

Male + Female

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[0 : 00] And as I mentioned, today we're going to consider the topic of male and female. And as you can imagine, it's a pretty massive topic. And so, potentially the sermon this morning could be a little bit more dense than usual.

I'm certainly going to employ a kind of theological reasoning which might require you to concentrate to be able to follow along. There aren't as many Bible verses compared to the previous weeks that we'll be referring to.

But again, some of them will appear on the screen. And I do assume a little bit of familiarity with the Bible in general. And if you do have a sermon outline in front of you, that could be an advantage in just helping to follow along.

But above all, we always need the author's help. We need the divine author's help. So let's go to him now. Heavenly Father, we just pray now that you would be speaking through this sermon this morning to reveal your will and your intentions for the human race.

We pray especially that we'll become more attuned to how you have designed us. And we just ask, Lord, that you help me to be clear, to be faithful, also to be compassionate, and to speak in the power and in the way of the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 16] And that you'll help all of us listening to be able to concentrate and to follow along. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Now, what does it mean to be male and female?

It used to be so simple. If you check whether you had a Y chromosome or not, and whether you had certain reproductive organs and external anatomy, that would sort you into either category.

But no longer, so it seems. In 2015, the cover of the magazine Vanity Fair featured a former Decathlon world record holder, Bruce Jenner, who won an Olympic gold medal in the 1970s. He was also known to younger generations through his appearances on the reality TV show Keeping Up with the Kardashians. But now, Jenner was wearing a dress, and splashed across the cover were the words, Call Me, Caitlyn.

From now on, Bruce identified as a woman, Caitlyn Jenner, and indeed would eventually undergo sex reassignment surgery two years later. And for many societal observers, that was a watershed moment, at least in the West.

[2 : 23] It was the point in mainstream culture where our definitions of male and female change. Well, maybe that's just the West, we might say. But let's go back one decade earlier.

In 2005, a big wedding was held right here in Kuching, at the Riverside Majestic. Nothing unusual about that, except that one of the parties getting married, Jessie Chung, Kuching Knight herself, was born as Jeffrey Chung.

Having felt tormented all his life, he eventually decided in 2003 to undergo several operations overseas to become a woman. And not surprisingly, her wedding two years later, which was blessed by several pastors, although it's not legally recognized here in Malaysia, sent many tongues wagging and made national headlines.

And I'm sure that's not the only story that we can hear in our local community. And so to adapt the famous opening line from the novel The Go-Between, we could say, the present is a foreign country, they do things differently now.

When it comes to questions of gender, many of us can feel like complete strangers in a brave new world. And if we throw in other cultural conversations, like those about toxic masculinity and radical feminism, then the fog surrounding just what it means to be male and female just gets ticker and ticker.

[3 : 51] And so how should Christians respond? Well, please do permit me to make some preliminary comments before we get into the Bible proper. Because I think it's really important not

just to get our theology, but our posture right in these conversations.

You see, I think Christians will be tempted to respond in one of the following four ways, all of which are unhelpful. The first way is to become an ostrich.

We bury our heads in the sand. We avoid the topic. We pretend the world hasn't changed. We get nostalgic about the past. We think that it's out there, far from us, not in here.

But becoming ostrich just doesn't make the subject go away. In fact, it might drive people away from the church. And it robs us of the opportunity to learn and to engage the world as followers of Jesus. The second way is to become zooplankton. Zooplankton, you might remember from your science classes, are those organisms that just drift along in the sea. They go with the flow.

[4 : 58] And for some of us, it's tempting to just go with the flow of our culture. Maybe it's the Bible that needs updating, we think. Now, it is good to search God's word afresh to check if our previous understanding of the scriptures are faulty.

But if we are changing our understanding simply to accommodate the latest cultural trend, what we are really doing is projecting our desires onto the Bible rather than letting the Bible speak on its own terms to us.

And when we don't do that, or rather when we do that, we don't hear God. We're just being zooplankton. The third way is to become a meal.

Meals are loud and stubborn. They charge around and they never budge their ground. And it's easy for some Christians to take this posture. They're quick to dismiss the issue, saying, come on lah, male-female.

So obvious, right? These people are just being stupid. And every news item on transgenderism is met with disdain. But is that how Jesus behaved when met with objections?

[6 : 07] No. He took time to listen, to engage, and to persuade without ever losing sight of the person in front of him. He was above all compassionate.

And the fourth way is to become a scaredy cat. We panic. Society is getting worse, we cry. We worry that the world is going to go down in flames and that our children especially are going to go down with it.

But when we take this posture, we forget that Jesus is still Lord, that his kingdom is still coming, and that his word is still sufficient to live attractive lives of godliness in this world.

And so what posture then should a Christian take? Let me suggest a fifth way. Christians should be guide dogs. What do guide dogs do?

Well, they lead those who are visually impaired. They help those lost in the fog to find their way and arrive at their destination. They are faithful creatures, and they offer support and security to those that they guide.

[7 : 18] And that's what Christians can be. We want to be creatures of faithfulness, confidently offering guidance on what to make of this strange new world by pointing to biblical truth.

And yet we never do so arrogantly, but with gentleness and kindness. And so this morning, I'll try to be a guide dog. It will be impossible to try to engage every cultural conversation surrounding gender this morning, and I wouldn't attempt that.

I actually wrote a longer version of today's sermon, but I realized that there was just way too much in it, and so I cut out some major portions. But what I hope to do is to give you the big picture.

And I hope to give you some foundational building blocks of what the Bible says about being male and female so that we can begin to build a proper theological framework. And as we go along, I will try to put the Bible in conversation from time to time with some of these hot topics.

And I know there will be specific questions people might have, especially pastoral ones, that I wouldn't be able to deal with, but feel free to ask more beyond this sermon.

[8 : 33] But we need the overall framework, because without it, we can't engage meaningfully with specific questions or situations. And so let's get started.

And here's building block number one. We live in God's embodied reality, not ours. Now what do you think might be the most foundational verse when it comes to thinking about gender?

It might not be what you expect. Here it is. Genesis 1 verse 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Why is that so important? Well, you see, what most people don't realise is that underlying all our discussions on gender is actually this question.

Who gets to decide? Who gets to define male and female? Just last week, my alma mater sent out a survey for their alumni to fill out, which I did, mostly because I wanted to win the prize that was offered in the lucky draw.

[9 : 39] But at the end of the survey, they asked me to provide my personal details, the usual stuff, you know, my name, what year I graduated, that kind of thing.

But this time around, there was a new question. What is your preferred pronoun? Is it he, him? She, her? They, them?

And that simple question reveals a very important assumption. It assumes that in the end, I get to define whether I'm male or female or something else.

I'm the final authority. But that is not the assumption of the Bible. Before there was gender and sexuality, there was God.

He was right there before the beginning. And in Genesis 1, notice that it is God who gets to name and define reality. He says, let there be light.

[10 : 40] And there was light. And he called the light day. He names it. He says, let the land produce vegetation. And it was so. He spoke the world into being and so he defines its shape.

He's the final authority. Or as Romans 11 verse 36 puts it, from him and through him and for him are all things.

And that extends to us as human beings. God gets to name and define us. He gives to us our shape. And the point we want to make here is that he gives to us an embodied shape.

That's what we explored in detail last week. And the form of our bodies take a particular shape. What Genesis 1.27 calls male and female.

And Genesis 2 verse 7 tells us that God didn't just create a non-physical self called Adam and then put it in an androgynous human body. Instead, he fashioned a male body and brought it to life as Adam.

[11 : 55] Similarly, in Genesis 2 verse 22, the woman was fashioned from the man with a female body, one which is capable of uniting with a male in Genesis 2 verse 24.

It's not androgynous. It has a specific form. What this means is that when it comes to defining our gender, the Bible treats our bodies as essential.

It is our sex bodies with those particular anatomical features that define us as male and female.

After all, when a baby is delivered, assuming we didn't know beforehand, what's the first thing we usually say?

It's a boy. It's a girl. And it's the body's sex. The same body that is fearfully and wonderfully made by God that helps us know whether we're male or female.

It is not the behavior or the mind of the baby that determines that. Remember last week that we learned that your body is not accidental?

[13 : 13] Well, that applies to gender as well. And this understanding, of course, is what we've taken for granted. But to understand what is happening today, what we need to realize is that the biblical paradigm is no longer the consensus.

Increasingly, we are no longer encouraged to think of our gender as being determined by the objective reality of our biological sex. Rather, we are now encouraged to think of our gender identity as determined by our subjective perception.

gender is what's between your ears, not what's between your legs. It's to do with your psychology, not your biology.

Or listen to how Sam Aubrey puts it. The Bible says, your body is your sexual identity. Let your mind be conformed to it. But our culture says, your psychology is your sexual identity.

Let your body be conformed to it. And so in some ways, you could say Genesis 1 verse 1 is arguably the most counter cultural verse in the Bible.

[14 : 30] You see, today we're constantly being told over and over and over again, be true to the self you feel you are on the inside.

That is the only way to thrive as a human being. Don't let anyone else stop you. In other words, we get to define who we are.

And if our biological sex hinders us from expressing who we think we are, then it's our body that's the problem, not our perceptions. And if someone tries to stop you from fully expressing your felt gender identity, then that is considered unjust.

That's considered hateful. That's considered a justice issue. But Genesis 1 reminds us, there is such a thing as reality.

And that reality is defined by God, not by us. It's a reality where we come into this world as beings with particular kinds of bodies.

[15 : 36] And God says, when we choose to embrace this sex body as a good gift, rather than fashion and alternative identity for ourselves, and that is where we'll find true freedom because we're conforming to how he made this world.

And so the underlying question becomes, do we take God at his word or do we not? Do we trust him or do we choose to listen to the serpent who whispers to us, did God really say that this is the way?

For if we choose to rename and redefine what God has already named and defined, the Bible has a word for that.

And it's not freedom. It's rebellion. It's subjugation. Now I hasten to add here that for some I recognize that their current lived reality is that they don't feel like their body is a gift.

And we'll see why that is so later on in this sermon. But that's not what I'm talking about here. I'm talking about calculated choices to go against how God has made this world.

[17 : 01] But of course this isn't all that the Bible has to say. We come now to building block number two. We complement one another to fulfill God's calling.

God designed human beings as a binary. Genesis 1 verse 27 makes that plain. There is only male and female. There's nothing else.

Jesus himself affirms this binary nature. In a debate with the Pharisees about divorce in Matthew 19 verses 4 to 5 on the screen, Jesus himself quotes Genesis 1 verse 27 and 2 verse 24.

Haven't you read? He replied that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

In other words, Jesus still considers God's original design of humans as male and female to be normative thousands of years later.

[18 : 11] That's why he employs it in his debate. It's still binding. It hasn't changed. Notice that doesn't leave room for a third sex. There is no spectrum.

There is no evolution. Now, this immediately raises the questions of those with intersex conditions. Intersex, for those of you who are unfamiliar with the terminology, is different from transgender.

It is an umbrella term referring to a number of physical conditions where a person is born with sex characteristics whereby they are not always clearly identifiable as male or female.

And Jesus does acknowledge their existence. In Matthew 19 verse 12, he will make reference to several kinds of eunuchs, including those who are born from birth.

And those are what we might call intersex today. But even then, Jesus and the Bible as a whole resist classifying them as a third sex.

[19 : 19] Isaiah consistently uses male pronouns to refer to them. And so, such people might not fit neatly into the binary, but they don't dissolve the binary.

But why is there this binary? You see, the word binary often comes with negative connotations.

Hear the word binary and we immediately think of things that are opposed to one another.

Cats and dogs, Manchester United and Liverpool, MCA and DAP. But when the Bible says we are created male and female, we are not meant to think of them as being opposed to one another.

Rather, we are to see male and female as ordered and wonderfully complementary. You see, order and complementarity are written into the fabric of creation itself.

I wonder, did you notice the world God made has an order to it? There is an intelligent arrangement to creation. Nine times in Genesis 1, we hear some version of the phrase, according to its kind.

[20 : 34] God's creatures have a specific form and shape of existence. Birds have wings and sea creatures have things that enable them to live in the sea. And so they can be grouped into kinds.

There is a certain ordering which is inbuilt into our world. But more than that, there is a certain complementarity to it. God tends to make things in pairs.

Light and darkness, land and sea, sun and moon, the heavens and the earth. And notice how these pairings tend to work. When we look at the days of creation, for instance, we notice that what he makes in days 1 to 3 tend to correspond to days 4 to 6.

So for example, on day 1, God makes the realm, if we can call it that, of day and night. And then in day 4, he fills that realm of day and night with the sun and the moon.

Or on day 3, God makes the land and vegetation. And so on day 6, he fills that land with animals and ultimately human beings.

[21 : 51] And this inbuilt order and complementarity extends to humanity. Come with me again to Genesis 1, verse 27.

We discover first that God created mankind in his own image. And that's the kind of creature we are. That's where we fit in God's created order.

That's what differentiates us from the animals. We are God's image bearers. But what God says next is really striking. Right after God proclaims mankind as being made in his own image, the first thing he then says about us is that we are created male and female.

Male and female he created them. And this is the very first time in the whole Bible we hear mention of gender.

Now right before humans, God created the animals. And we know that animals have gender too. They are made male and female. But that is never highlighted about them.

[22 : 58] It's not a big deal for non-humans. But here in Genesis 1 verse 27, once it is established that we are both made in the image of God, it is the very first thing that is said about us.

Why? Well, it's as if Genesis is signalling to us. If God only created men or if God only created women, there is a sense in which we won't be able to fully showcase the image of God in the way God intends.

Now, of course, men individually and women individually fully bear the image of God. In Genesis 5 verse 3, it's made clear that Adam's son Seth on his own is made in God's image.

And yet, it's only together as men and women that collectively we can truly, fully reflect God in all his splendor.

And if God only created men or if God only created women, there would be no opportunity to complete the task that he's given to us together.

[24 : 16] Look at Genesis 1 verse 27, verse 28 rather. 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 underground. And that job requires more than one human being.

And so that is why we have the account of Genesis 2. In chapter 2 verse 18, God says that it is not good for man to be alone. He needs a suitable helper to work and take care of the garden.

And so God brings Adam to sea and to name all the animals. But we're told they're not suitable, they're not of the same kind as Adam.

He needs another human being. But notice then that God doesn't just make another man. It is a woman who is suitable.

[25 : 21] The word translated suitable here in the Hebrew word is *kinekdo*, which is actually a compound word. That means it's made up of two Hebrew words. And it literally means something like like yet opposite.

The woman is like Adam and yet at the same time opposite to him. She's different from him in such a way that makes them fit one another.

They complement one another. And that's why the Christian Standard Bible translates Genesis 2 verse 18 this way. I will make a helper corresponding to him.

I think that's an excellent way to phrase it. And that is seen perhaps most clearly in their physical biology. That is why they are able to procreate and begin the task of starting a family and thus forming the building blocks of human society who will rule the world as God's image bearers.

And so what we have here is something better than mere sameness. We have complementarity and we have unity.

[26 : 37] Being male and female is fundamental to bearing God's image and fulfilling our calling. And when this design is subverted, the world begins to be bent out of shape.

And what this tells us clearly is that guys and girls need each other. We are not the same, but we're meant to be together.

We are interdependent on each other. We are made to interact with each other. We can't make it on our own. There is no place for idolising our own sex.

There is no place in the Christian worldview for males or females to think that they're perfect. fine on their own. In Greek mythology, as described by the Greek poet Hesiod, women are a kind of accidental creation, one forged out of the rage of the Greek god Zias, who made women as a kind of revenge on mankind, calling her a beautiful, evil thing.

Hesiod is implying then that men were better off by themselves and were inflicted by women. And that kind of misogynic thinking still lives on in our world today, sadly speaking.

[27 : 59] But how far that is from the Bible's story? I'll take some forms of radical feminism today. Feminism is a very elastic term which means many different things.

The historians of feminism will tell you about first wave and second wave and third wave feminism, all of which advocate for very different things, some of which Christians should support.

But there are some versions of feminism that don't just advocate for equality of opportunity for women, but for men as a category to be eradicated.

But that is not what the Bible advocates. The Bible's view is that men and women are made for relationship with one another, and not just as husband and wife, but as brothers and sisters, cousins, friends, colleagues, teachers and students, and so on.

And when they come together, there is a unique and beautiful dynamic that is brought out, which we won't see if it was only just guys or only girls.

[29 : 12] And so in church ministry, we need men and women working together. In Romans 16, Paul thanks all his partners in ministry.

But what is striking about that list is how men and women both populate that list. He talks about the men who have stood the test and the women who have worked hard in the Lord.

He talks about the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila as a team who have earned the gratitude of the Gentile church. And I thank God for the ministry of the women in our church.

We can't do without them. And we also need what might be termed both masculine and feminine traits. In 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul tells us verse 7 that he longs to be like a mother who cares and nurtures her children.

And then in verse 12, to be like a father who encourages, comforts, and exhorts. But why is it that we experience gender as an area of much pain and confusion today?

[30 : 25] Well, that takes us now to building block number 3. Disorder and dysfunction affect our gendered selves. The Bible makes clear that the 4 makes a big impact on us, not just generically, but specifically as male and female.

We see this almost immediately. Look at what sin does to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, verse 16. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.

And so clearly, relational strife has now been introduced to male-female relationships.

Complementarity has turned into competition and dysfunction.

Guys and girls misunderstand one another, hurt one another, overreach in the way they try to influence one another by manipulating one another.

Gender stereotypes are now perpetuated in such a way that they cause real frustration, introducing unhealthy ways in which we define ourselves and each other.

[31 : 35] Gender discrimination can be embedded into our social structures in a way that is clearly unjust. And as we saw last week, the impact of the fall isn't just relational.

Amongst other things, our bodies become disordered. Romans 8, verse 20 says we have been subject to frustration and are in bondage to decay.

And that accounts for, amongst other things, the existence of the intersex condition. No part of our existence has been left untouched by the fall, including the sexuality of our bodies.

But the fall does not just disorder our bodies, the fall disorders our minds. Ephesians 4, verse 18 says that we are darkened in our understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in us due to the hardening of our hearts.

So it is not just our bodies that are unreliable, but our minds. And that is true of every single one of us. We see it in the spiral of dark thoughts that sometimes fill our minds, the way we misinterpret situations, and even the way we misinterpret our own bodies, as those with eating disorders will tell you.

[33 : 03] We see it in the way we think that living up to certain stereotypes of masculinity or femininity will win us acceptance. And for a number of people, the way that is manifested is by having a gap between the perception of their own gender and the body that they have.

And it's not because that they are weirder than all of us. It's just that they experience what affects all of us in this particular way.

And so that's how the Bible makes sense of gender dysphoria as it is now called. It is an effect of the four. Whereas the world assumes that our self-perception is indisputably correct.

And that we simply need to make our body catch up with our mind. The Bible helps us to view what is happening through a different lens. It is our minds that have gone wrong.

And that should cause us to be more compassionate. We might not know exactly what it's like to be in the shoes of someone struggling with their gender identity. But we do understand why they are struggling.

[34 : 23] they are simply dealing with life in a fallen world. Earlier I mentioned the story of Jessie Chung. And Jessie mentioned in a Bonio Post interview a couple of years ago how hurt she was by all the criticism that she's received.

She said, it's not as if I deliberately chose to feel this way. And she's right. She didn't. But the difference is, Christians can offer her an alternative story to the one the world gave her.

The story the world gave her was that she had no choice but to undergo surgery to live a happy life, to follow her mind. But our story is that she can find life in remaining faithful to God's design as she rests in an identity found in Christ.

Because here is building block number four. Jesus can restore God's masterpieces. The Christian bioethicist John Wyatt talks about Christianity being all about art restoration.

If you see a piece of art and you're asked to restore it, what you don't do is you add to the work.

What you do instead is you restore the artwork so that it respects the artist's original intention.

[35 : 45] you study the work and the painter so that you know what he's trying to bring out in the painting. You make sure to clean it carefully and restore its colours vividly so that people can enjoy the painting in all its original glory.

And that's what Jesus is all about. He's into art restoration and we're the masterpieces. Jesus wants to restore us to our original glory.

So that we might then reflect the glory of the one who made us. As the theologian Herman Baving says, Christianity does not create a new cosmos but rather makes the cosmos new.

It restores what was corrupted by sin. It atones the guilty and cures what is sick, the wounded it heals. and that's what Jesus can offer.

When we come to him, as 1 Corinthians 6 verse 11 reminds us, we are no longer what we once were. We are no longer defined by our struggles, our failures, our confusion.

[36 : 57] Now that doesn't mean we don't struggle anymore, fall anymore, or get confused anymore. That doesn't mean that our struggles with gender are no longer present, whether that's gender dysphoria, or just even struggling with feeling unmanly or unwomanly at times.

Because, listen to what Galatians 3 verse 26 to 29 says, So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Now this is the wonderful affirmation of the gospel. In Christ Jesus, you are now children of God by faith. You are clothed with Christ. That means that when it comes to your relationship with God, your ethnicity, and your social station, and yes, your gender doesn't come into play.

They don't elevate you to a place closer to God, or relegate you to a place further away from God. God doesn't look at you and judge you by how much of a man or woman you feel you are.

[38 : 26] In Christ, even if you are a guy who is not into sports and cars and barbecues, or a girl who is not into pink dresses and Korean dramas, you have an equal stake in Christ.

You share in the same blessing. Your standing before God is not defined by gender stereotypes. And so Galatians 3 relativizes the importance of gender.

At the same time, it doesn't obliterate it. Remember, Jesus is into art restoration. And so although occasionally people take Galatians 3 verse 28 to mean that male-female distinctions have completely disappeared, that is not quite right.

In context, Paul is not saying that sexual or gender difference ceases to matter, but that they are fulfilled in Christ. For in Christ, we are now one.

In other words, it is not so much that men and women have now become exactly the same, but that they have been brought together in Christ.

[39 : 40] Just like how it was originally designed. Just like how it was back in the garden. Indeed, it is better than it was in the garden because now in Christ, they are spiritual offspring.

The job of Adam and Eve as male and female to be fruitful and multiply is now being fulfilled because people who are being renewed to conform to the image of their Creator are being multiplied because people are coming to faith and becoming Christians.

And as those clothed with Christ, that means we must keep putting off the old self and putting on the new self. That's the definition of someone clothed with Christ.

The world assumes that all desires are good and should be met. But the Bible teaches that not all our desires are right and some are to be resisted.

They belong with the old self. That means those who experience same-sex attraction have to resist feelings that encourage them to get sexually involved with a person of the same gender.

[41 : 04] That means those who experience gender dysphoria have to resist feelings that encourage them to see themselves as anything other than the sex of their birth because those feelings belong.

with the old self. Now, that can be very, very difficult. Agonizing at times. I've had the privilege of walking with people with same-sex attraction, although not gender dysphoria.

And I know, it really is a real struggle. And the Bible does not promise that these feelings would necessarily go away over our lifetime. It might very well be that this is the cross that one is called to take up and follow.

And I'm so encouraged when I walk with some of my brothers and sisters in Christ who experience same-sex attraction and watch them persevere as they maintain their fidelity to Jesus.

But it's not all bad news. It's good news because here is the hope you can have. The body you were created with will be the body you will be raised with.

[42 : 22] But when that body is raised on that final day, it will now feel exactly like the body you were made for.

That is amazing, isn't it? Never again will there be a sense of mismatch, of incongruence. this is the hope of the gospel.

I hope there is someone out there who needs to hear that today. But to hold on to this hope, Christian community is essential. Again, to go back to Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2, we need guys and girls acting as spiritual fathers and mothers, encouraging spiritual sons and daughters as they care and nurture for them, as they encourage, comfort, and urge them on to live for Jesus.

Remember, our aim is art restoration too. And so we want to help each other to live up to our original calling as those made in the image of God. And we do so as brothers and sisters in Christ. If you go back and read places like 1 Timothy 5 verse 1 to 2 and Titus 2 verse 1 to 10, notice how Paul assumes that the household of God will be one where healthy, multi-gendered relationships will be taking place.

[43 : 40] Where we challenge each other over our sin, but we also bear each other's burdens. We want the household of God to be a place where we don't perpetuate unhelpful gender stereotypes.

But where we can help each other to be men who will be the best sons, the best fathers, and the best brothers, not just biological, but also spiritual, that they can be.

And where we can help women to be the best daughters, the best mothers, and the best sisters, again not just biological, but also spiritual, that they can be.

Now, I'm sure there's more that we can say, and I admit it was really tough at times to work out how to bring out the Bible's teaching today on male and female in a way that is accessible and knowing what to include or what to exclude.

But as I mentioned, there are always opportunities to continue this conversation beyond this sermon. And if there are issues today that you're struggling with, please do speak to someone, whether that's me or an elder or home fellowship group leader.

[44 : 51] But I hope that some foundational building blocks are now in place. But let me just briefly put in one more block for you. Let me point you to where all this is heading. So here's building block number five.

The fact that we're created male and female point towards our happy ending. In Genesis 1 verse 1, we're told that God created the heavens and the earth. That's the beginning of the creation account.

And the climax of that account is reached in Genesis 2 verse 24, when we find that men and women have now become one flesh. They are united together. Ephesians 5 then tells us that this is actually a picture of Jesus and his church.

Now turn with me to Revelation 21, the very end of the Bible. And once again, we read about the heavens and the earth. Except this time, notice, they are united.

The new Jerusalem is being brought down to this earth. And that reveals to us that the ultimate marriage, the one between Jesus and his people, is finally taking place.

[46 : 01] and so everything, heaven and earth, God with his people, are now united in Christ for eternity. And that is why God gave us a male-female pairing.

For as they complement one another, and as they unite themselves with each other, they ultimately point towards God and to what he's going to do.

In other words, God didn't just make gender arbitrarily. He made maleness and femaleness as a way to tell us that what the end of our story is going to be in Christ.

There's going to be one out of the two as everything is united under Jesus. And so let us live out this calling.

Let us seek to fully image the God we worship as male and female together. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we come again this morning, I pray that your word would have been understood and not just understood, Lord, but absorbed as well.

[47 : 25] As we ponder again, just how perfect your design is, the way that you have designed us human beings to be male and female, will you help us every day to just grasp more and more what it means to be made in your image of God as male and female, and to seek to live up to that image as we look to complement one another and as we seek to be godly together.

Father, this morning, I don't know if there's anyone who is struggling with different ways in their gender, whether that's just struggles to do with feeling like a guy or feeling like a girl according to our society standards, or whether perhaps a little bit more disconcertingly whether anyone at all is experiencing gender dysphoria or something of that nature, will you help them to see that you offer a better story, that if we inhabit your story and live in line with your story, that is the best story we could possibly be in, a story with a happy ending.

So I pray, Lord, that for anyone struggling in that area, please, Lord, will you help them to find support, will you help them to find ways, Lord, in which they are able to keep living for you.

And may we be able to help those like that as well. Please help us to be that household of God that you envision for us, where guys and girls can be interacting with one another in a healthy way and in a way that builds each other up.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Well, we're going to spend some extended time singing now. We're going to sing of God, our creator, who made the laws of space and time and then we'll sing about that glorious day that we can look forward to.

[49 : 34] Sure.