

# Beautiful & Broken

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Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[ 0 : 0 0 ] school class. So this is the first week of new class. We are talking about gender and sexuality, looking at biblical visions and contemporary questions. So there's a handout. So if you, there's, Rita has some handouts if you didn't get one. So we'll be following along. So this class is going to go for the next couple of months. So I want to sort of just give you an overview of where we're going and why we're doing this. I think in the last few decades, sort of the prevailing consensus in our society has sort of shifted step by step away from traditional Christian understandings about gender, sexuality, and marriage. And you could see that in a lot of different things, whether it's divorce or same-sex marriage or other things, sort of the cultural consensus is sort of moving quickly away from what are usually considered traditional

Christian positions. And I think that this is an opportunity for us as Christians, not just to, I think we can either tend to just sort of run along with the current of sort of the majority view in our society, or we can tend to react by just saying, we just need to hold on to what was true 50 or 100 years ago and, you know, idealize the 1950s or something like that. And I think really what we should be doing is holding to and looking deeply into the scriptures, right? Because the scriptures are our anchor. They're our guide. That's where God has shown himself to us and teaches us.

And that's how we can sort of evaluate and discern the meaning of our lives and the meaning of these things. So we're going to consider gender and sexuality in light of the biblical story. And, you know, if you think about what's the Bible all about, you can sort of summarize it as creation, fall, redemption, and glory, right? Creation, God made us, God made the world, it was good, and then sin entered the world, right? We've been looking at this in the beginning of Genesis, and you see the effects of sin played out in numerous ways, right? Throughout the Bible and in human history. But then Jesus has come to redeem us, to restore God's original intended creation, and to make us new, to sort of put back together, to heal what was broken. And then our hope is that we will one day be glorified with him and see him face to face, and everything will be made completely new, right? And now we're sort of in this in-between, right? We live, we still live in a fallen world, but we want to be leaning into the redemption that Jesus has come to bring us.

So, so really what I want to do in this class is over the course of the next, I think it's about nine or ten weeks, is really to tell a story that I think makes sense of our bodies and gender and sexuality in light of the biblical story. And I think it's a really compelling story. I think it's a beautiful story. I think that's what the Bible gives us. And, and I think that, that sometimes, sometimes that's, that's just missed. So if you look at the outline of the class schedule, today we're basically talking about creation and fall, right? That we're created and fallen, beautiful and broken. And we'll talk about our bodies and gender being male and female, and sexuality, the fact that we are, we are our sexual beings and, and, and, and God made us that way, and how those things are both beautiful and also broke, beautiful because of God's creation and broken because of sin. The next two weeks we're going to be looking at, there's sort of two paths that the Bible, particularly the New Testament outlines for the redemption that are sort of connected to the shape of God's overall redemption in the world, but two paths of redeemed sexuality or marriage in, sexuality in particular. So one is faithfulness in marriage. And so that'll be next week, we'll look at what is marriage, sort of a big picture of marriage in the Bible.

You know, what's, what's the biblical vision of marriage, right? Because that's, that's one of the things that the Bible commends as a good thing and a good gift of God. But the, the second part, which we'll look at on in two more weeks is about Christian singleness and particularly how this is a unique thing in the New Testament. We don't really see this in the Old Testament. We'll look at why it's not really in the Old Testament, but there's sort of a redemptive path of Christian singleness in the New Testament and, and how that bears witness to the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in a particular way. So these are both sort of paths that God commends, right? That God says, you know, as the redeemed people of Jesus Christ, these are ways that you can give glory to God in your body through faithfulness in marriage or through celibacy and singleness. And those might be, you know, those might be things that, that are experienced in different parts of life. Some people will be in that state for all, you know, in, in, uh, some people will be single for their whole lives. Some people will be married until they die. Some people will be married and then widowed, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So, um, anyway, so then we're going to go on and sort of look at some of the particular challenges of living in a fallen world and some of the particular challenges and questions that are, uh, sort of facing us in our church and in, uh, sort of the broader culture today. So we'll look at homosexuality. Uh, does the Bible really mean what it says? And then, or what if I'm a Christian and I only feel attracted to people of the same sex? Like, is, is there a redemptive path for me? Uh, what does that look like? Um, and then we'll look at, uh, we'll sort of think about how do we relate to our neighbors outside the church? People who don't share Christian assumptions or convictions. Um, and you know, what does it mean to love our neighbor?

[ 6 : 24 ] Uh, and be sort of faithful to God in that. Um, and then I think there we'll also talk about addressing gender and sexuality with children and youth and Christian families, which I think is an important topic to talk about, um, whether you're a parent or not. Um, I think that's, that's, I want to put that in here. Uh, then we will look at, um, sort of, this is like the, the, you know, I taught this, taught a version of this class. I've reorganized it, um, three or four years ago.

And, uh, I taught a session on, on transgender and I asked people to raise their hand if they'd ever heard any teaching in the church about transgender at all. And there were about 40 people in the class, nobody raised their hand. Um, and I think in the last four years, right?

Like it's all over the news, right? People transitioning, um, right? Many people have, many of us have loved ones who, uh, have, you know, are biologically male, but now identify as female, et cetera, et cetera. So how do we, you know, how do we understand these things? Um, and, uh, as well as, as gender dysphoria and, uh, what, what, what is, you know, how do we navigate, um, these, um, matters as Christians and relate to people? Um, uh, let's see, November 17, we're, uh, we're having a visiting missionary presentations. That's going to be sort of a break from this class. Uh, and then I, um, want to look at two other issues, uh, that are related to this overall topic of gender and sexuality. I want to take one week and look at pornography.

Um, pornography is a pervasive problem in our society and in the church, and, uh, we don't always talk much about it. So, uh, I want to look at that and about sort of a path to redemption, uh, sort of why, why that is such a problem and, and sort of what is God's path to redemption, uh, uh, from that. And then I want to take a week and look at sexual abuse and sexual assault, um, and sort of what the Bible has to say about that. So we're looking at our topics, um, and, uh, but, you know, the Bible, the Bible speaks to these things and, you know, the Bible, um, has wisdom for us. And then we'll end with looking at sort of our hope of glory, right?

Where we're going in the end. That's our ultimate hope. And we'll, you'll, we'll, I'll, we're going to sprinkle that in throughout, right? Because isn't that how we make it through life in a fallen world is we look forward to what Jesus has promised and we start to experience sort of like sprinkles of that in the present, right? That's what we hope and long for. So, uh, so I hope you see like there's a flow to this class. There's a story that we're, there's an overarching story and really the question is how do we live into this story as, as Christian believers and how does that help us navigate, um, some of the particular questions in our world today? So, um, I've listed a lot of books as you may have noticed with different topics. So these are, um, uh, I've read all these books. I don't recommend, I don't usually recommend books that I haven't read.

[ 9 : 30 ] So, um, if you read one of them and you want to dialogue about them, I'd be happy to. Um, I think they, uh, uh, if you don't want to read a book, but are like, is there some shorter stuff like an article that I can read? Talk to me. Um, I'll be sort of trying to throw in some articles along the way, but, uh, you know, some of these things sort of, we, it's helpful to, to read something from somebody who's thought more deeply and sort of walked with people in, in some of these ways. So, um, so these are some, uh, books that I would recommend, uh, that I think are insightful on these topics. Um, there are others as well. Um, all right. So that's the overview of where we're going. Uh, let me pray for us before we jump into our session this morning.

Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us in your word. Thank you for, um, showing yourself as our creator and as, um, our redeemer. Lord, thank you for, for the hope that we have through Jesus Christ that whatever our, um, experience of, of our sin and fallenness of the world may be, we thank you that there's hope for us because of Jesus Christ, our redeemer. And, uh, we pray that you would help us as believers, um, help us to be shaped by your word, uh, and shaped by your character, uh, in the way that we think about, uh, our own gender and sexuality and the way that we relate to other people within the church, uh, who are facing different struggles and challenges.

And in the way that we relate to our neighbors outside the church who may not, uh, who may not understand the story at all, uh, who may be living in a totally different story. Um, uh, but we pray that we would be able to commend the hope that is within us to, to, um, to share the hope that we have found in Christ and the beauty of, um, uh, your, of, of your, uh, creation as, and the beauty of your, uh, forgiveness and redemption that you have given to us in Jesus Christ. Um, so we pray you guide us by your spirit and give us wisdom through this time together in Jesus name. Amen. All right.

So the topic of this morning is beautiful and broken. Why bodies, gender, and sexuality are good gifts from God and why nothing's quite the way it's supposed to be anymore. So this is sort of big picture. We're going to start big picture. Um, but I want to start by sort of asking this question, you know, does what, what, what is, why do we have bodies in the first place? Right?

What does the Bible say about that? How does that connect to our identity? Um, one Christian writer says God created us with bodies. That is how we begin to know that he cares how we order our sexual lives. God created us with bodies. God himself incarnated in a human body. Uh, Jesus was raised again from the dead with a body. And one day we too will be resurrected with our bodies. Now, you know, that's a, that's, that's a quote from a modern Christian writer, but in the ancient world, uh, the high regard with which Christians regarded the body was very, was quite unusual. Um, and, and particularly how Christianity sort of had a high degree of honor for the human body, um, and, and also called for a high level of bodily discipline and self-sacrifice.

[ 12 : 44 ] Um, and, and that, the mix of those two things was pretty unusual in the ancient world. So here are three sort of common attitudes toward the body that were reflected by different groups of people in the ancient world. So some people saw the human body as dirty or evil or inferior.

Uh, these were the Gnostics and the Gnostics, uh, there were a variety of Gnostics, but they all basically believe that God made the spiritual world and then a lesser or inferior God created the material world. Sometimes they thought it was a demon who created the material world.

Um, and so they saw the body as a prison and our goal is to escape. So salvation for these Gnostics was escaping from our bodies and escaping into the spirit, the pure spiritual realm. And so that was sort of the hope that they offered to people. And interestingly, this attitude toward the body sort of went two directions. Um, if you've come in, by the way, there's some handouts. I think they're, uh, raise your hand if you don't have a handout and, um, uh, we can get one to you. Uh, there's handouts over on that table. Um, anyway, so the Gnostics sort of went two ways. So some Gnostics were extreme ascetics. That means they were very harsh. So they fasted, uh, you know, for long and extreme periods of time. They, um, you know, uh, there were some communities where nobody would get married and nobody would have sex. And, and that was sort of the way they would live, um, as sort of, uh, trying to sort of discipline, uh, in the body and reject bodily desires. Other Gnostics went the opposite way. They were basically like, well, what we're really trying to do is get to the spiritual world. The body's dirty and inferior, so it doesn't really matter what you do with it anyway.

Right? What the heck? Just go for it. And so some of those went the opposite way, right? And it was anything goes. Um, and, and I think that's interesting because I think when, uh, particularly when, you know, uh, most, uh, many people today are would, very few people today would call themselves Gnostics, right? But I think many people today wrestle with a lot of shame, a lot of, a feeling that their body is dirty or contaminated or inferior, especially if you've been, especially for people who've been wronged, um, who've experienced some kind of abuse, uh, bodily. And, and again, I think sometimes that can go two ways. It can go either towards a very harsh strictness, um, in trying to sort of be in control of your, the, your body, um, or it can go towards, I'm such a, it doesn't matter what the heck, let it go. Right? Um, so I think we can, can see those sort of two ways, um, uh, that even today, uh, second view, um, so other, uh, other people in the ancient world said the body is non-essential. So Plato and the Stoics were sort of philosophical groups that, that basically went this way. Um, so they said the soul, uh, and your body are sort of, your soul is like your captain and your body is the ship. Right? Uh, and so you are your soul. You are not your body. Your body is basically just temporary. Um, so, uh, I remember somebody saying to me a while ago, yeah, the body's just a can, right? And it's going to be thrown in the trash one day. Um, and that's sort of a, you know, that's sort of a modern, like, that's a street version of, you know, Platonism, Stoicism is probably just a can, just, you know, you dump it out and, uh, you, whatever's in there is important.

The soul's in there. Um, but, but, you know, just toss it. Um, so this view, uh, sort of tends to emphasize the importance of spiritual things over material things, or sometimes rational thought over emotions and instincts. So sometimes there's sort of a high emphasis on rational thinking and debating, um, and a sort of distrust of anything that's intuitive or, uh, affective, um, and tends to emphasize the difference between the body and the soul. Uh, so it's not so much a view that they're deeply interconnected, but it's more that they're separate. Um, and we really need to lean into the spiritual aspect. Um, and I think there are, again, you know, there's not many people today who would call themselves Platonists or Stoics, but I think some people sort of live this out. I think sometimes it gets into, uh, some, uh, Christian churches. Um, you sort of hear that, this kind of language, uh, you sort of distrust your body, but trust your, you know, lean into the soul and spiritual things, right? And there's sort of this, like, spiritual material, like, dichotomy, um, separation that's, that's emphasized. Um, now the third view sort of goes the other way.

[ 17 : 51 ] The third view in the ancient world was the Epicureans. So they were another Greek philosophical group, and they said the body is all there is. They were materialists, um, in the sense that there's no God, there's no spiritual world, uh, there's no soul distinct from the body, there's no life after death. You, your body is all you've got. And so they said the goal is bodily pleasure, or they, they actually didn't use pleasure so much as they talked about tranquility, right? Finding peace.

So, you know, the Epic, it's not right to say that the Epicureans were just crazy hedonists who were going out and just doing all these kinds of crazy things to achieve pleasure. Some of them were pretty, were more pragmatic. They're like, you know what? If you eat everything that you want to, you're going to feel sick, right? If you are a glutton, you're, you're, you're not going to feel good. So it's better to sort of enjoy pleasure in moderation, but the goal is bodily pleasure, right? So, um, all right, how, how do you see this today? Uh, you know, maybe some version. So, um, a couple of years ago, I was walking by Elm City Market and they had some advertisement in the front window that said something like, you know, food for the body, mind, and spirit or something like that, right? Um, well, that's not quite the body's all there is. That's more of like a mix of views two and three, but, but there's right. There's some of this that's sort of like, uh, your body is your friend, but, but your body, your body is, is, is all, is sort of what you're living for, right? And that's, that's, that's, that's every, everything is sort of wrapped up in that.

Um, so, uh, so I think we see these three views, even if people have forgotten the ancient philosophers associated with them, right? Ecclesiastes says there's nothing new under the sun, right? These sort of views come up and recur in the modern world. And I think some people will sort of mix parts of these views together. We don't always have coherent, um, you know, most, we often live in self-contradictions. Um, but I think these are three common views of the body. None of these are the Christian view. And the Christian view is actually distinct from all of these. So what is a biblical Christian understanding of, uh, the body, gender, and sexuality? Well, uh, I think we can start from the beginning. God made us with bodies and called them good. So we've been looking at this in Genesis one. So I won't sort of repeat what we've heard in the sermons last couple of weeks, but just a brief overview, God orders and fills the world to display his sovereignty and glory.

And God called our bodies good, right? Um, you know, we don't see, uh, you know, there, there were some ancient philosophers who thought that our souls existed sort of from eternity past or from a long time before the physical world, and then they were dropped into human bodies. Um, so, you know, the Christian philosopher origin sort of speculated about this. He was too influenced by some Greek philosophers that he really liked. Um, that is not a biblical idea, right? We don't see that idea anywhere in the Bible, right? God doesn't sort of create a whole bunch of souls up in the heavenlies and then drop them into bodies and then they have to endure those bodies temporarily. Um, no, right?

What we see in Genesis one is God makes the physical world and he calls it good. And he puts human beings there as his image bearers. Um, and Genesis two, right? God breathes the breath of life into, um, he takes, uh, let's see, uh, the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathes into his nostrils, the breath of life. Uh, right? So there you have a picture of, uh, you might call it body and soul. Um, but it emphasizes the interconnection, right? We're made from the dust of the, we're made from just the same stuff as animals and plants, right? Same bodily material. And yet God has breathed the breath of life into us. He has put his image upon us, stamped his image upon us. Um, and so, so the Bible emphasizes, so the Bible teaches that we have body and soul, uh, but it, it emphasizes the interconnectedness of them. It emphasizes that we were meant to, to live as interconnected body, soul beings. Um, uh, and that makes us unique in God's creation, right? Angels, uh, don't have physical bodies. Sometimes they will appear with physical bodies in the Bible, uh, but those are only sort of temporary, um, appearances. Uh, you know, on the other hand, animals or plants, uh, are, are at their very nature physical, right? They're not destined for eternal life as, as human beings were. Uh, they were never created to be immortal. And so as human beings, we sort of occupy this unique place in God's creation as body, body, soul creatures. Um, uh, one quote, uh, is, uh, I put on here as man can neither be understood nor explained in his full depth with the categories taken from the world, from the visible totality of bodies, right? So we, so we don't fully understand human beings just by talking about ourselves, um, in the same categories as animals, plants, dirt, rocks, um, and everything else on earth. Um, right? So, you know, the, the, for example, the biological sciences give us a lot of, a lot of insight into how our bodies work, but they don't tell us why our bodies work, right? They don't tell us, you know, what we were made for.

[ 23 : 36 ] Do we have a purpose, right? So, so there's these bigger questions, um, that we have to ask, uh, to do justice to our, our, um, our human identity. Uh, but then he goes on and says, nevertheless, man too is a body. That's an interesting statement. Um, but I think it's right, uh, that the body is part of who we are. Um, it's not all of who we are, right? One day our physical bodies will die, right? And Christian hope is that, uh, you know, our, at, at, at the time of death, our soul will go to be with the Lord, but we await the resurrection of the body, right? Um, when our, our soul will be clothed with a new body, right? With a resurrected body. That's the hope that we have as Christians for eternity. Um, so, so I think our bodies have great dignity and value to God and they're part of who we are, um, at a deep level. Uh, second thing we see is from the beginning, God made us as gendered beings. What I mean by that is he made us as male and female. And, uh, Genesis one points that out in the image of God, he created him male and female, he created them. Now Genesis, uh, now that's, it's interesting because that's the only time in Genesis one that it talks about male and female.

Now the author of Genesis knows that many animals come in male and female pairs, right? So he talks about it later when the animals go into Noah's Ark, right? Male and female pairs. Um, but in the creation story, the male female pairing is only specifically noted in relation to human beings.

Uh, so the animals are created according to their kinds, but it doesn't say human beings are created according to their kinds. There's not many kinds of human beings. There's one kind of human being, right? Someone who fully bears the image of God. Um, uh, so, you know, Genesis is, is, is clear that all human beings sort of are of the same kind ultimate and at the deepest level. But, uh, what distinguishes us in the creation account is being made male and female.

Now I think, and I'm going to leave this as a hypothesis. I'm not going to say this must be true, but I think, um, that this indicates that our being male and female is more at the core of our human identity than other, uh, characteristics that we have. So I think that the Bible is indicating that our maleness and femaleness is closer to the core of who we are than our race or ethnicity or our, uh, class or social status, um, or our national origin, right? Now all of those things are part of who we are. Uh, some of those change over, can change over time like our class or social status, right? That can change based on all kinds of, of things, uh, or the nation we live in can change.

Um, uh, now our, our, our race or ethnicity won't change throughout our life. Although our understanding of that might change, you might realize that you have an ancestor that you didn't know, right? And sort of you realize, oh, like my heritage includes, you know, this ancestor from somewhere else, from some different part. I've got some roots in some other part of the world that I never realized.

[ 27 : 02 ] Um, and so all of these are, are part of who we are. And I think all of those are parts of us that God, uh, can redeem and, and, uh, that, that are, uh, important to God. But I think Genesis indicates that, that our, our gender is, is even more, is even deeper at the core of who we are. Um, uh, and I think the New Testament indicates that as well, uh, because of how the New Testament sort of reaffirms the male and female distinctions, uh, but sort of, um, moves towards relativizing some of the sort of national distinctions between Jews and Gentiles and things like that. Um, anyway, so I'm going to suggest that, uh, you don't have to go with me on that, but I, I think that's, that's an implication. Um, uh, so, um, so God created us as gendered beings, male and female. Uh, we looked at Genesis two last week.

Um, God also created us as sexual beings in the sense that that's right. That's how human beings reproduce, um, uh, among other things. God could, right. There are other species that do not reproduce through sexual union, uh, of a male and female. Um, but God made human beings, uh, uh, with that capacity. Um, and in Genesis one, God blessed, uh, the human race, commanded them be fruitful and multiply.

How do we fulfill that command? Well, through sexual reproduction, right? So this is part of God's creation. There's a goodness to it. And we even see in Genesis two, uh, the man and his wife naked and unashamed. So there's this picture of, uh, complete security and complete vulnerability in the marriage, uh, context. Um, uh, uh, yes. So, so from the standpoint of creation, Bible has a high honoring view of human bodies of gender and sexuality as a part of God's beautiful design for his image bearers.

However, that's only the first part of the biblical story. That's a very important part and a foundational part of the biblical story. But the second part of the biblical story is that we are also corrupted by sin. And in our present experience, nothing is quite the way it's supposed to be, including our bodies, our gender, and our sexuality. Um, so we see this all over throughout the Bible. So Genesis, we see the consequences of sin include bodily, uh, consequences, um, shame connected to nakedness, pain and childbearing, pain and frustration and working, uh, the ground, bodily death. Um, the rest of the Bible see every aspect of human nature and experience has been corrupted by sin.

So there's no part of us that's completely free from the effects of sin. So that means our minds are darkened, right? We don't think clearly. We don't always reason well. Um, sometimes we reason from the premise to the conclusion, but we have the wrong assumption. So when we start with the wrong assumption, we get to the wrong conclusion, right? Sometimes we misperceive things.

[ 30 : 17 ] Sometimes we misperceive other people's intentions. Sometimes we misperceive ourselves, right? Sometimes we see ourselves in a way that is very different and contrary to the way God sees us.

Sometimes we attach ourselves to, um, uh, to aspects of ourselves that are part of our brokenness instead of part of the beauty that God has made us with. Um, so everything is not as bad as it possibly could be. God restrains lots of evil in the world, um, and, and sort of sustains and provides for us. But, you know, there's nothing, there's no part of us that is completely unaffected by sin.

Um, so I've listed several things, our bodies, our minds, our desires, uh, deceitful desires, Ephesians talks about, um, our identities become idolatrous. So many idolatries come from fixing, fixating on one part of God's good creation that's nevertheless twisted by the fall and looking for our hope and salvation and redemption from that created thing. So if you just look at the book of Genesis, there's lots of examples of this. So the citizens of Babel, um, they idolize their, uh, their city, their nation. Um, they think that they have the power to build a tower to heaven, um, and to rule the entire earth, right? Um, and so there's sort of idolatry of national identity, right? Uh, then Leah idolizes being loved by her husband, right? The names of her first three children are, are connected to her desire for her husband who doesn't really love her to love her, right? She's constantly longing to be loved. Uh, and then Rachel, who is Jacob's other wife, right? This is, again, Genesis shows us all kinds of problems from the beginning, including polygamy.

Um, Rachel idolizes having children. She goes to, uh, Jacob and she says, give me children or I'll die. Interesting. Sometimes our idolatries make us want to kill each other or die ourselves because we feel like we can't get what we want and we need it, right? So all these things are good things. That's the thing, right? Children are a good thing. Being loved by your spouse is a good thing.

Uh, uh, uh, uh, your national identity is a good thing. But when those become the most important thing, when those become the thing that makes or breaks your life, then that thing has come to replace God and become an idol. And that's what we see throughout the Bible is human beings are prone to idolize all kinds of things. Idolize ourselves, idolize another person, idolize our nation, idolize children, idolize your parents, idolize whoever. Right. Right. Jesus has come to free us from idols.

[ 33 : 17 ] Um, we also experience all sorts of unwanted afflictions. You know, by definition, most afflictions are unwanted, right? How many of us have asked for the troubles that we are currently going through in our life? Right. That's just the reality of living in a fallen world. We have all kinds of unwanted burdens and afflictions. And sometimes we know where they came from and sometimes we don't know where they came from. So our experience of our gender, our bodies, our gender, and our sexuality must also be affected by the fall. Right. And in a whole variety of ways. Um, and you see that beginning in Genesis, um, and throughout the rest of the Bible, different examples of that. So stepping back, uh, some implications so far, uh, three implications.

And then I want to open it up for some questions or comments. Uh, so first I think we need to hold these two truths together. We're created by God and we're corrupted by sin. Because if we emphasize only the first part, we're made by God, then what we're going to be prone to do is identify everything that we presently experience as something good that God has created.



Right. So, um, uh, there's, there's a church that I drive by on my way into New Haven. And for the last month, it had a sign that said, love is love. God loves you. And it was sort of clear what the implications of that was. Right. Uh, in other words, God made you just the way you are. So everything that you feel, uh, about yourself, uh, the only proper response is total affirmation and celebration and self-expression. Now the problem with that view, it does is it really doesn't leave any place for self-criticism or questioning. And I think, you know, most of us, if we're honest with ourselves, we realize there are some parts of ourselves that we, that aren't all right, that aren't only to be celebrated. Right. Uh, it doesn't, this, that sort of saying like everything I experienced now must be a reflection of God's creative design. Well, that's, that's part of the story, but it's not all of the story. On the other hand, uh, sometimes we can emphasize only the second truth. We're corrupted by sin. We're totally depraved. And if we only see that part, we can be prone to fall into hating ourselves and despairing. And self-hatred is not the path to atonement and redemption in the Bible.

Um, you know, this, this would be, I'm so wretched and so messed up that God could never want me and he could never find anything useful to do with me. And that's not true either. Right. Both of these, if you take one of these, one half of this view and ignore the other created by God, corrupted by sin, you end up in a place that's psychologically unhealthy and theologically out of balance, out of whack. Uh, so the Bible always holds these truths together that were made by God.

And so there's something beautiful about us, about each one of us. And we're corrupted by sin that every part of us, nothing, no part of us is free from the effects of the fall. We need God's help and wisdom, uh, to, to heal and restore us. Uh, Pascal, uh, that he was a mathematician and philosopher in the 17th century. He, he put this in a memorable way. Uh, he wrote, what sort of freak then is man?

[ 37 : 05 ] How novel, how monstrous, how chaotic, how paradoxical, how prodigious, how smart and intelligent judge of all things, feeble earthworm repository of truth, sink of doubt and error, glory and garbage of the universe. He says, man's greatness and wretchedness are so evident that the true religion must necessarily teach us that there is in man, some great principle of greatness and some great principle of wretchedness. That's what the Bible teaches. There's a great principle of greatness.

We're made in God's image and there's a great principle of wretchedness. We're corrupted by sin. Second, uh, these two truths apply to all human beings without any exceptions. Well, with the sole exception of Jesus, who's not corrupted by sin. So in every human being, there's beauty beauty. And, uh, that reflects that person's status as a, as an image bearer of God.

And let me challenge us. Do we take time to recognize this beauty, even in the people who are hardest for us to love and appreciate? Do we take time to recognize, uh, the beauty that they are made in God's image and how do, how they specifically reflect that? Even if there's all kinds of aspects of their life that might be, even if they've wronged you, even if, even if there's all kinds of aspects of their life that are out of whack with God's design and purposes, we can, there's, there's still a very important truth that every person is made in the image of God. And that's how we need to see them and treat them. But second, in every human being, there's brokenness. That's ultimately a result of sin, not necessarily a result of their own particular sin. Cause sometimes we inherit all kinds of brokenness and we receive, you know, other, it's a, uh, we're hurt by others. Um, so, you know, I think some of us who feel our brokenness very deeply can be prone to look at some other people who look really good on the outside and think that they're not broken. And that's a danger because you're going to set yourself up for disappointment. If you look at somebody else and think,

I want to be just like them. If only I was just like them. If only I had a marriage like theirs. If only I felt like as, as confident as they do. If only I could succeed like they do. And you know what? They have brokenness too. You just might not see it yet. They're human just like you too. Don't idolize them. Or I think for those of us who, uh, feel a lot of confidence at being made in God's image and sort of have a, have a thankfulness to God for how he's made us and how he's working in us.

Um, do we, can we also look at ourselves and see our own kind of brokenness? Okay. It's very dangerous if you're trying to help somebody else with what you see as their brokenness, but you don't see your own. And you can end up really hurting and damaging other people if you're trying to help them, but you're blind to your own flaws and your own struggles and the ways that you need to be growing and finding healing and in the Lord. All right. Third, uh, we need discernment. And this is what God's word gives us in order to sort out what in ourselves is beautiful and what in ourselves is broken. Cause that's not always self evident, right? We sometimes think things are beautiful when they're actually broken. And we sometimes think things are broken when they're actually beautiful. And God's word helps us to sort that out. And also conversations with, uh, wise and godly believers, um, uh, confessing and repenting of our sin helps us to see things more clearly. Uh, right.

[ 41 : 00 ] It's a process of sorting out our thinking, our desires, our habits, our intuitions, our perceptions in light of who God is. And thankfully God's given us resources in his word, his spirit, and his people to help us in that process. So beautiful and broken. We've got five minutes for questions or comments. Ivor.

Talking about the body being sacred, how does that, um, in today's society, a lot of people are cremated. So, uh, if the body is sacred, should we as Christians not be cremated?

Ah, good question. If the body is sacred, should we as Christians not be cremated? Um, so, uh, so that's an interesting question. The early Christians, uh, you know, the early Christians, uh, many early Christians, um, and you can even see this in the Old Testament, uh, would bury their dead, um, and would even bury other, uh, people would sort of see that people's, uh, uh, corpses, their remains were, were given an honorable end when they could. Um, uh, now, so, uh, and, and I think they did that partly because of this high view of the body. Now, on the other hand, there's nowhere in the Bible, there's nowhere in the Bible that says you may not be cremated if you are a Christian. Um, and, you know, Genesis says to the dust we will return, right? Um, that's going to happen one way or another. Uh, so, uh, you know, I think most people who are cremated today are cremated for financial reasons. Um, it's a lot cheaper right now in the United States to cremate someone's remains than to bury them in a cemetery.

It's just gotten more and more expensive. Um, and so, uh, you know, that's just a reality. So, I don't think, I don't think cremation is a sin. On the other hand, there is something about burial that reflects, uh, sort of the, um, the honor that, that, that Christians and Jews have traditionally given to the body. Um, so, that's a good question. I don't think, but I don't think we can, I don't think, I don't think we should say that it's sinful, uh, to be cremated. Um, uh, and the reality is God promises to put our bodies back together again, right? Even if you die at sea and you're thrown off the boat and a whale eats you, right?

Like, you know what? When you get the resurrection body, nothing's going to stop the Lord from giving you the body that he wants you to have, right? No matter what happens to your remains after you perish from the earth. Yes?

[ 43 : 35 ] I, I was just going to say, my thoughts on that question would be, is there a lot of difference between being cremated and, and a Christian burial where your body's going to decompose?

Or, you know, you're just speeding it up? Yep. Yep. Your body will decompose anyway. That's true. That's true. Yep. Um, so what do you do when you see like the culture around you living sexually any way they please and just promoting it and they seem to be doing really well and it's easy to get kind of like, you know, hung up on, you know, that they have everything that they, and they, they don't see anything wrong and it feels almost like you're the odd person now, you know? Yes. Yes. Right.

It's, um, it's odd now not to live together before marriage, for example. Um, so, uh, you know, uh, my wife and I even had adults in our, one of our extended families tell us that. Like, why, why, you know, why would you get married without living together first? Like, um, so yeah, there's some things that, that seem odd as in sort of doing it the Christian way seems odd, uh, in the world. Uh, one thing I would say is in one way, in one way, that's how it should be.

Right? Christians should be willing to be different and distinct because we live in a different story. We believe God's made, we believe that there's a God who's made us with a purpose that we've turned away from that. That's, and, and that, you know, Christ calls us to be joined to him. Um, you know, I think, I, that's, it's a bigger question, right? Uh, sort of how do we, I, I, I think, so I think it's important if you're, say, if you're relating to a colleague at work or someone in your extended family, you know, who's sort of living in a way that, that doesn't follow the Christian way, um, I don't think it's usually helpful to just go to them and say, the way you're living is wrong because of, like, this is God's command. I, I think we need to, I think we need to ask some, I think we need to ask, first of all, like, what do they, you know, like, there's an opportunity to get to know someone. Like, what do they believe? Like, what, what does motivate them? Like, um, uh, I mean, that's, that's, that's why in this class I wanted to structure it around the biblical story is, is to see how, um, the story of the Bible impacts the, the choices that we might make.

So, you know, I, and I think broadly speaking, um, how are Christians supposed to relate to, to others in the world? Well, the Bible says, love your neighbor, love even your enemy, right? Pray for them, show kindness to them, um, and the Bible also says, be, you know, live differently, like, live distinctly, and trust that God's way is ultimately the best. Um, and, uh, you know, often there, there are, um, yeah. Yes? I was just going to say, in response to that, two things. One is, they seem to be doing really well, but what does doing really well mean?

[ 46 : 56 ] Mm-hmm. Because doing really well, because they're happy, they might be living with someone of the same sex, whatever. In God's eyes, that's not doing really well. That's doing very poorly.

And a second thing is, people are very happy and have long, successful marriages, you know, two men, two women, until they die, but God doesn't say it's impossible for people to sin and be happy. But his design, like, I've heard it described a couple different ways, but one simple way is, you can take a pen and nail it into the wall and hang a picture on it. It's going to work. It's going to hold. But that's not what the pen was designed for. And you can use a beautiful portrait as kindling for fire. It's going to burn. It will work. But now you've burned a beautiful portrait. Like, God's design for us is much more important than if we can make it work and be happy otherwise.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. All right. We're going to have more time to talk about these things in the next several weeks. But we have to wrap up for now. So let me close this in prayer.

Lord, we pray that you would help us grow as followers of you to live in a way that reflects your good design for us and be empowered by your spirit and find healing for our broken, for errors of brokenness. Help us, Lord, to be faithful and loving witnesses in the world.

Lord, even to people who are far away from you or are not see you in very different ways. Lord, we pray that you would help us to find ways to love our neighbors and yet to live in a way that reflects your distinctiveness. Pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

[ 48 : 50 ] Amen.