. Gracious Father, we do thank you for the ministry of Ronald and Mary in Myanmar at the Bible College of Mext.

We thank you for the appointment of Ronald to principle. We pray that you would give him wisdom and help him to make good and caring and godly decisions amidst many hardships, not least of which is the military dictatorship that is continuing to rule that country.

We pray that you would also sustain Mary's health and grant her healing, complete healing from her recent surgery. We give you thanks, though, for the 140 students who have enrolled in the college this year and pray that you would grow them in Christ and equip them for Christ so that they might go out and teach the good news about Christ.

We thank you also for Ridley College here in Melbourne and for the appointment of Rhys Peasant as the new principal. We do pray that you would be with Rhys. Give him again great wisdom as he takes on this role of leading the college so that more gospel workers might be trained up and sent out.

And we also thank you for Brian Rosner's ministry as the outgoing principal and pray that you would continue to use him for your glory. And finally, we pray for ourselves.

[2 : 52] We thank you for your word, which shows us the truth and also how we are to speak it in love. And so help us, we pray, to, as a church, hear your word and to practice both truth and love.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, the Bible readings should be on the screen. The first one is easy to find, page 2. Thanks, Peter.

It's our first reading from the Old Testament is Genesis 2. I'm reading Genesis 1. I'm reading verses 26 to 31. Then God said, So God created mankind in his own image.

In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it.

[4 : 40] They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground, everything that has the breath of life in it, I give every green plant for food.

And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

This is the word of the Lord. The second passage today is 1 Corinthians 15, starting from verse 35.

The resurrection body. But someone may ask, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come? How foolish!

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

[6 : 01] But God gives it a body as it has determined, and to each kind of seed, he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same.

Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies, and there are earthly bodies.

But the splendor of heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another.

The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another, and the stars another.

And star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead? The body that is sown is perishable.

It is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

[7 : 06] It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So it is written, The first man Adam became a living being. The last man, The last man, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual does not come first, but the natural, and after that, the spiritual.

The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth.

And as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of a man from heaven.

Listen, I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

[8 : 14] Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in the flesh, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with the immortality, and then the same that is written will come true.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks to God, He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 21] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. In response to hearing God's word, let us affirm our faith using the words of the 19th Creed.

Please stand. And together. We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally the God and the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, the God and the heart made, of one being and the Father, through Him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven. He was the kind of the Holy Spirit, and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human.

For our sake, He was crucified and a conscious pilot. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day, He rose again, and it was all His scriptures.

[10 : 42] He ascended into heaven, and He ascended at the right hand of the Father. From there, He will come again in glory, to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the given of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who will be the Father and the Son, who is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy, universal, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen. Please remain standing as we have our second hymn today, Great is Thy Faithfulness.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[13 : 31] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[16 : 59] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. and nephews are coming across it. And some in our church have granddaughters who now identify as it. Transgenderism is here, and the research says it's been increasing, especially amongst teenage girls who are listening to social media with influences or their peers at school, neither of which have medical training.

And so we need to know about it so that we can lovingly respond to it, helping those who are struggling with it and helping them to understand the truth about it.

But also, secondly, so that we might be able to share the gospel with those who already identify as it. I mean, we can't just shake our heads just because we don't get it.

And what does John 3.16 say? For God so loved the people I can understand. For God so loved the people I can relate to. No, no. For God so loved the world. Yeah.

Including those who identify as transgender. If God loves them, then so too should we. Indeed, they need Jesus just as much as we. And so we're looking at two topics, yours, transgenderism this week and homosexuality this week. And I know there'll be different opinions in the room and certainly online. I'm open to talking about it in a respectful and loving manner.

[18 : 32] But there's no point just kind of ignoring it. It's here. And we want to talk about it so that as a church, we can practice both truth and love. But first, what is it? At point one in your outlines.

Well, there are a number of terms associated with it. I've put the names on your sheets and the definitions on the screen. The main ones are gender identity, which refers to your internal gender, the gender you feel that you are on the inside, whether it's male or female or neither.

There's biological sex, which refers to your body, whether it's male or female. There's gender dysphoria, which is a term to describe the distress or confusion people feel when their internal gender identity doesn't match their biological sex, when the top two definitions don't match. And then there's trans or transgender. They're used interchangeably, which is a broad term for those who now say their gender is different to their body, their biological sex. And so those with a male body who say they are women would say they are trans.

Or those with a women's body but say they are men would say they are trans. My daughter works with another one who says this, which means they often then change their name and then change their clothes to be the other gender they identify with and even change the pronouns, you know, from he to her and vice versa and so on. But for the moment, I want you to notice the basis of transgenderism, that it's what someone feels they are on the inside.

Now we cannot dismiss feelings. We cannot just say just get over it just because we don't feel those things. For them, they are real feelings and for them they have been the cause of real distress.

[20 : 41] But it's worth knowing that transgenderism places subjective feelings above objective biology. Harry Potter, or rather the actor who played Harry Potter, summed it up back in 2020 when he said, transgender women are women. That was his claim. In other words, if you feel like your gender is a woman, then you are a woman. That's the reality for you, he said. Your internal feeling determines your objective reality.

Reality. This is dangerous. To use a silly example that another writer uses, if we feel on the inside like we can fly and then go and jump off a building outside, it's not going to end well for us, is it?

Our feelings cannot determine our reality. It just doesn't work. And so it won't end well. In fact, it's not ending well. The research is showing that transgender ideology is actually causing harm.

And we'll come back to that later. Because as Christians, we first want to hear what God has to say.

If I was talking to a different group who were not Christians, I'd start with the research. But as Christians, we want to start with God's word. So point two.

And here we see that God has created us as male and female for our good. That's what we heard from our Genesis reading. So verse 26 says, Firstly, let us, says God, make mankind in our image, in our likeness.

[22 : 22] And so that immediately gives every single person immense worth and dignity. No other creature in the world is made in God's image.

In fact, C.S. Lewis once wrote, There are no ordinary people. Because we're made in God's image, we're all extraordinary. And then he goes on to say, You have never talked to a mere mortal. Because we are made in God's image, we all have great worth. But we are made in God's image. Primarily, it means to lovingly rule like God, as his co-regents.

Which is what the verse goes on to immediately say. Let us make mankind in our image and our likeness, so that they may rule over the birds, the fish, etc., etc. Yet in order to reflect God's loving rule on earth, people need to be seen.

We need a body, not just a spirit. That's what the word for image implies, something physical. In the ancient world, it was a physical statue of the king.

[23 : 32] What's more, if Adam and Eve are to reflect God's loving rule over the whole earth together as one, like the Trinity, three in one, then they are given equal but different bodies.

That fit together as one. And this, in turn, helps them to rule the world. Because to rule the whole world with just two of them, it's an impossible task.

And so they're given equal but different bodies, so that they can have kids to help them in this task. And that's what we see in the next couple of verses. Verse 27, So God made mankind his own image.

Male and female, he created them. And notice what it immediately goes on to say in verse 28. The next verse, God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful, have kids. Increase in number so that what?

You can rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and so on and so on. Now it's not saying that you have to be married or that you have to have kids.

[24 : 34] For in Christ, we are also united together as one to lovingly reflect God's loving rule over the world.

And in the new creation, we'll do that perfectly. But notice here, after creating male and female at the bottom of the screen, in verse 31, God saw all that was made, and it was very bad?

No, very good. The point is our bodies, including our male and female sexes, are for good. For they enable us to reflect God's image in the world by lovingly ruling over the world together, like him.

Our favorite psalm of a number of people in our church is Psalm 139, which has that beautiful verse where David says, I praise you, God, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and we are. In fact, that includes our biological sexes, which is why we can even have a Father's Day and a Mother's Day.

[25 : 43] What's more, the birth or incarnation and resurrection of Jesus affirms this. Jesus was born with a body as a boy, and he was resurrected with a body as a man.

Amen. Our bodies, including our biological sexes, are part of God's good design, seen in creation, affirmed by Jesus' incarnation and resurrection. What's more, it's our bodies that determine our gender, not our feelings.

So our bodies are part of who we are. For example, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, he says, Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you?

And notice how the Spirit is both in our bodies and in us. Because our bodies, including our biological sex, is part of who we are.

And so if you have a female body, you are a female. If you have a male body, you are a male. The sex of your body is part of who you are. And so it's our biological sex that determines our gender, not our feelings.

[26 : 50] And that actually is for our good, because it provides much more stability in life. Imagine if it was our feelings that always determined our reality. I mean, our feelings change every day, don't they, depending on whether you have a good night's sleep or bad night's sleep.

And so our realities are going to change every day. It's going to be a very unstable existence. But God has designed it this way to create stability for our good. And it means then that part of honoring God with our bodies is to be the gender that God gave our body, rather than trying to become another one.

In Deuteronomy, for example, we read, A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing. Although what exactly is men and women's clothing is determined by culture, isn't it?

But that's the principle. Don't try and be the other gender. Or later on in Paul's letter to 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11, he says, Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered

dishonours his head, but every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head.

These are tricky verses, but it seems like the men in the church are trying to act like women who traditionally would cover their head with a shawl, much like women used to wear hats to church, if you remember those days.

[28 : 12] I don't think I was born in those days, but it happens still even today. Like, sadly, at the Queen's funeral, remember, all the women wore hats, while the men did not.

And so in this reading, it seems like the Corinthian church are trying to be the opposite gender. And Paul is saying, don't be the other gender. Be the gender God gave your body. God says we are created as male and female for good, so that together we can lovingly rule the earth like him.

And it's no surprise that science backs up this creation as male and female. As scientists know that in the womb, at fertilisation, from the beginning, we are either male or female.

We either have a set of X and Y chromosomes as males, or a set of 2X chromosomes as females. We are either male or female.

Now, some people say today, and it's worth you being aware of this, that, well, what about those who are born without any obvious male or female sex, what is called intersex?

[29 : 23] That must prove, then, there's more than just male and female. There you go. And so gender identity should be more important than our biological sex.

What we feel should be more important. They often then quote a statistic of 1.7% of people who are born like this, which is about the same as the number of people born with red hair.

So that's a reasonable amount. But actually, the 1.7% refers to people who are sadly born or suffer from a DSD, which is, I forget the bottom two definitions, I've already done those, but the top two. DSD stands for Disordered Sexual Development. That's 1.7%. And most of these are recognisably male or female. And they have a felt gender to match their body.

In fact, many don't even know they have a sexual disorder until they try to have children, because sadly, many of them are infertile. Rather, those who are actually intersex, that is, without recognisable male or female bits, are extremely rare.

[30 : 36] 0.018%. One in every 5,000 people. Which is still quite sad. Yet, even their biological sex is determined before that development goes awry.

If it's determined in the womb at fertilization, then they are either male or female, and then something has happened in the development, that's why it's called Disordered Sexual Development, that has caused them to sadly be born like this.

And so there are still only male or females. And what's more, sadly, these are disorders because they leave people with bodies that are not in good working order.

They have issues in sexual function or fertility, which is not good, is it? Like all imperfections and issues, it's a product of the four.

And so we are to love them and care for them, but we cannot then use them, as transgender activists do, to say that there's more than male and female.

[31 : 51] That God created us as male and female for our good. And you know what? The research actually backs this up. It actually shows, increasingly so, that transgender ideology is not for our good.

Point three. It is not unloving. It is actually harmful. Firstly, it's harming women's rights. Women have the right to be safe, but trans women who have a male body are now saying they ought to be allowed into female bathrooms.

Just like a teenage boy went into the female bathroom at my daughter's school while my daughter was there. Thankfully, the school stopped that and provided an own kind of unisex bathroom.

Or, in the US, it's happening in prisons, which only leads to rape. And so here's one person who was raped by a bearded six-foot-two trans cellmate.

Male body claimed to be woman, so in the women's prison. Or women's rights are being harmed. Women's rights are being harmed. Women's rights are being harmed in sport. We've seen this recently with the Paris Olympics.

[33 : 05] And another well-known case was the college swimmer, Leah Thomas, where doctors have found that she had an unfair advantage because she actually had a he, body.

In fact, even lesbian women are protesting. Did you realise? There was a case in Tasmania in 22 and even here in Melbourne last year where lesbian women wanted to ban trans women from their

events because they had male bodies and they didn't feel safe.

And so now they are saying we should drop the T from LGBT. The point is transgender ideology is harming women's rights. And secondly, it's harming vulnerable kids.

Firstly, by saying it's a solution to their problems. Problems like kids who don't fit into their society's stereotype. Now, some boys will not be very blokey.

Some girls will not be very girly. But instead of saying, that's okay, I think it's something like 30% of the population that don't fit in the stereotypes. But instead of saying, that's okay, activists will use those very stereotypes they criticise and actually push the kids to say, oh, well, you must be the other gender.

[34 : 25] Or teenagers going through puberty. They have hormones cascading through their bodies and brains, which changes their bodies and causes them to question things with their brains and alter their moods.

And if anyone has had teenagers in the house, you know exactly what I'm talking about. And for some kids, it means wrestling with same-sex attraction or questioning their gender identity or being unhappy with their bodies, especially teenage girls.

This is sadly normal. It's part of puberty. But transgenderism holds itself up as a solution to their mixed feelings or unhappiness. When what they really need is to be loved and supported through this.

Though that often involves the parents copying the brunt of their bad moods. In fact, when it comes to gender confusion, one doctor has said, research shows, however, that the vast majority outgrow any sense of gender confusion that arises during the course of puberty.

She's a well-respected doctor, done loads of research. Or teenagers who are struggling with mental health illnesses or mental trauma are looking to transgenderism as a solution when it's not what they need.

[35 : 46] In fact, earlier this year, the only gender clinic in the UK called the Tavistock Centre was closed down. Why? Because finally, the concerns of their staff, so we're not talking Christians, we're not talking research, we're talking what's happened this year, the staff were saying many of the children who were coming were vulnerable.

Many were autistic. Many had been bullied. And in some instances, after coming out as gay, most were unhappy. These children had complicated lives and sometimes had suffered horrendous abuse or trauma.

But this wasn't always explored properly before referring them to medication. Transgenderism is being pushed by activists and online influencers as a solution to kids who either don't fit the stereotype or are struggling through puberty or have some sort of mental illness looking for help. And this is harmful because it not only neglects the real issues for these kids, it encourages them and drives them to medication and even surgery, which harms their body.

And so again, it's worth you knowing that puberty blockers, that is those drugs that block puberty from happening, the idea is so that the kids have time to decide for themselves what gender they want to be.

[37 : 08] Research has shown that they actually are producing adverse side effects. There's more research that needs to be done, but so far, things like diminished bone density, loss of memory and concentration, and the risk of stunted growth are some of the side effects being discovered of the puberty blockers.

And far from just pausing puberty so that the kids can then decide for themselves, again, research has shown that almost 100% of kids who start on puberty blockers then go to the next step of cross-sex hormone therapy making their bodies become or try to become, it never actually gets there, try to become the other gender, and then surgery.

And again, there's bad, harmful side effects. Another writer who has been really hard, like he tries very hard to have an even balance, he's interviewed people on both sides, but he says many studies show significant health risks involved with cross-hormone therapy.

Things like cholesterol, blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack, and if they do go for surgery, it's irreversible, makes them infertile, and often leads to even more complications which require even more surgery.

And all this is pushed on kids who are teenagers who have chemicals going through their heads and therefore scientifically cannot make good decisions.

[38 : 44] I mean, the decision to have pizza for breakfast is not a good decision. But teenagers, I did it as a teenager as well. And so, transgender ideology is harming vulnerable kids.

Of course, some will say that to deny it can cause harm too. And often, people point to suicide amongst teenagers which is awful. We need to do all we can to help any kids we know who are struggling with these thoughts.

But again, there is growing evidence that suggests puberty blockers or transitioning sadly does nothing to reduce those rates. Alison Clayton, who's a psychiatrist and works at Melbourne University, says, this is last year, there is no, none, robust empirical evidence.

There's kind of people who claim this or claim that, but there's no robust empirical evidence that puberty blockers reduce feelings of suicide or suicide rates.

None. And in fact, sadly, this is an older study so it's hard to know how much stock to put into it, but in Sweden in 2011, they found that suicide rates are actually around 20 times higher in those who actually have surgery and to change their gender than in a population of equal age, sex and mental health.

[40 : 15] And so, the research is telling us that transgender ideology is actually harming vulnerable kids and so how are we to respond?

Point four. Well, firstly, give thanks that the tide is turning. There are a growing number of secular researchers and writers, not Christians, secular researchers and writers who are discovering the truth about this and writing against this because they know it's harming kids.

There's also people who have detransitioned, you know, they transitioned to the other gender and now they've gone back because they realised it wasn't the answer. Perhaps the most famous is Kira Bell in the UK who struggled as a girl in puberty and so sought to transition to be a boy at the age of 16 and was given drugs easily over the counter but realised it wasn't the answer and so has now gone back to being a girl.

Even the New York Times, which is not conservative, has published an article in 22 about saying they paused puberty but is there a cost? And it goes on to talk about the growing concerns of these medications.

Give thanks that the tide is turning. People are realising the truth. And second, rejoice that there is a resurrection. As we heard in our second reading when God sends his son a second time to put this world right an end or suffering, he will raise our broken bodies and make them perfect, imperishable bodies.

[41 : 49] We will no longer feel any unhappiness with our bodies whether that's gender dysphoria or health issues or things we just don't like about our bodies.

I mean, I wanted to use a silly example, a personal example. I'm 47 turning 48 this year. I still get pimples and I find that really embarrassing. New body.

Rejoice, there is a resurrection. And third, practice truth and love for those who are struggling. For those who have teenage kids or grandkids, nieces or nephews struggling with this, then love them. Don't immediately tell them that they're being ridiculous or criticize their choices. Instead, tell them that you'll be there for them to help them work through their feelings.

Tell them that you want what's good for them, which at some point will mean gently warning them that there are real dangers if they keep going down this road.

[42 : 57] And then remind them that they are the wonderful truth, that they are precious to God, that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, even if they don't feel like it at this time.

Practice truth and love, including to those non-Christians we meet, who now identify as trans. We cannot look at them with outrageous disgust, love, but we have to show them, even if we don't understand them.

If they come to church, then go up to them. Even if you can't work out if it's a guy or a girl, go up to them, welcome them, ask them for their name, and use it, even if their name sounds different to their gender.

name. Because after all, names seem to be culturally determined. They're changing all the time. Did you know that this year, the top girls' names, number one, is Kai. That's the name of Ricky's son.

Number four, Noah. I thought that was a guy's name, but it seems to be more gender neutral these days. It's changing. The point is we want to welcome them, get to know them, and help them meet Jesus in the Bible, so that they might believe in him and be say.

[44 : 13] We cannot expect them to follow Jesus if they don't first believe in Jesus, can we? And then once they believe and know us, we can encourage them in the wonderful truth that we are made for good as male and female.

There's much more to do on this topic. I've already gone over time, I'm sorry. I'm still learning, but if you have questions, I'll do my best to answer. From now, let's pray for God's help to practice truth and love.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and we grieve over those people in our society who struggle with their identity and their bodies.

Help us, we pray, to practice truth and love. Help us, we pray, to do what we can for them to meet Jesus and find the wonderful truth and freedom we have in Jesus.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.