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The Gender Revolution: Are We Getting It Right?

by Dannah (Barker) Gresh '89

Our country is in the midst of a gender revolution, and as believers, we cannot stay silent. Sadly, the most vocal evangelicals have been either hatefully accusative or completely affirming.

Thankfully, hate-fueled accusers who use Leviticus as a beating stick for the lost are a dwindling minority.

Those who are affirming often use an appeal to compassion and are a growing sector of the Christian family. It is unkind to ignore the emotional trauma, but let's take a closer look.

The Center for Disease Control's website states that "MSM (men who have sex with men) are at greater risk for mental health problems"¹ including major depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and a greater risk of suicide.² According to Cambridge University, lesbian women are twice as likely to have "longstanding mental health problems." Bisexual women were nearly three times as likely to suffer.³ Here's the problem with the appeal to affirmation in the name of kindness: high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, and psychiatric disorders are prevalent and undisputed in the gay⁴ and transgendered communities⁵ *both before and after coming out/completing gender reassignment surgery*. There is a reason that Johns Hopkins University,

As true followers of Jesus Christ, we should be heartbroken and poised to respond. But how should we respond? There is a Christian conversation that gets to the root of diminishing the pain and depression of those struggling with same-sex attraction and gender dysphoria. Russell Moore of the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission (ERLC), a favored chapel speaker

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at Cedarville, has coined the phrase "convictional kindness" (cedarville.edu/convictionalkindness). He applies it liberally to all arguments of sexual choice, whether our modern-day gender reformation, the tolerance movement, or the sexual reformation of the 60s and 70s. According to Moore, the devil deceives us in two ways: affirming us as we make our own truth and/or accusing us for our choices. The devil stands on both sides to coach us along. For example, the sexual revolution of the 1960s brought us the birth control pill and abortion.



once the national leader in gender reassignment surgery, no longer performs operations but instead seeks to provide psychological support for those suffering. It is not kind to offer false hope.

divorce revolution. The people of the day were reveling in their freedom to marry and divorce at will. It was their modern-day revolution. They wanted to build their own morality concerning marriage. Sound familiar?

"No one is more pro-choice on the way into the abortion clinic than the devil," Moore said, "and no one is more pro-life on the way out of the abortion clinic than the devil. Because what he wants to do is deceive on the front-end. He seeks to say on one hand, 'You're too good for the Gospel,' and the other hand, 'You're now too bad for the Gospel.'"

How do we build a conversation that's based on convictional kindness? I think we follow the example of our Savior. When Jesus walked the earth, He was on the end of a different kind of sexual culture shift: the

As recorded in Matthew 19:3–8, the Pharisees ask Jesus about it, believing divorce to be a sin, but knowing Jesus would agree and would therefore lose the affections of the masses that were following Him! It was a trap.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

"In the beginning" and "from the beginning" — The Lord Jesus uses these phrases in the dialogue about marriage. He does not run to Leviticus, but points back to Genesis to search out understanding. Jesus does not approve, but He also does not stand with the accusers. Instead, He initiates a loving, thought-provoking conversation. He does not say, "Thou shalt not." Instead He says, "Let me remind you what I intended." What a loving, gentle way to respond.

Embracing our manhood and womanhood enables a lost world to see God.

Genesis informs that the sexual relationship and function is for one man and one woman in the confines of an exclusive one-flesh relationship that is meant to make them permanently one flesh. This is the Creator's design. Why? Because within that design is a picture of God Himself (Gen. 1:27).

Embracing our manhood and womanhood enables a lost world to see God. The sin of homosexuality and gender fluidity is not about sexual acts. The true sin is exalting self and exchanging the glory of God for the glory of self/humanity. Paul refers back to Creation when he teaches that disregarding God's definitions for manhood and womanhood is a rebellious refusal to glorify Him and an attempt to hide who He is and Whose we are (Rom. 1:24–32).

We glorify God no more when we carry either affirming or accusatory hearts. Let's move to an

approach that is more effective and follow the example of Jesus to do the hard work of entering into a thought-provoking and careful dialogue. I've been happy to see Cedarville participating in this conversation.

Hosting chapel speakers who have spent significant time researching a biblical perspective on gender and sexuality and who offer a compassionate and convictional approach is just one action demonstrating that Cedarville is concerned about this discussion. I've witnessed current leadership fostering an environment that is uncompromised in biblical truth but emotionally safe for students struggling with same-sex attraction to have a thoughtful conversation.

Struggling with same-sex attraction is not a sin. Struggling with your gender identity or gender dysphoria is not a sin. It is when a person ceases to struggle and gives in to the temptation to act on these impulses that they have sinned. Instead of throwing accusations, Christians should ask God to break their own hearts with the pain that gay, lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual people are facing so that they can enter into a useful dialogue that brings healing. Can you imagine what would happen if our local churches became a safe place for someone to talk about their struggle? Instead of a culture full of stories that are forming a heretical view of Scripture, we would have stories that are being formed by Scripture and so glorify our God as was always intended.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* by Robert A. J. Gagnon
- *Love Into Light: The Gospel, The Homosexual, and The Church* by Peter Hubbard
- *The Secret Thoughts of An Unlikely Convert* by Rosaria Butterfield

¹ cdc.gov/hiv/risk/gender/msm/facts

² cdc.gov/msmhealth/mental-health.htm

³ independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/gay-people-more-likely-to-have-mental-health-problems-survey-says-9709761.html

⁴ cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm

⁵ articles.latimes.com/2014/jan/28/local/la-me-ln-suicide-attempts-alarming-transgender-20140127

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