

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

SEXUALITY IN OUR SEXUALIZED WORLD
GENDER IDENTITY IN LIGHT OF ETERNITY
OCTOBER 25-31, 2015



MAIN POINT

The most important part of our identity is who we are as children of God.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Can you imagine a world where sexual identity and passion are not part of the relational equation? What would it be like?
2. Today we will talk about our identity as children of God. When you say you are a child of God, what specific things does that communicate about who you are and how you live?

Leader: Human sexuality was part of God's perfect design when He created the world and its inhabitants. He created men and women, and He created sexual passion. However, as we discussed last week, the entrance of sin into creation had devastating consequences on sexuality and gender identity. No matter what kind of brokenness is in your past, what matters most is that you embrace who you are in Christ. If you are a believer, then you are a child of God and a citizen of heaven. That heavenly citizenship is what matters most, and it should determine who we are and how we live today.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21.

3. In this passage, Paul contrasted those who follow Christ with those who do not. What specific phrases did Paul use to describe unbelievers (vv. 18-19)? What do those phrases reveal about life apart from God?
4. On the other hand, what specific words and phrases did Paul use to describe Christians (vv. 20-21)? What do these teach about the believer's identity and how we live compared to the world's?

Leader: One of the issues Paul addressed in many of his letters was the issue of false teachers, people who claimed to be Christians but led others astray. These were the "enemies of the cross" Paul warned the Philippian Christians about (v. 18). They were enemies of the cross because their lifestyles contradicted their professed commitment to Christ. Paul declared that these false Christians were headed for destruction—that is, ruin in

the sense of eternal separation from God (v. 19). Though they professed to worship God, they had made an idol of their stomach, a term that implies they gratified all manner of sensual pleasures. Their self-indulgence contrasted sharply to Christ's sacrificial self-giving. Rather than center their lives on heavenly or spiritual values, truths, and goals, they were focused on earthly (material) things. While it is easy for us to get wrapped up in our identity and lifestyle on earth, that is not what matters. The most important aspect of our identity is that we are children of God who have a heavenly citizenship.

5. How does being a citizen of God's kingdom (v. 20) impact your daily life? How does it alter how you perceive your identity? How does it also help you in conversations with people struggling with gender dysphoria?

Leader: In contrast, the believer's citizenship is in heaven (v. 20). While we live on earth, we have our feet in two worlds. We are citizens of earth and of heaven, but our heavenly citizenship is much more important because we owe our primary allegiance to God. Heavenly citizenship should govern our earthly lives.

6. From verse 21, what do we learn about the impact of our heavenly citizenship on our physical bodies? Why is that important to understand? How does this future transformation motivate you to live for Christ today?

Leader: Paul teaches that for the child of God and citizen of heaven, an eternal body awaits. This body is outfitted for eternity because it is transformed into the likeness of Jesus' resurrected body. Christ will change believers' bodies to be like His. Neither our gender nor our sexual passions will matter anymore. All that matters is our union with Christ in His resurrection and glory. In another of Paul's letters, he described our heavenly bodies in greater detail.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58.

7. What traits describe our mortal bodies (vv. 42-44)? What does this contrast imply about your sexual identity in light of eternity?

Leader: Paul highlighted four key differences between our mortal and eternal bodies. Unlike the perishable, dishonorable, weak, and "natural" bodies we live in now (vv. 42-44), our eternal bodies will be imperishable, glorious, filled with power, and spiritual. Physical bodies are susceptible to disease and death—they are broken by sin. This makes them unfit for the incorruption that characterizes eternity in God's presence. Therefore, we will be resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit (the same power that raised Jesus from the dead), and the result will be bodies that highlight the glory and holiness of God. This is yet another promise we can cling to as we set our minds on the things of God (Col. 3:1-2).

8. Why do you think it is important that God equip us with a glorified body for eternity? What difference does it make in how we live our day-to-day lives?

Leader: Paul said that in an instant (v. 52), Jesus will return and raise up all who are in Him into their new, glorified bodies. That we don't know when this time will come means we are to live every day ready for His return. Our resurrection into eternity confirms that Jesus conquered sin and death. As far as how we live today, the promise

of being made new in Christ impacts everything about our lives here on earth. We can overcome the brokenness of our world because we know that we have a better one waiting.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

9. What habits and behavioral patterns identify you as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven?

10. How does confidence in your future resurrection and transformation impact your understanding of gender identity issues today?

11. How does the priority you give to serving Christ faithfully give evidence that you are living for heaven? What next step can our growth group take together toward kingdom living?

PRAYER

Thank God for the future redemption of our bodies, and pray that as you meditate on these truths from Scripture, it would transform the way you live your life in the present and the conversations you have with others.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - **As you have reflected on last week's sermon and discussion, how have you looked at your identity and pursuits differently? Have you made any changes? How has our discussion impacted your conversations with others?**
 - **What specifically encourages you when you think about your heavenly citizenship?**
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Philippians 3:20-21.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21

Paul urged his brothers in Christ to join in imitating him (v. 17). He was not bragging or holding himself up as the perfect model; yet he was the best example of Christ's follower they had. He urged the Philippian believers to fix their attention on believers who were following his example. The Philippian Christians were to pattern their lifestyles after Paul and other believers who imitated him—all of whom were following Christ's model.

With deep emotion, Paul warned his friends against enemies of the cross of Christ (v. 18). Paul described these enemies as unbelievers and wept because of their tragic condition and their negative effect on others in the church. They were enemies of the cross because their lifestyles contradicted their professed commitment to Christ. Paul declared that these pseudo-Christians were headed for destruction—that is, ruin in the sense of eternal separation from God (v. 19). Though they professed to worship God, they had made an idol of their stomach, a term for the wide range of their sensual (bodily) appetites. Their self-indulgence contrasted sharply to Christ's sacrificial self-giving. Rather than center their lives on heavenly or spiritual values, truths, and goals, the professing Christians were focused on earthly (material) things. The Greek term rendered are focused on means "to set the mind on," "to be intent on," and conveys continuous action. They consistently pursued material things as their priority.

In contrast, genuine believers' citizenship is in heaven (v. 20). Paul maintained that Christians were (and are) members of two realms. They were citizens of the Roman Empire and should be exemplary citizens. More important, they were citizens of God's kingdom and owed their primary loyalty to God. Their heavenly citizenship governed their earthly lives. Paul emphasized the creative tension in which believers lived: they eagerly awaited the return of Christ their Savior. Paul's emphasis may have been on the fulfillment or culmination of Christians' salvation at that time or their being delivered from persecution.

Christ has supernatural power to subject everything to Himself (v. 21). He is sovereign. With such unlimited effective energy, Christ will transform believers' bodies when He returns. The Greek word translated transform has the idea of changing something so it conforms to something else. The body of our humble condition is the physical body. The phrase His glorious body refers to the Lord's spiritual or resurrection body appropriate for eternity. Christ will change believers' bodies to be like His, not merely in external appearance but also in essential nature. Believers will reach full maturity.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58

15:35-38. Paul compares human resurrection to the life-death-life cycle from agriculture. The seed body that dies gives rise to a totally different plant body, and yet there is retention of identity. So it is with our present bodies and our future resurrection bodies.

15:42-44. Having reviewed differentiations within the created order (vv. 35-41), Paul turns to differentiations of the resurrected body. It was sown in corruption and will be raised in incorruption. The body changes from a perishable body (a natural body) to an imperishable body (a spiritual body), though one that has physical characteristics (e.g., Luke 24:39). It is sown in dishonor and weakness, and it will be raised a glorious, imperishable body.

15:45. The first man Adam received the breath of life, a life that would become corruptible and perishable. In contrast, the last Adam (Jesus) will impart life, granting believers an incorruptible, imperishable, eternal body. Jesus will make believers alive through His life-giving Spirit, a power God alone wields.

15:46. Grammatically, the words the spiritual and the natural are in the neuter gender. They refer to two kinds of bodies (see v. 44) and not to Adam or Christ. "Spiritual" here refers to a body brought to life by the last Adam, Christ.

15:47-49. Paul contrasts the first man Adam and those who have borne his image with the second man and

those who will bear his image. The first man was made of earth. This language emphasizes the transitory nature of those who are related to the first Adam, with bodies that return to dust. The “second man” from heaven refers to Jesus in His glorified humanity, as God-man and Messiah, who is coming from heaven to impart imperishable eternal bodies to those who have borne the image of the man made of dust.

15:50. Our earthly condition is such (flesh and blood and corruption, references to our perishable physical nature) that our Adamic bodies cannot inherit the kingdom, implying that they somehow must be changed.

15:51-53. Paul supports the above implication (v. 50) with an apostolic revelation that though not everyone will die before Christ’s coming, those who are alive when He comes will all be changed. No one is transported to the eternal state unchanged.

15:52. “In a moment” signifies the smallest possible division of something, in this case time. “Twinkling of an eye” similarly implies rapidity. Such will be the swiftness of the transformation of the living when the last trumpet sounds at Christ’s return.

15:53. The body that bears the image of the man of dust (the first Adam) must inevitably be changed into the incorruptibility and immortality of the body that bears the image of the man from heaven (the second Adam).

15:54-55. Paul conflates Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 in this citation. The exchange of corruptible for incorruptibility comes only when death and corruption are swallowed up by Jesus Christ. This passage does not teach the doctrine of “soul sleep”—a suspended state for believers between physical death and the change into glorified bodies. Believers are with the Lord immediately after death (see Luke 23:43; Acts 7:55-59; 2 Cor. 5:1-8).

15:56. This verse represents a theological aside that Paul developed further in a letter he wrote some months after this present one (see Rom. 7).

15:58. Most anything we do in this life is vanity (Ecc. 1:2-3), but labor in the Lord has eternal value.