

# FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

*Systematic Theology Series*

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## ANTHROPOLOGY

*The Doctrine of Humanity*

*Created, Fallen, and Redeemable — What It Means to Be Human Before God*

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### UNIT 6

**Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Gender**

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#### Lesson 17

## Male and Female He Created Them

**The Biblical Doctrine of Gender**

*“Gender as a Creation Ordinance, Not a Social Construct”*

*Key Texts: Genesis 1:27; 5:2; Matthew 19:4–6; Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Corinthians 11:7–12*

*“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

**Genesis 1:27, NASB 1995**

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## Introduction

Unit 6 turns to the most intimately human and the most culturally contested terrain in the entire Anthropology series: human sexuality, marriage, and gender. The five units that precede it have established the theological foundations upon which this unit builds, the very good creation, the image of God in male and female, the complementary design of the human creature, the original righteousness of the pre-fall state, and the covenantal framework within which human life before God is ordered. Unit 6 draws on all of these foundations and applies them to the questions that the contemporary culture has made most urgent and most contested: what does it mean to be male or female, what is marriage, what does complementary relationship between the sexes look like, and how does the church navigate the collision between the biblical account of human sexuality and the sexual revolution's comprehensive reframing of every one of these questions.

Lesson 17 opens the unit with the most foundational question: what is gender, and where does it come from? The contemporary cultural consensus, now enshrined in law, enforced by institutional pressure, and proclaimed in the educational and media environments that form the next generation, answers this question with the claim that gender is a social construct, a spectrum of self-identified experience that may or may not correspond to the biological sex of the body, and a matter of personal autonomy over which the individual has sovereign authority. The biblical answer to the same question is categorically different: gender is a creation ordinance, established by the creative act of God in Genesis 1:27, reflecting the divine design, carrying the divine authority, and constituting the human creature's creaturely identity in a way that neither the individual's subjective experience nor the culture's evolving consensus can undo or redefine.

This lesson proceeds in six sections. We begin with Genesis 1:27's foundational affirmation of the binary sexual distinction as a divine creative act. We then examine the goodness of gender, what it means that both masculinity and femininity are expressions of the image of God, neither superior and neither dispensable. The third section addresses the contemporary challenge of gender ideology directly, presenting the theological and anthropological case against the social construction of gender and the self-identification model. The fourth section addresses the collapse of the egalitarian model, the attempt to honor gender equality while eliminating gender distinction, showing that the distinction between male and female is not merely biological but theological and cannot be dissolved without loss of something the Creator designed as good. The fifth section addresses the pastoral question of gender dysphoria with the combination of theological clarity and pastoral compassion that the gospel demands. We close with the eschatological dimension: whether gender survives the resurrection and what the new creation's affirmation of embodied existence implies for the permanence of the male-female distinction.

A note on the tone of this lesson is necessary. The questions addressed in Unit 6 are questions about which people in the congregation and in the wider community experience genuine and deep personal pain, confusion, and vulnerability. The clarity of the biblical testimony on the definition and the goodness of gender does not eliminate the pastoral complexity of ministering to those for whom the biblical teaching creates genuine suffering or genuine conflict between their experienced identity and the identity the Scriptures affirm. This lesson holds biblical clarity and pastoral compassion together, not as competing values but as complementary expressions of the same love for image-bearers whose deepest flourishing depends on both. The church that abandons clarity in the name of compassion has abandoned the very thing that makes genuine compassion possible; and the church that abandons compassion in the name of clarity has abandoned the spirit in which the truth must always be spoken.

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## I. Genesis 1:27: The Binary Distinction as Divine Creative Act

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### *The Most Foundational Statement About Gender in All of Scripture*

#### A. Male and Female He Created Them

Genesis 1:27 is the most foundational text for the biblical doctrine of gender, and its theological content is denser than its brevity might suggest: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (NASB 1995). Three features of the verse demand careful attention. First, the subject of the creative act: it is God who creates, not culture, not biology, not the social arrangements of ancient Near Eastern patriarchy, and not the subjective self-understanding of the individual creature. The male-female distinction is established by a divine creative act, which means it carries the authority of the Creator and cannot be undone, modified, or transcended by any creaturely agency. Second, the scope of the creative act: the verse says that God created man (the human creature, humanity as a species) in the divine image, and then immediately specifies the form in which that humanity was created, “male and female.” The male-female distinction is not a supplementary detail added to the creation of the human creature; it is the form in which humanity itself is created. There is no gender-undifferentiated human creature that subsequently divides into male and female; the human creature is created as male and female, in that differentiated form, from the moment of its creation.

Third, the verse’s placement within the Genesis 1 creation narrative establishes the male-female distinction as a creation ordinance, a structural feature of the created order established by God before the fall, before the law, before any human cultural development, and therefore carrying the authority and the permanence of the creation itself. Genesis 5:2 reinforces this point by repeating the creation affirmation: “He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created” (NASB 1995). The repetition of the creation statement in the genealogical context establishes that the male-female distinction is not a pre-narrative mythological symbol but a historical feature of the created order, as enduring and as historically grounded as the genealogical record it introduces. The male-female distinction is as old as humanity itself, because it is constitutive of humanity itself: there has never been a human being who was not either male or female, because the male-female distinction is the form in which the Creator made the human being.

Jesus’ citation of Genesis 1:27 in Matthew 19:4–6 is the most important New Testament affirmation of the creation-ordinance character of the male-female distinction. When challenged about divorce, Jesus grounds His answer not in the Mosaic law (which He proceeds to qualify) but in the creation narrative: “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?” (Matthew 19:4–5, NASB 1995). Jesus treats the creation’s male-female distinction as the permanent, authoritative foundation of the entire biblical account of marriage and human sexuality, a foundation that Mosaic concessions do not set aside and that human cultural developments do not supersede. The authority Jesus attributes to Genesis 1:27 is the authority of the Creator’s own creative act, which He regards as more binding than any subsequent legal or cultural arrangement. This Christological affirmation of Genesis 1:27 is the most decisive possible confirmation that the male-female distinction is a creation ordinance whose authority is not subject to cultural revision.

#### B. Gender as Biological, Theological, and Personal

The biblical doctrine of gender is not reducible to any single dimension of the male-female distinction. It is simultaneously biological (the sexed body, with its chromosomal, hormonal, anatomical, and reproductive specificity), theological (the divine creative act that establishes the distinction and the divine design that it expresses), and personal (the individual human being’s identity as male or female, which is constitutive of what the person is rather than merely a biological fact the person has). The contemporary debate about gender has generated a series of conceptual distinctions, most importantly the distinction between biological sex (the body’s physical characteristics) and gender (the individual’s subjective sense of identity), that the biblical account does

not support and cannot accommodate without distorting the integrated account of the human creature that the Scriptures provide.

The biblical account of the human creature, as the preceding units of this series have established, is an account of a whole person, body and soul together, each genuinely constitutive of what the person is. The sexed body is not a biological accident that the soul inhabits and that may or may not correspond to the soul's subjective sense of its own identity; it is part of the whole-person identity that the Creator designed, formed, and declared very good. Genesis 1:27's declaration that God created the human being as male and female refers to the whole person, the embodied, ensouled, image-bearing creature in its specific creaturely form, not merely to the body's chromosomal or anatomical characteristics. The male-female distinction is a whole-person distinction, encoded in the body's biological specificity and expressed in every dimension of the person's existence: in the structure and the capacity of the body, in the relational orientations and the vocational callings that the Scriptures associate with maleness and femaleness, and in the complementary relationship between the two that Genesis 2 describes as the completion of the image of God in the full human community.

The distinctives of male and female as the Scriptures describe them are not merely biological functions; they are expressions of the image of God in the two complementary forms in which God chose to create the human creature. The male and the female are not two parallel tracks of the same generic humanity; they are two different expressions of the same *imago Dei*, each displaying dimensions of the divine character that the other does not display in the same way, and each requiring the other for the full expression of the human image of God that Genesis 1:27 envisions. This is not the diminishment of either sex; it is the affirmation that both are necessary, both are good, and both together constitute the fully adequate human embodiment of the divine image that God declared very good in Genesis 1:31.

*“He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.”*

**Matthew 19:4, NASB 1995**

## II. The Goodness of Gender: Masculinity and Femininity as Expressions of the *Imago Dei*

*Neither Superior, Neither Deficient, Neither Interchangeable*

### A. *The Equal Dignity and Distinct Expression of Male and Female*

The affirmation that both masculinity and femininity are expressions of the image of God, and therefore that both are genuinely good, genuinely necessary, and genuinely valuable in the sight of the Creator, is the theological foundation for the biblical account of gender's goodness. This affirmation has two inseparable dimensions that must be held together with equal conviction: the equal dignity of male and female as image-bearers, and the genuine distinction between the two as different expressions of that shared dignity. To affirm the equal dignity without the genuine distinction is the egalitarian collapse that Section IV will address; to affirm the genuine distinction without the equal dignity is the patriarchal diminishment that the biblical testimony explicitly rejects. The biblical account holds both together, and the holding of both together is what makes the biblical doctrine of gender both theologically rich and culturally counter-cultural.

Galatians 3:28's declaration that in Christ Jesus “there is neither male nor female” (NASB 1995) is sometimes misread as the abolition of the male-female distinction in the community of faith. But as the series established in Lesson 4, this verse is addressing the equal standing of male and female before God in the matter of justification, the equal access of all human beings to the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Christ Jesus, not the abolition of the created distinction between male and female. The equal standing before God in justification is

entirely compatible with and indeed presupposes the created distinction between male and female: both the male and the female stand equally before God because both equally bear the image of God, and the image-bearing status that grounds the equal standing before God is the same status that expresses itself in the two complementary forms of male and female. Galatians 3:28 eliminates the spiritual hierarchy between male and female; it does not eliminate the created distinction.

The goodness of gender, the specific goodness of masculinity as a good expression of the divine image and the specific goodness of femininity as a good expression of the divine image, is a conviction that the contemporary culture has largely abandoned and that the church must recover and celebrate with theological confidence and pastoral warmth. The cultural abandonment of gender's goodness takes two forms: the egalitarian form, which regards the distinction between male and female as at best irrelevant and at worst oppressive, and the gender-ideology form, which regards the specific expression of maleness or femaleness in the body as potentially alien to the authentic self and therefore subject to correction by medical intervention. Both forms share the same underlying assumption: that gender, as a differentiated expression of the human creature's identity, is not genuinely good but is at best neutral and at worst harmful. The biblical doctrine of gender's goodness, rooted in the very good verdict of Genesis 1:31 applied to the male-female distinction, is the direct and comprehensive counter-affirmation to both forms of the cultural abandonment.

## **B. *The Specific Goodness of Masculine and Feminine Distinctives***

The goodness of gender is not merely the goodness of the male-female distinction in the abstract; it is the goodness of the specific, embodied, characteristically masculine and characteristically feminine ways of being human that the Scriptures consistently describe and celebrate. The Scriptures do not merely affirm that males and females exist; they affirm that there are characteristic ways of being male and characteristic ways of being female that are expressions of the divine design and that carry the Creator's commendation. The strength and the provision-orientation of the husband and father, the nurture and the life-sustaining orientation of the wife and mother, the specific forms of leadership and care and relationship that characterize masculinity and femininity in the Scriptures' consistent portrayal, these are not cultural stereotypes to be deconstructed but creaturely expressions of the complementary divine design to be understood, celebrated, and embodied.

1 Corinthians 11:7–12 provides one of the most theologically rich New Testament accounts of the relationship between male and female as distinct but interdependent expressions of the image of God. Paul writes: "For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God" (NASB 1995). The passage holds simultaneously the asymmetry of origin (woman from man) and the interdependence of existence (man through woman) in a way that refuses both the subordinationist diminishment of the female and the egalitarian erasure of the distinction. Male and female are distinct in their origin, their function, and their expression of the divine image; and they are interdependent in their existence, their dignity, and their common derivation from God.

The specific goodness of masculine and feminine distinctives is not primarily a function of cultural expression, the specific forms in which different cultures have embodied the male-female distinction, but of the creational design that underlies and informs the cultural expressions. The specific forms of masculine strength and leadership, feminine wisdom and nurture, and the complementary relationship between the two that the Scriptures describe as the divine pattern for human flourishing are not imposed cultural constraints on a gender-undifferentiated human nature; they are the creaturely expressions of a divine design that was declared very good and that the fall has corrupted but not annihilated. Part of the church's task in the contemporary moment is to distinguish between the creational design and its cultural distortions, between the genuine masculinity and the genuine femininity that the Scriptures commend and the toxic masculinity and the distorted femininity that the fall has produced, and to

hold up the genuinely good creaturely expression of the male-female distinction as the standard toward which the gospel's work of renewal is moving.

### III. Against Gender Ideology: The Biblical Response to the Social Construction Thesis

*Why the Contemporary Claim That Gender Is a Matter of Self-Identification Is Irreconcilable with the Biblical Testimony*

#### A. The Gender Ideology Thesis and Its Anthropological Errors

Gender ideology, the contemporary intellectual and political movement that holds gender to be a social construct, a spectrum of self-identified experience, and a matter of personal autonomy, represents a comprehensive and systematic rejection of the biblical account of the human creature's sexual identity. Its core claims are: (1) that biological sex and gender identity are distinct categories, with biological sex referring to the body's physical characteristics and gender identity referring to the individual's subjective sense of her own gender; (2) that gender identity is determined by the individual's subjective experience rather than by the body's biological characteristics; (3) that gender is not binary but a spectrum along which individuals may locate themselves at any point; and (4) that authentic personhood requires the affirmation and expression of one's self-identified gender, including the medical and social modification of the body to align with the self-identified gender when they conflict. Each of these claims is irreconcilable with the biblical account of the human creature as a whole person, body and soul together, whose sexual identity is constituted by the Creator's creative act rather than by the individual's subjective experience.

The anthropological errors embedded in gender ideology are precisely the errors that the preceding units of this series have equipped the student to identify. Gender ideology is, at its deepest level, a Gnostic anthropology: it locates the authentic self in the inner, subjective, immaterial experience of gender identity and treats the body's biological characteristics as potentially alien to that authentic self, a material container that may or may not correspond to the authentic inner identity and that can and should be modified to conform to it. As the series established in Lesson 5, this Gnostic anthropology is the direct contradiction of the biblical doctrine of the goodness of the material creation and the whole-person constitution of the human creature. The body is not an arbitrary container for the soul; it is part of the whole-person identity that the Creator designed, and its biological sexual characteristics are part of that identity, not a contingent accident that the authentic self can transcend or override.

The social construction thesis, the claim that the categories of male and female are social constructs rather than creational realities, is equally irreconcilable with the biblical testimony. Genesis 1:27's declaration that God created the human being as male and female is not a description of ancient Israelite social arrangements; it is a statement about the divine creative act that established the binary sexual distinction as a permanent feature of the created order. If the male-female distinction is a social construct, then it is a human invention that could in principle be deconstructed and reconstructed differently; and the entire framework of the biblical teaching on marriage, complementarity, and the eschatological vision of the redeemed community from every nation and tribe and people and tongue would be built on an arbitrary cultural foundation that has no necessary connection to the nature of the human creature as God made it. The social construction thesis is not merely a theoretical alternative to the biblical account; it is the systematic dismantling of the theological foundation upon which the biblical account of human sexuality and marriage rests.

#### B. The Theological Case Against Bodily Modification to Align with Self-Identified Gender

The specific practice of medical transition, the use of hormonal treatments and surgical procedures to modify the body's biological sexual characteristics to align with the individual's self-identified gender, raises the most direct

and the most concrete form of the theological question that gender ideology poses. The question is not primarily a medical question (whether the procedures are effective at producing the desired psychological outcomes) or a social question (whether the individual's wellbeing is best served by affirmation and accommodation of the self-identified gender) but a theological one: is the body's biological sex a feature of the person's God-given identity that is to be received, honored, and inhabited, or is it a contingent biological fact that the person has legitimate authority to modify in pursuit of subjective alignment with a different self-identification?

The biblical doctrine of the body, as the Spirit's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19–20), as a component of the whole-person imago Dei (Lesson 7), as destined for resurrection in its glorified but sexually specific form (since the resurrection body is continuous with the mortal body it glorifies), provides the theological framework for a clear response: the body's biological sexual characteristics are part of the God-given identity that is to be received with gratitude, not a contingent accident to be surgically corrected. Deuteronomy 22:5's prohibition of cross-dressing, "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God" (NASB 1995), reflects the same theological principle in a specific cultural application: the deliberate confusion of the male-female distinction, the blurring of the boundary between masculine and feminine expression, is an offense against the Creator's design, not merely a violation of a cultural convention. The theological principle that underlies the specific prohibition is broader than its ancient Near Eastern application: the created male-female distinction is not to be deliberately obscured, blurred, or transgressed, because it is the expression of the Creator's design and carries the Creator's authority.

The pastoral response to those who have already undergone gender transition procedures must be one of genuine compassion, genuine truth-telling, and genuine hope. The compassion is genuine because the suffering that gender dysphoria produces is real and the desire for relief from that suffering is entirely understandable. The truth-telling is genuine because the pastoral care that does not speak the truth, that affirms what the Scriptures do not affirm, is not genuine care but a counterfeit that leaves the person in a false identity rather than helping them inhabit their God-given one. And the hope is genuine because the gospel is the power of God for the renewal of every dimension of the human person, including the dimension of sexual identity, and the work of the Spirit in the believer's life is moving toward the full conformity to the image of Christ that will be perfectly realized in the resurrection of the body in its God-given, glorified, and whole-person form.

*"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God."*

**Deuteronomy 22:5, NASB 1995**

## IV. Against Egalitarian Collapse: The Distinction Is Theological, Not Merely Biological

### *Why Honoring Gender Equality Requires Preserving Gender Distinction*

#### **A. The Egalitarian Error and Its Theological Root**

Egalitarianism, in its various forms, from the moderate egalitarianism that affirms equal dignity while denying meaningful male-female distinction in function and role, to the more radical egalitarianism that treats the male-female distinction as an obstacle to human flourishing that the gospel has rendered irrelevant, represents a different but equally serious departure from the biblical account of gender. Where gender ideology erases the distinction by subordinating the body's biological characteristics to the soul's subjective self-identification, egalitarianism erases the distinction by denying that the functional and relational differences between male and female have any theological significance. Both positions share the conviction that the male-female distinction

does not have the normative weight that the biblical account assigns to it; they differ only in the manner and the degree of the erasure they propose.

The theological root of the egalitarian error is the confusion of equal dignity with identical function and role. Galatians 3:28 declares the equal standing of male and female before God in the matter of justification; it does not declare the identity of male and female in every dimension of their existence, including the specific forms of relational order and vocational calling that the creation narrative establishes. The confusion of equality with identity, the inference from “male and female are equally image-bearers” to “male and female are therefore interchangeable in every function and role”, is a logical error that the Scriptures do not support. The Trinity itself is the theological model that exposes this error: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally divine, co-equal, co-eternal, co-essential in the divine nature, and yet they are not interchangeable in their personal roles and relations. The Son submits to the Father; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; and none of this asymmetry of relation constitutes an inequality of essence. The equal dignity of male and female is fully compatible with and indeed expresses itself through the genuine and God-given distinction of function, role, and relational ordering that the creation narrative establishes.

The specific egalitarian claim that the Pauline creation-order arguments for male-female distinctions in the family and the gathered church (1 Corinthians 11:7–12; 1 Timothy 2:12–13; Ephesians 5:22–24) are cultural accommodations to ancient patriarchy that the contemporary church should no longer apply has been addressed in this series, most fully in Lesson 4’s treatment of the *\*ezer kenegdo\** and in Lesson 8’s treatment of the *imago Dei*’s relational and functional dimensions. The argument bears repetition here in the specific context of the gender doctrine: Paul’s creation-order arguments are not cultural accommodations but theological inferences drawn from the permanent structure of the creation, from the sequence of Adam’s and Eve’s creation, from Eve’s derivation from Adam’s body, and from the purpose of Eve’s creation as Adam’s *ezer kenegdo*. These are not features of a specific cultural moment that the interpreter can bracket or set aside; they are features of the creation itself, and their normative weight is the weight of the Creator’s design.

## **B. *The Ordered Complementarity of Male and Female***

The biblical doctrine of gender holds simultaneously two affirmations that the culture consistently pulls apart: the equal dignity of male and female as image-bearers, and the ordered complementarity of male and female as different expressions of that shared dignity. The ordered complementarity is the specific content of what the creation narrative establishes when it describes Adam’s creation first, Eve’s creation from Adam’s side, and Eve’s purpose as Adam’s *ezer kenegdo*, his indispensable counterpart and helper. The order and the complementarity together constitute the divine design for the male-female relationship: not the subordination of the lesser to the superior, but the ordered relationship of two genuinely different expressions of the same dignity, each contributing to the other what the other cannot contribute to itself, and together displaying the full richness of the human community in the image of God.

The ordered complementarity has implications for the family and the gathered church that the Pauline epistles consistently develop and that the complementarian theological tradition has consistently defended: the husband’s loving headship in the family (Ephesians 5:22–25), the wife’s responsive and wisdom-filled complementarity (Ephesians 5:22–24; Proverbs 31), and the male eldership in the gathered church (1 Timothy 2:12–13; 3:1–7). These applications of the ordered complementarity are not incidental cultural expressions of a timeless principle that could equally be expressed in any other cultural form; they are the specific applications of the creation-order arguments that Paul draws in his letters, and their normativity is the normativity of the creation order that Paul consistently appeals to in making his arguments. The egalitarian who argues that these applications are culturally relative must provide a hermeneutical principle for distinguishing cultural application from transcultural norm that can be consistently applied without unraveling the entire fabric of Pauline ethical instruction.

The pastoral implication of the ordered complementarity is that the church must cultivate genuine masculinity and genuine femininity, not the toxic distortions that the fall has produced, but the genuine embodiment of the Creator's design for the male-female distinction, as an expression of the goodness of the creation and a witness to the surrounding culture of what the image of God looks like in its full complementary expression. Men who love their wives as Christ loved the church, who exercise the servant-headship of the one who gives himself for his bride, who lead their families in the gentle, wise, sacrificial manner that the Pauline household code describes, these men are displaying a distinctively masculine expression of the image of God that the culture desperately needs to see. Women who love their husbands and children, who manage their households with wisdom and strength, who invest in the community and the church with the vocational creativity of the Proverbs 31 portrait, these women are displaying a distinctively feminine expression of the image of God that is as counter-cultural and as necessary in the present moment as it was in the first century. The ordered complementarity is not an oppressive arrangement to be dismantled; it is a good and beautiful expression of the Creator's design that the church is called to embody and to celebrate.

## V. Gender Dysphoria: Pastoral Care with Truth and Compassion

### *Ministering to Those Who Experience Incongruence Between Biological Sex and Gender Identity*

#### A. Understanding Gender Dysphoria with Theological and Pastoral Precision

Gender dysphoria, the experience of significant distress arising from the incongruence between a person's biological sex and their subjective sense of gender identity, is a genuine and often severely painful human experience that the church must engage with both theological clarity and genuine pastoral compassion. It is not sufficient, and it is not faithful, to respond to the person experiencing gender dysphoria with a dismissive reference to Genesis 1:27 and an exhortation to "just accept" their biological sex; nor is it sufficient or faithful to affirm the self-identified gender against the biological sex in the name of compassion. Both responses fail the person: the first by treating the genuine suffering as a non-issue, and the second by trading a real and difficult problem for a false and ultimately more damaging solution.

The theological framework for understanding gender dysphoria with pastoral precision is the doctrine of the fall's comprehensive damage to every dimension of the human creature's constitution. The fall has corrupted the human creature's experience of every dimension of its God-given identity, including the dimension of sexual identity. The distress of gender dysphoria, the experienced incongruence between biological sex and subjective gender sense, is one of the forms in which the fall's comprehensive damage to the human creature's constitution can express itself. This theological account does not trivialize the experience; it takes it with full theological seriousness by acknowledging that the fall can genuinely and severely disrupt the human creature's experience of its own God-given identity. But it also provides the hope that neither the gender ideology's model of affirmation and transition nor the dismissive model of denial can provide: the hope that the God who made the person in their biological sex, who has not abandoned them in their suffering, and whose Spirit is at work renewing every dimension of the human creature's constitution, can and does bring genuine healing to the distress of dysphoria, not necessarily the complete elimination of the subjective incongruence in the present life, but the peace that comes from knowing one's identity in Christ and inhabiting the God-given body as the Spirit's temple even amid the suffering that the fall's damage produces.

The pastoral care of persons experiencing gender dysphoria requires, at minimum, three things. First, genuine listening: the pastor who has not heard the specific story, the specific pain, and the specific questions of the specific person before her is not yet in a position to offer specific pastoral care. Second, genuine truthfulness: the pastor who affirms what the Scriptures do not affirm, who validates the self-identified gender against the biological sex in the name of compassion, has not cared for the person but has ratified a false identity that separates the person from the God-given identity in which their deepest flourishing lies. And third, genuine hope: the pastor who communicates only the theological verdict on gender ideology without also communicating the

specific, Christological, resurrection-oriented hope that the gospel provides for every form of human suffering, including the suffering of gender dysphoria, has not finished the pastoral task.

### **B. The Hope of the Gospel for Gender Dysphoria**

The hope the gospel provides for those experiencing gender dysphoria is not primarily the hope of the resolution of the subjective incongruence in the present life, though that resolution is possible through the Spirit's renewing work, and the testimony of those who have experienced significant relief from gender dysphoria through spiritual formation and community in the church is genuinely encouraging. The primary hope is the hope of identity in Christ: the hope that the person's deepest and most fundamental identity is not the subjective experience of gender dysphoria but the identity as a child of God, made in the image of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit of God, and destined for the eschatological glorification in which the image's full expression, including the God-given sexual identity of the biological body, will be perfectly and permanently realized in the resurrection.

The Christological resources for the pastoral care of gender dysphoria include several specific affirmations that are pastorally urgent. First, the affirmation of the person's full and unconditional worth as an image-bearer of God, which is not contingent on the resolution of the dysphoria or on the conformity of the subjective experience to the biological reality. Second, the affirmation that the suffering of gender dysphoria is a form of the groaning of the creature under the fall's damage, a genuine suffering that the God who saw the creation's subjection to futility and promised its liberation (Romans 8:18–25) sees, acknowledges, and is at work addressing through the ministry of His Spirit. Third, the affirmation that the body in which the person lives, however distressing the dysphoria makes its existence, is the Spirit's temple and is destined for resurrection, which means that the biological sex expressed in that body is not a mistake to be surgically corrected but a God-given identity to be received, however painful the reception may be in the present life.

The church that provides this pastoral care will be a community in which those experiencing gender dysphoria find both the truth that orients them toward their God-given identity and the compassion that accompanies them in the suffering that the fall's damage produces. It will be a community that refuses the two inadequate alternatives that the surrounding culture offers, the dismissal of the suffering and the affirmation of the false identity, and provides instead the specifically Christian alternative: the truth that does not pretend the suffering away and the grace that does not abandon the sufferer to it. This is the pastoral expression of what the entire Anthropology series has been building toward: the conviction that the God who made every human being in His image, who made them upright, who declared them very good, and who has set about through the Last Adam's obedience to restore and surpass the original goodness, this God is not indifferent to the specific suffering of any specific image-bearer, and His gospel is not a general soteriological principle but a specific, personal, face-to-face encounter between the Redeemer and the specific creature He is redeeming.

*“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them.”*

**Genesis 1:27–28, NASB 1995**

## **VI. The Eschatological Dimension: Does Gender Survive the Resurrection?**

### *What the New Creation's Affirmation of Embodied Existence Implies for the Male-Female Distinction*

The eschatological question about the permanence of the male-female distinction through death and resurrection is one that the contemporary theological discussion of gender has increasingly raised, and it deserves a careful

and honest engagement. The primary text typically cited in support of the abolition of gender in the eschatological state is Matthew 22:30: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (NASB 1995). Jesus’s statement that the resurrection involves neither marriage nor giving in marriage is sometimes interpreted as implying the abolition of gender itself, as if the transcending of the marriage relationship requires the transcending of the male-female distinction that marriage presupposes. But this interpretation moves well beyond what the text actually says. Jesus’s statement is specifically about the marriage relationship, not about the male-female distinction per se; and the reason He gives for the transcending of marriage in the resurrection (“they are like angels in heaven”) is the transcending of the mortal conditions that make marriage both necessary and limited, not the transcending of the sexual identity that is constitutive of the human creature’s whole-person existence.

The biblical testimony to the resurrection of the body, examined in detail in Lesson 5 and Lesson 11, is the testimony to the resurrection of the same person’s body, glorified and transformed but continuous with the mortal body from which it is raised. The resurrection body is not a generic human body stripped of its specific personal characteristics; it is the glorified body of this specific person, continuous in personal identity with the pre-resurrection body that died and was buried. If the resurrection body is continuous with the mortal body in personal identity, and if the mortal body’s biological sex is a fundamental feature of its personal identity (as the whole-person account of the human constitution established in Lesson 11 requires), then the resurrection body will bear the same biological sex as the mortal body, not as a limitation of the glorified state but as a feature of the glorified person’s whole-person identity. The eschatological glorification does not strip the person of the characteristics that constitute her God-given identity; it perfects them in the fullness of the image of God for which the person was always designed.

The new creation’s vision in Revelation 7:9–10, the great multitude from every nation and tribe and people and tongue, is a vision that preserves the full diversity of the redeemed community, including presumably the diversity of male and female, without the sin and the suffering that the fall has introduced into the expression of that diversity. The new creation does not eliminate the particularities of the human creature’s creaturely identity; it perfects them in the fullness of the image of God’s eschatological expression. The male and female who stand before the throne in the new Jerusalem will stand there as the specific persons they were made to be, bearing the specific, embodied, whole-person identities that the Creator designed for them and that the Spirit has been renewing and glorifying throughout the history of redemption. The eschatological state does not answer every question about the specific form of the male-female distinction in the new creation; but it does not provide any positive warrant for the claim that gender itself is abolished, and the comprehensive affirmation of embodied human identity in the resurrection of the body provides strong positive warrant for the claim that the Creator’s very good design for the human creature, including the design of male and female, is not discarded but fulfilled.

*“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”*

**Matthew 22:30, NASB 1995**

## Theological Terms and Definitions

| Term                                       | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gender as Creation Ordinance</b>        | The theological affirmation that the binary distinction between male and female is not a social construct, a cultural convention, or a matter of individual self-identification, but a structural feature of the created order established by God's creative act in Genesis 1:27. As a creation ordinance, the male-female distinction carries the authority of the Creator who established it, predates every cultural development, is independent of any individual's subjective experience of it, and cannot be undone or redefined by creaturely agency. Its permanent validity is confirmed by Jesus's citation of Genesis 1:27 as the authoritative foundation of the biblical account of marriage and human sexuality (Matthew 19:4).                                                                                                              |
| <b>Gender Ideology</b>                     | The contemporary intellectual and political movement holding that gender is a social construct and a spectrum of self-identified experience, distinct from biological sex and determined by subjective identity rather than bodily characteristics. Gender ideology holds that authentic personhood requires the affirmation and expression of one's self-identified gender, including bodily modification when biological sex and gender identity conflict. Theologically, gender ideology embodies a Gnostic anthropology that locates the authentic self in the inner, subjective experience of gender identity and treats the body's biological sexual characteristics as potentially alien to that authentic self, a direct contradiction of the biblical doctrine of the whole-person human constitution and the goodness of the material creation. |
| <b>Gender Dysphoria</b>                    | The experience of significant psychological distress arising from a persistent incongruence between a person's biological sex and their subjective sense of gender identity. Gender dysphoria is a genuine and often severely painful human experience that the church must engage with both theological clarity and genuine pastoral compassion. Theologically, it is understood as one form of the fall's comprehensive damage to the human creature's experience of its God-given identity. The pastoral response neither dismisses the suffering nor affirms a false identity against the biological reality, but provides the truth that orients the person toward their God-given identity and the grace that accompanies them in the suffering that the fall's damage produces.                                                                    |
| <b>Ordered Complementarity</b>             | The theological characterization of the male-female relationship as established in the creation narrative: the two complementary expressions of the shared human dignity (male and female) stand in a relationship of genuine distinction, genuine interdependence, and genuine but asymmetric order. The order is established by the creation sequence (Adam first, then Eve), by Eve's derivation from Adam's body, and by Eve's purpose as Adam's ezer kenegdo; the complementarity is established by the genuine differences in the two expressions of the imago Dei and the genuine interdependence of each on the other for the full expression of the human image. Ordered complementarity is distinguished from both patriarchal subordinationism (which denies equal dignity) and egalitarianism (which denies the created order).               |
| <b>Social Construction Thesis (Gender)</b> | The claim that the categories of male and female are social constructs, human cultural inventions that have been imposed on a pre-social biological reality and could in principle be deconstructed and reconstructed differently. The social                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                     | <p>construction thesis is irreconcilable with Genesis 1:27's declaration that God created the human being as male and female by divine creative act: if the distinction is a divine creative act, it is a feature of the created order whose normativity is independent of any cultural convention and cannot be dismantled by cultural deconstruction. The social construction thesis represents the epistemological inversion of the fall applied to the domain of sexual identity: the creature's autonomous self-evaluation replacing the Creator's declared design as the standard.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Biological Sex</b>               | <p>The bodily, biological dimension of the human creature's sexual identity, constituted by chromosomal, hormonal, anatomical, and reproductive characteristics that are determined at conception and expressed throughout the life of the body. In the biblical doctrine of gender, biological sex is not merely a biological fact that the person has but a dimension of the whole-person God-given identity that the person is: the sexed body is part of the imago Dei's full creaturely expression, declared very good by the Creator, indwelt by the Spirit as the Spirit's temple, and destined for resurrection in its glorified form. The contemporary distinction between biological sex and gender identity, treating biological sex as a bodily characteristic that may or may not align with the authentic self's gender identity, is irreconcilable with the biblical whole-person anthropology.</p> |
| <b>Deuteronomy 22:5</b>             | <p>The Mosaic prohibition of cross-dressing: "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God" (NASB 1995). Theologically, the prohibition reflects the principle that the created male-female distinction is not to be deliberately obscured, blurred, or transgressed, because it is the expression of the Creator's design and carries the Creator's authority. While the specific cultural application of this principle (the specific forms of male and female clothing in ancient Israelite culture) is culturally relative, the underlying theological principle, the affirmation and embodiment of one's God-given biological sex, is a transcultural application of the creation ordinance of Genesis 1:27.</p>                                                                                    |
| <b>Egalitarianism (Gender)</b>      | <p>The theological position that holds men and women to be not only equal in dignity and worth (which is biblical) but also interchangeable in function, role, and relational ordering in the family and the gathered church (which is not biblical). Egalitarianism errs by confusing equal dignity with identical function, making the inference from "God made male and female equally in His image" to "God made male and female interchangeable in every role and function." The confusion is analogous to concluding from the co-equal divinity of the three Trinitarian persons that the Father, Son, and Spirit are interchangeable in their roles and relations, which the doctrine of the Trinity consistently denies.</p>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Complementarianism (Preview)</b> | <p>The position, developed in detail in Lesson 19, that men and women are equal in dignity, value, and worth before God (both made in His image) yet distinct in their God-given roles within marriage and the church. Complementarianism holds that the ordered complementarity of male and female is established in the creation narrative (Genesis 1–2), developed in the Pauline epistles (Ephesians 5; 1 Timothy 2–3), and reflects both the character of the Trinitarian relations and the shape of the covenant union of Christ and His church. It stands against both egalitarianism (which denies the created order) and patriarchalism (which denies the equal dignity).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

**Galatians 3:28  
(Correct  
Interpretation)**

Paul's declaration that "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" addresses the equal spiritual standing of all persons, regardless of ethnicity, social status, or sex, before God in the matter of justification and salvation. It does not address the functional and relational distinctions between male and female that the creation narrative establishes and that Paul himself upholds in his epistles on marriage and church governance. The verse affirms that male and female have equal access to the righteousness of God through faith in Christ; it does not affirm that male and female are interchangeable in their creational roles and relational ordering.

## Practical Application

### A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the male-female distinction is a creation ordinance, a feature of the created order established by the divine creative act of Genesis 1:27, carrying the authority of the Creator, and immune to revision by any creaturely agency, including the cultural consensus of the contemporary West. This conviction is not a defensive posture driven by cultural anxiety but a positive theological affirmation grounded in the character of the God who made the human creature as male and female and declared the result very good. The church that holds this conviction will not be uncertain or apologetic about the biblical account of gender in the face of the culture's contrary pressure; it will hold the biblical account with the theological confidence of those who know that the Creator's declaration is more authoritative than the culture's consensus.

We must also believe that the pastoral care of those experiencing gender dysphoria requires both theological clarity and genuine compassion, that these are not competing values but complementary expressions of the same love for image-bearers whose flourishing depends on both. The church that abandons clarity in the name of compassion has abandoned the image-bearer to a false identity. The church that abandons compassion in the name of clarity has abandoned the image-bearer to a theological verdict without the grace that makes the verdict life-giving rather than crushing. The church that holds both, the biblical truth about gender and the pastoral grace of the gospel for those whose experience of gender involves suffering, is the church that most fully embodies the character of the God whose image the suffering person bears.

### B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the doctrine of gender's goodness produce in you a genuinely celebratory response to the male-female distinction that the culture has been taught to regard with suspicion or contempt. The specific goodness of masculinity, the strength, the provision-orientation, the servant-leadership that the Scriptures commend, and the specific goodness of femininity, the wisdom, the nurture, the life-sustaining care that the Scriptures celebrate, are genuinely good expressions of the image of God that deserve the church's celebration and embodiment, not its embarrassed accommodation to the culture's egalitarian or gender-ideology alternatives. The God who made men and women differently did not make a mistake; He made a design, and the design is very good.

Desire the kind of pastoral sensitivity that enables you to hold both the truth about gender and the compassion for those for whom that truth creates suffering. The person experiencing gender dysphoria is not your theological opponent; she is a specific image-bearer of the living God, suffering under the fall's damage in a particularly acute and particularly painful way, and deserving the specific pastoral care that the gospel equips the church to provide. The willingness to sit with that specific person in her specific suffering, to listen to her specific story, and to offer her both the truth that orients her toward her God-given identity and the grace that accompanies her in the suffering that the fall's damage produces, this is the pastoral vocation that the doctrine of the imago Dei and the doctrine of the fall together define.

### C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Read Genesis 1:26–28 and Genesis 2:18–25 together as a unit, attending to the specific ways in which the creation narrative establishes the male-female distinction as a creation ordinance. What does each passage contribute to the understanding of gender's character as a divine creative act? Then read Matthew 19:3–6, attending to the specific way in which Jesus grounds His account of marriage in the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2. What does Jesus' citation of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 establish about the authority of the creation narrative for the doctrine of gender and marriage? And how does the specific hermeneutical move Jesus makes, grounding the normative account of marriage in the creation narrative rather than in the Mosaic law, model the method the church should use in engaging the contemporary culture's alternative accounts?

- Identify one specific person in your congregation or community who is experiencing gender dysphoria or who has a close family member experiencing it. Commit to a specific pastoral engagement with that person that is explicitly shaped by both the theological clarity of this lesson and the pastoral compassion it calls for. The engagement should include: genuine listening to the specific story and the specific suffering; a clear but gracious communication of the biblical account of gender as a creation ordinance; and a specific articulation of the gospel hope that is available to the person in their specific suffering. After the engagement, reflect on what was most difficult and what was most fruitful in holding truth and compassion together.
- **Read Preston Sprinkle’s Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say (2021).** Sprinkle’s treatment is the most exegetically careful and pastorally sensitive engagement with the transgender question available in the evangelical tradition. His commitment to both biblical fidelity and genuine pastoral compassion models exactly the combination this lesson commends, and his detailed engagement with the scientific, philosophical, and theological dimensions of the gender dysphoria question equips the pastor with the resources needed for the specific pastoral contexts that this lesson’s application calls for. For the complementarian theological framework undergirding the creation-ordinance account of gender, Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology, chapter 22 (“The Family”), provides the most comprehensive Reformed treatment.
- Prepare a five-minute presentation suitable for a congregational adult education setting on the question “What does the Bible say about gender?” The presentation should be theologically grounded (drawing on the key texts: Genesis 1:27; 5:2; Matthew 19:4; Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Corinthians 11:7–12), pastorally sensitive (acknowledging the genuine pain of those who experience gender dysphoria without affirming the gender ideology alternative), and practically accessible (avoiding theological jargon that would be unintelligible to a congregation without theological training). After preparing the presentation, identify the single point that is most difficult to communicate clearly and commit to developing a more accessible account of that point.
- Spend time this week in prayer specifically for those in your congregation and community who are experiencing the suffering of gender dysphoria, and for those whose children or other family members are being formed by the gender ideology of the surrounding culture. Pray for the wisdom to hold biblical truth and pastoral compassion together without sacrificing either; for the courage to speak the truth about gender in a cultural environment that regards that truth as harmful; and for the grace to be the kind of community in which those experiencing gender dysphoria find both the theological clarity that orients them toward their God-given identity and the pastoral warmth that accompanies them in their suffering.

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## Study and Discussion Questions

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### Opening Question

- Before working through this lesson, how would you have described the biblical account of gender to someone who asked you what the church believes about the male-female distinction? Was your account primarily biological (emphasizing the body's sexual characteristics), primarily sociological (emphasizing the cultural roles and expectations associated with maleness and femaleness), primarily theological (emphasizing the creation ordinance character of the male-female distinction), or some combination? Has the lesson changed the emphasis of your account, and if so, in what direction?

### Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Genesis 1:26–28 carefully. What is the relationship in the text between the creation of the human being in the image of God and the creation of the human being as male and female? Is the male-female distinction a feature of the image of God, an expression of the image of God, or a separate feature of the human creature that accompanies the image? What does the inclusion of “male and female he created them” in the same verse that declares the creation of the image suggest about the relationship between the *imago Dei* and the sexual differentiation of the human creature?
- Read Matthew 19:3–6. What is the specific question the Pharisees ask, and why does Jesus ground His answer in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 rather than in the Mosaic law? What does Jesus’ appeal to the creation narrative (“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female?”) establish about the authority of the creation narrative for the doctrine of gender and marriage? How does Jesus’ hermeneutical move here, appealing to “from the beginning”, model the method by which the church should engage contemporary alternatives to the biblical account of gender?
- Read Deuteronomy 22:5 in its broader context (Deuteronomy 22:1–12). What is the broader concern of the Deuteronomy 22 legislation, and how does verse 5’s prohibition of cross-dressing fit within that broader concern? What theological principle underlies the specific prohibition, and how does that principle relate to the creation ordinance of Genesis 1:27? Is the prohibition of cross-dressing a culturally relative application of a transcultural principle, and if so, how would you articulate the transcultural principle in terms applicable to the contemporary question of gender expression?
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:7–12. What are the specific theological claims Paul makes about the relationship between man and woman in this passage? What does the phrase “the woman is the glory of man” (v. 7) contribute to the understanding of the male-female relationship as ordered complementarity rather than simple hierarchy? How does the qualification of verse 11–12 (“neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman”) modify the asymmetry of the preceding verses without eliminating it?
- Read Matthew 22:23–33. What is the specific question the Sadducees ask Jesus about the resurrection and marriage? What does Jesus’ answer that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (v. 30) establish about the eschatological state of the male-female relationship? Does the transcending of the marriage relationship in the resurrection imply the transcending of the male-female distinction itself? What does the context of Jesus’ statement, addressing the resurrection of bodies rather than the abolition of personal identity, suggest about the eschatological status of gender?

### Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that gender ideology embodies a Gnostic anthropology by locating the authentic self in the inner subjective experience of gender identity and treating the body’s biological characteristics as potentially alien to that authentic self. Do you find this characterization of gender ideology theologically accurate? What specifically does gender ideology share with the Gnostic anthropology that the early church condemned, and where does it differ? How does the biblical doctrine of the whole-person human

constitution (body and soul together, each genuinely constitutive of the whole person) address the Gnostic dimension of the gender ideology claim?

- The lesson distinguishes between the transcultural theological principle underlying Deuteronomy 22:5 (the male-female distinction is to be affirmed and expressed in one's behavior, not deliberately obscured) and its culturally specific application (the specific forms of male and female clothing in ancient Israelite culture). Is this distinction hermeneutically sound? How do you identify which elements of a Mosaic legal prohibition are transcultural principles and which are culturally specific applications of those principles? And how does the transcultural principle of Deuteronomy 22:5 apply to the contemporary questions of gender expression, including the question of clothing, pronouns, and other forms of gender expression?
- The lesson argues that Galatians 3:28's "there is neither male nor female" addresses equal standing in justification rather than the abolition of the male-female distinction. Do you find this interpretation persuasive? What exegetical evidence supports this reading? Are there aspects of the Galatians 3:28 context that might support a broader application, one that does challenge the functional and relational distinctions the creation narrative establishes? How would you respond to the egalitarian interpreter who argues that the new creation in Christ has rendered the creation-order distinctions of Genesis 2 obsolete?
- The lesson holds that gender dysphoria is one form of the fall's comprehensive damage to the human creature's experience of its God-given identity. Is this theological account adequate for pastoral purposes? Does it provide the person experiencing gender dysphoria with a framework for understanding their suffering that is both theologically honest and pastorally hopeful? What does this account imply about the appropriate pastoral response: should it emphasize the hope of relief from the dysphoria through the Spirit's renewing work, or the hope of inhabiting the God-given identity faithfully despite the dysphoria, or both?
- The lesson argues that the resurrection body will bear the same biological sex as the mortal body, on the grounds that the resurrection body is continuous with the mortal body in personal identity and that the body's biological sex is a fundamental feature of its personal identity. Is this argument exegetically compelling? What specific biblical texts bear on the question of the resurrection body's continuity with the mortal body and its preservation of personal characteristics? Does Matthew 22:30's statement that "they neither marry nor are given in marriage" provide any positive evidence for the abolition of gender in the resurrection, or is the inference from the transcending of marriage to the transcending of gender an unwarranted extension?

### Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson identifies three inadequate responses to gender dysphoria: (1) dismissal of the suffering with a reference to Genesis 1:27 and an exhortation to "accept" the biological sex; (2) affirmation of the self-identified gender against the biological sex in the name of compassion; and (3) communication of the theological verdict without the gospel hope. Which of these inadequate responses is most common in the congregation you serve or the theological tradition you inhabit? What specific formation, in theological understanding, in pastoral skill, or in community culture, would most effectively address the inadequacy you have identified?
- The lesson calls for the celebration of the specific goodness of masculine and feminine distinctives as expressions of the image of God. In the congregation you serve, is there a culture of genuine celebration of the specific goodness of masculinity and femininity, or is there more of a culture of gender neutrality (treating the male-female distinction as irrelevant to congregational life) or gender anxiety (treating the male-female distinction as a source of division or oppression)? What specific initiatives, in preaching, in formation, in the structure of congregational life, would most effectively cultivate a genuinely celebratory engagement with gender's goodness in the congregation?
- The lesson notes that the contemporary culture is forming the next generation in gender ideology through educational institutions, media, and peer culture. What specific pastoral and educational initiatives would

most effectively equip the parents and the young people in your congregation to engage the gender ideology of the surrounding culture with theological clarity, cultural awareness, and personal confidence? What specific resources, what specific conversations, and what specific community practices would be most helpful?

- Unit 6 is the unit most likely to produce genuine disagreement among members of the congregation, not just about the cultural questions of gender ideology, but about the internal theological questions of complementarity and egalitarianism that will be addressed in Lesson 19. How does the congregation you serve navigate theological disagreement on questions where the biblical testimony is clear but the cultural pressure is intense? What specific pastoral practices, what specific community norms, and what specific theological formation would most effectively enable the congregation to hold the biblical account of gender with both conviction and charity toward those who find it difficult or who disagree with aspects of it?
- The lesson closes with the affirmation that the new creation's vision of the redeemed from every nation and tribe and people and tongue suggests the preservation of creaturely diversity in the eschatological state, including presumably the diversity of male and female. Let this eschatological vision shape the way you understand the present doctrine of gender: not as a restriction to be endured but as a feature of the very good creation that the new creation will preserve and perfect. What would it look like to live in the present with the eschatological vision of gender's goodness in view, inhabiting the specific creaturely identity that the Creator gave you, male or female, with the confidence of one who knows that this identity is not a contingency of the fall but a permanent feature of the very good creation that the Last Adam's obedience has secured for eternity?

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## Prayer Focus

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Open this seventeenth lesson of the Anthropology series, and the first lesson of Unit 6, with a slow and meditative reading of Psalm 139:13–16, which has appeared at several points in this series as the Old Testament’s most personal and most concentrated account of the Creator’s intentional involvement in the formation of each individual human being. Read it now with specific attention to what it says about the specifically embodied, specifically sexed character of the individual person’s formation: “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them” (NASB 1995). The Psalm’s account of the divine formation of the individual person is an account of the formation of an embodied, sexed person, the woven body, the formed inward parts, the frame skillfully wrought, in its specific creaturely identity, including its specific biological sex. The Creator who forms the inward parts forms them as the inward parts of a male or a female person, as part of the whole-person identity that the creation narrative establishes as the form in which every human being is created. Read the Psalm as a prayer of gratitude for the God who saw the specific, sexed, embodied person before the world did, who knew and loved the specific creature He was forming in its specific creaturely form, and who declared the result, in all its male-female specificity, very good.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the doctrine of gender as creation ordinance to deepen your worship of each person of the Trinity. Begin with the Father, the Creator who said “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” and who created that image-bearing humanity in the complementary form of male and female, who saw the full human community in its male-female differentiation and pronounced it very good. Adore the Father whose design for the human creature is not the androgynous generic but the specifically differentiated complementarity of male and female, each displaying in its own distinctive way the image of the God who made them both. Move to the Son, who was born as a male human being into a family with a mother and a father, who honored the created order of the male-female distinction in His own human life and who grounded the biblical account of marriage in the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2, and who is even now, at the right hand of the Father, the specifically male human being in whom the full image of God is perfectly and permanently expressed in His glorified humanity. Conclude with the Spirit, who formed the inward parts of each specific person in the womb, who knit together the specific embodied identity of each image-bearer in its specific creaturely form including its specific biological sex, and who is even now at work in the hearts and minds of believers, including those experiencing gender dysphoria, renewing the image of the One who created them in the specific embodied identity that He gave them at conception and will perfect in the resurrection.

Pray together at the opening of Unit 6 in three specific directions. First, for theological clarity and cultural courage: that the congregation would hold the biblical doctrine of gender as a creation ordinance with the theological confidence of those who know that the Creator’s declaration in Genesis 1:27 is more authoritative than the culture’s consensus in any generation, and who therefore do not need to be embarrassed or defensive about the biblical account of gender in the face of the culture’s contrary pressure. Second, for the pastoral compassion that truth requires: that the congregation would be the kind of community in which those experiencing gender dysphoria, or whose families are navigating the challenges of gender ideology in the surrounding culture, find both the truth that orients them toward their God-given identity and the grace that accompanies them in the suffering that the fall’s damage produces. Third, for the doxological response that gender’s goodness deserves: that the theological understanding of gender as a good expression of the image of God, in both its masculine and feminine forms, would produce in the congregation not the anxiety of those defending a contested cultural position but the joy of those celebrating a genuinely good feature of the very good creation that the God of all grace has made and is making new.

*“For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”*

**Psalm 139:13–14, NASB 1995**

**Key Texts:** Genesis 1:26–28; 5:2; Psalm 139:13–16; Deuteronomy 22:5; Matthew 19:3–6; 22:23–33; 1 Corinthians 11:7–12; Galatians 3:26–29; Romans 8:18–25

## ***Soli Deo Gloria***

*To God Alone Be the Glory*

### **FAITHFUL TO THE WORD**

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