



Anchoring Your Child to God's Truth

IN A
GENDER-CONFUSED
CULTURE



Helping Our Children Embrace
Their Calling to Godly
Manhood or Womanhood

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 6 |
| Chapter 1 The World Where Our Children Live | 15 |
| Chapter 2 Biblical Response to the Gender-Fractured Worldview | 21 |
| Chapter 3 Adam’s Distinct Calling as a Man | 37 |
| Chapter 4 Eve’s Distinct Calling as a Woman | 51 |
| Chapter 5 Guide Your Teen to Adopt a Biblical Sexual Identity | 67 |
| Chapter 6 Inspire Your Children to Embrace Their Call to Godly Manhood or Womanhood | 87 |

Helping Our Children Embrace Their Calling to Godly Manhood or Womanhood

Introduction

Today's world is constantly sending our children unbiblical messages about gender identities, gender roles, same-sex attraction, and sexual fulfillment. Gender fluidity, which is at the core of many of these views, denies the sovereignty of God and the creation of man and woman as His image-bearers. The inherent uniqueness and value of each gender is not clearly understood by our culture because of historical stereotypes and abuses. We, therefore, must help our children put a biblical lens over whatever message comes to them from the culture. That biblical lens is called *complementarianism*. "God created them male and female" to *complement*, i.e., *complete* each other.

This mini-book is designed to equip Christian adults to understand the culture that is shaping their children's views of sexuality, so they can help their children respond to the deconstruction of male/female gender identities and roles taking place in our culture with gospel grace towards the sexually broken and with a whole-hearted celebration of the biblical teaching of complementarianism.

GOSPEL GRACE TOWARDS THE SEXUALLY BROKEN

We won't succeed in anchoring our children's souls to God's truth about sexual personhood in today's culture unless we approach the issue of gender confusion through the lens of gospel grace. Many in the rising generation believe that Bible-believing Christians are anti-gay. David Kinnaman of Barna Research conducted an exhaustive study of what sixteen to twenty-nine-year-olds non-Christians think of Christians. He published his findings in the book, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christians and Why It Matters*. Here is what he found:

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The gay issue has become the “big one,” the negative image most likely to be intertwined with Christianity’s reputation. Outsiders say our hostility towards gays—not just opposition to homosexual politics and behaviors but disdain for gay individuals—has become virtually synonymous with the Christian faith . . . When you introduce yourself as a Christian to a friend, neighbor, or business associate who is an outsider, you might as well have it tattooed on your arm: anti-homosexual, gay-hater, homophobic.¹

Christian teens often assume their parent’s generation is anti-gay since that is our reputation in the culture. If taking a stand for truth in our culture spills over to hostility towards those in the LGBTQ² lifestyle, we will have little influence in our kids’ lives when it comes to their gender issues. Far worse, we will not be showing them Jesus! When it comes to the sexually confused, parents and church leaders must reflect both God’s truth *and* His love. We must lead the way in obedience to God’s command, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts” (Col. 3:12).

As a church leader and parent, I must expel any potential judgmental attitude I have towards those in the LGBTQ lifestyle by remembering that to whom much is given, much is required. God has allowed me to know him through Christ and to experience the unconditional love of One Who died *for me*. Therefore, who am I to condemn one who does not know God as I do, who looks for love in places of sexual confusion or brokenness?

When I am tempted to be angry at LGBTQ political activists whose influence seems to be harming our country, my hard heart needs to be softened by recognizing they are not the enemy—they

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are being held captive by the true enemy, the evil one. Furthermore, LGBTQ political activists are a small minority of those who experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. I also need to remember that in most of the cultures of the world, the LGBTQ community has been despised, loathed, and ostracized.

Those in bondage to this lifestyle need my compassion, not my hostility. Instead of finding value as one made in God's image, they are believing the empty promises of the world that do not satisfy. It is also quite common that those who experience same-sex sexual attraction don't want it; many have prayed through tears for God to take it away. When someone in the gay lifestyle repents and trusts Christ for salvation, God does not necessarily give him or her heterosexual attraction. In this case his or her sexual pathway becomes celibacy, which can be a very hard, lonely life. Those engaged in such a difficult struggle need the support and understanding of the Body of Christ.

Jesus' compassion for those who struggle with sexual sin is modeled for us in his treatment of the woman He met at the well of Samaria. He provides a paradigm for every Christian to follow who has a gay or transgender relative, friend, or work associate. It is an example our children need to see in us.

So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans) (John 4:5-9).

Notice that Jesus does not feel the need to immediately express His disapproval of her lifestyle. Some confused Christians seem to feel an urgency to express their disagreement with a gay friend's or relative's lifestyle, before he has gotten to know anything else about him. That was *not* Jesus' approach. Instead, He first takes three steps to *affirm the woman's value*. These steps *open her heart to discuss spiritual things*:

- 1. Jesus went out of His way to go into her world.** When any reputable Jew wanted to travel from Judea north to Galilee, he would go around the Samaritans who were considered to be unclean half-breeds. These idolaters had not only intermarried with the Assyrians, they had set up a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim. In the eyes of the Jews, Samaritans were idolaters, just below dogs on the social status scale. But Jesus affirmed the worth of the Samaritan woman and her culture by walking among them. He didn't stay in Jerusalem and demand they clean up their act before He would speak to them. In fact, the incarnation of Christ is the very picture of holiness coming down and bringing God's love to those the world devalues. Instead of treating homosexuals and the transgendered like lepers, we, if we would be like Jesus, need to take the first step toward friendship with them *because they are sexually broken*.
- 2. Jesus took the initiative to speak to her.** Jesus' request, "Will you give me a drink?" would have been revolutionary and countercultural, giving her both worth and dignity. In that culture, no self-respecting rabbi would ever speak to a woman in public, much less a Samaritan woman, and one living in sexual brokenness. Even among her own people, the woman probably experienced disapproval and harsh treatment. The fact that she travels to the well during the heat of the day, alone, and without

the community of the other women, shows the woman's marginalized condition. And then Jesus speaks to her. He doesn't avert His eyes and look away. He doesn't condemn her. By taking the initiative to speak kindly to the woman, Jesus overcomes social stereotypes and treats her with a level of dignity she probably had never experienced.

- 3. Jesus overwhelmed her with acceptance.** More astonishing than the fact that Jesus spoke to her was what He said. Jesus asked for her help. According to the tradition of the Jews, drinking from the cup of a Gentile would make Jesus ceremonially unclean. Jesus' request for a drink from her cup was an act of true compassion. By willingly drinking from her cup, Jesus did not treat her as if she were unclean. She was clean enough for Holiness Incarnate to put His lips to her cup.

Jesus stepped into her world, spoke to her, and drank from her cup. Each act showered this sexually broken woman with God's love, affirming her value and worth. If we are to be like Jesus, we must find ways to pour affirmation into the souls of our sexually confused or broken friends, to give them a sense of worth and a sense of dignity as those made in the image of God.

Verses 10-26 describe how Jesus then led the Samaritan woman to discuss the need of her soul for the refreshing water that He could provide, His claim to be that soul-satisfying Messiah, and eventually, her own sexual sin. She came to faith and told her neighbors about Jesus. We read in John 4:39, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony."

What a story of the power of the gospel! It all started when Jesus refused to shun this sexually broken outcast but deliberately went into her world, took the initiative to befriend her, and flooded her

soul with acceptance. Only then did He raise spiritual issues and talk about her sin. (For a thrilling, current example of these principles being put into practice, see the story of Ken Smith, a former pastor of Syracuse Reformed Presbyterian Church, who reached out to Rosaria Butterfield, a lesbian feminist who came to faith in Christ.)³ As Christ's followers, we need to learn from His example!

SHEPHERDING OUR CHILDREN'S HEARTS TO ANCHOR THEM TO GOD'S TRUTH ABOUT SEXUALITY

Although the intent of this mini-book is to equip adults with a lot of information, it must be said that loving our children requires more than passing this information on to them. Good shepherding always begins with knowing your sheep. For parents, this means discovering what your teen thinks and feels about these issues. *You achieve this goal by asking questions.* What does he think about the transgender movement? What does she think about homosexuality? What has her experience been with lesbian friends? Does he think the biblical views are outdated? What does she think about male/female stereotypes? What do they think the Bible teaches about gender roles? It is only by asking questions and listening carefully to the answers and feelings behind the answers that we can help our children apply the truths of this mini-book to their lives.

Effective shepherding also focuses on the heart. This mini-book seeks to help parents shepherd their child's heart in three primary ways. First, it seeks to awaken compassion in the heart of both parent and child for the lost who stumble in the darkness without the light of God's truth concerning sexuality. Second, it seeks to create a quiet confidence in the heart of our children concerning the truth of God's Word regarding sexuality. Such heart-confidence prevents them from being defensive about the biblical view of sexuality and is

a prerequisite for them to genuinely love those who are not living up to God's design of sexuality. The third way this mini-book seeks to help adults shepherd the hearts of their children is by helping them celebrate the wonder of our Creator's design of His image-bearers as male and female and wholeheartedly embrace their calling to show the world godly manhood and womanhood.

One final aspect of shepherding our children's heart is worth mentioning. As adults, a big part of reaching our children's hearts is *letting them see our own*. My desire is that, as God moves in our hearts, we will show the rising generation that it is because of deep heart-trust in the Designer that we grieve for those who are sexually broken, knowing that falling short of God's design is always destructive and that Jesus is the only pathway to wholeness. My hope is that we will be vulnerable enough to let our children see our own personal struggles in sexual discipleship. My prayer is that our children will see that it is our heart-driven love for them and personal loyalty to Christ that make us want to see our sons and daughters glorify God by being all that He designed a godly male or female to be. May all who use this study be moved to lift their hearts in praise to the Designer of man as male and female.