

## *In God's Image*

*Genesis 1:26-2:4a*

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.’ What does this mean? What does it mean to be made in God’s image? One thing it means is that men and women possess the attributes of personality, as God himself does, ... To have personality one must possess knowledge, feelings (including religious feelings), and a will. This God has, and so do we... A second element that is involved in man’s being created in the image of God is morality. This includes the two further elements of freedom and responsibility. To be sure, the freedom men and women possess is not absolute. Even in the beginning the first man Adam, and first woman, Eve, were not autonomous. They were creatures and were responsible for acknowledging this by obedience in the matter of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... The third element involved in man’s being made in God’s image is spirituality, meaning that man is made for communion with God, who is Spirit (John 4:24), and that communion is intended to be eternal as God is eternal... here lies our true worth. We are made in God’s image and are therefore valuable to God and others.” James Boice*

- I. The purpose of God creating the heavens and earth with its profound support system, was to provide an explicitly unique habitation for life to thrive in. He called everything He created good, meaning that it was perfect and without flaw. **On day one** he spoke light into existence and separated the light from dark. He called the light day and the dark night. **On day two** God made the sky. He put an expanse (a canopy, a tent) between the water below and the water above. It separated the earth from the upper atmosphere. **On day three** God separated the waters from the ground and made the seas. And he spoke into existence vegetation, seed bearing plants and seed-bearing fruit trees, all after their own kind. **On day four** God spoke the sun, the moon and the stars into existence as well as the seasons, days, and years. **On day five** God spoke life into existence (*nephesh / soul. He gave life consciousness*). He created sea life and birds, and he blessed them and said be fruitful and multiply, all after its kind. **On day six** God spoke into existence livestock, creatures that move along the ground and wild animals, all after its kind. God allows tremendous variation within a kind, but one "kind" will never become another "kind." And **on day six**, he made man for the purpose of ruling over and subduing the earth and all that is in it.

Gen. 1:3-30

Ps. 8:3-9

- II. Being created in God's image means that man has been given moral consciousness, intelligence to think and reason abstractly, speech, emotion, a will, and the capacity for worshipping and loving God. When God created man, he created him for the purpose of interacting with his Creator intelligently, emotionally, and spiritually. Man's creation involves responsibility. If man were his own creator, he would be responsible to no one but himself, but he isn't. Because we are created by God, we will be held accountable to Him alone for what we do in every area of our lives morally, spiritually, and physically.

Gen. 1:26-31  
1 Peter 1:18-20  
Rev. 17:8b  
1 Timothy 1:9  
John 4:24  
Heb. 10:5  
James 3:9  
Gen. 9:6

*"This is a progression, from the body (matter) to soul (consciousness) to spirit "(life with God consciousness)". Boice*

- III. Six times God said that what he had made was good, but now that his work is complete, he calls it "**exceedingly good**." This is also the first time the definite article "**the**" is used to stress the end of God's creating work (the sixth day instead of a fifth day). *"The whole universe was a beautiful, perfect creation, the finest that the mind and heart of God Himself could create for man."* And what do you do after your work is complete, you rest. We get the sense that God was very satisfied with what he had done. After the sixth day of creation God rested (not, *he is resting*) *for he is constantly at work fulfilling His will.*

Gen. 1:31-2:4  
Jn. 5:17  
Matt. 11:28-29

*"God, having completed His work of creation, rests, as if to say, 'This is the destiny of those who are My people; to rest as I rest, to rest in Me.' " (Boice)*

**Hebrews 4:9-10** *There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.*

# Responding to the LGBTQ+ People in Your Life: 5 Bible-Based Truths

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

Within the last decade, acceptance of LGBTQ+ lifestyles have been on the rise in America and beyond. The Pew Research Center shared last year that the majority of people who approved of homosexual lifestyles didn't consider religion important in their daily lives. Later in 2020, a separate report found that nearly half of adults identifying as LGBT claim to be religious.

It can be a murky area where even the most compassionate and sincere Bible-believing Jesus follower can hesitate to step.

"Claiming the name of Christ is sometimes a dangerous business. And holding to God's revealed truth in His Word concerning homosexuality is even more dangerous," Becket Cook wrote in his book, *A Change of Affection: A Gay Man's Incredible Story of Redemption*. "If you believe that homosexuality is a sin, you are immediately labeled a bigot or homophobic."

"Somewhere in the last decade, 'I disagree with you.' came to mean 'I hate you.' ... Although we are not forced to bow down to a golden image, we are pressured to bow down to the great god of Public Opinion. Over the last several years, I've seen many Christians cave to culture."

So what's a believer to do? Consider these 5 Biblical truths as you minister to your LGBTQ loved ones:

1. No matter what identity a person chooses, that individual was created in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 is very clear. "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." It wasn't random or haphazard. God intricately knit every human being in the womb (Psalm 139:13). Treat every single person you encounter the way God intended—as His beautiful creation. God's people are reminded to "clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

>>The late Rev. Billy Graham once explained why you were created

2. Stand firm in your faith. Don't confuse loving God's creation with affirming the sin the world promotes. Jesus was firm in His stance on a variety of topics, including marriage, which He cited between one man and one woman in Matthew 19:5. As followers of Christ, our marching orders

are simple (per Mark 12:30-31): We are to love God and love people. But we're also "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). We're supposed to put on the armor of God and resist things contrary to God's Word (Ephesians 6:13). We're also told not to grow weary in doing good (Galatians 6:9) no matter what's happening around us.

3. Homosexuality is complicated, but it's not a gray area. It's sin, so it separates a person from a Holy God, but it's rooted so much deeper. Cook reminds his readers, there are gay pride parades but not gossip pride parades. "Homosexual orientation affects the whole person: the mind, will, emotion and body," he writes. "When I was fully immersed in that lifestyle, my entire identity was wrapped up in my sexual orientation. And the only thing that changed that identity for me was the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

4. Transformation isn't up to you. You can introduce people to Jesus all day long, but you personally can't transform a single soul. Yes, you should pray. Yes, you should invite your LGBTQ+ loved one to church (even virtual church). And there is nothing wrong with grabbing a socially distant cup of coffee and gently challenging your friend. But remember, as you walk in obedience to Christ, turn everything—especially your loved one—over to God. He promises His Word will not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11) and simply urges us to be ready at all times to share Christ (1 Peter 3:15). Consider Colossians 4:6: "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

>>Cissie Graham Lynch: Speaking to the LGBTQ community with grace & truth

5. Proclaiming Christ, even in love, is counter-cultural. Expect backlash, particularly from a society that continually normalizes and promotes all sexual sin via media platforms. LGBTQ characters account for 9.1 percent of series regular characters on scripted broadcasts (primetime, adult and youth programming), according to the 2020 GLAAD "Where Are We On TV" report. Jesus didn't condone the outward embrace of sin, but he didn't outcast the people involved. He talked with the woman at the well (John 4). He ate with tax collectors (Luke 19). But his message of God's love never wavered.

To that end, Christians shouldn't alter the Word of God based on popular thought.

"The consciences of today's Christians are being corrupted by the oppressive cultural milieu and the extreme social pressure surrounding the issue of homosexuality, but we know that the law of the Lord is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33) and though we may succeed in muting our conscience, the Word of God is eternal," Cook said.

"It is never safe to tamper with conscience and it is absolutely fatal to tamper with God's Word."

## CC Oley

Satan has successfully confused young people, children, adults and even the church about what it means to be a man or a woman.

The acceptance of transgenderism, wokeism, gender identity, the use of different pronouns to identify oneself other than with their true sexual identity as either a man or a woman, to even using language like having one's sex assigned at birth has infiltrated almost every aspect of our culture, especially among young people who have been immersed in a godless educational system that promotes and encourages it.

Cultural indoctrination from social media influencers, the progressive culture of public schools and institutions of higher learning, the internet, smart phones, liberal media etc. is taking a toll on the moral foundation of this nation.

It's infuriating to say the least when the sex industry pushes for gender affirming surgery on young boys and girls who have been successfully duped into thinking that they are what they are not, which ruins them for life.

And the question is, how do we as believers respond to it?

We certainly can't remain silent out of fear of reprisal or for the sake of not hurting someone's feelings. God's truth compels us to take a stand and not back down.

**1 Cor. 16:13-14** *13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14 Do everything in love.*

The best response is to know your Bible. Make sure you have a world view that is shaped and formed by God's Word, not by the culture.

**Col. 2:8** *See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.*

The elemental spiritual forces of this world are called the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms in Eph. 6:12.

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, know how to respond in a Christlike manner.

*"There's enormous pressure to believe that both homosexuality and transgenderism are good," Johnston says. "Christians must be the ones to bring healing on these issues and to present the Biblical narrative with grace and kindness—but with the truth." (harbingerdaily.org / Doctrine of Demons Bent on Indoctrinating Young Minds*

We are to respond with grace, kindness and out of love, but that doesn't mean that we in any way buy into their godlessness and accept it .

3<sup>rd</sup>, take a stand and don't back down.

Ask questions like: What does God say about sexual identity? Are there more than two genders, and if so then where in the Bible does it say that? Did God make a mistake when you were born a boy or girl? Did he make men and women to be two separate genders without variation? What's God's view concerning homosexuality, transgenderism, and the like. Does he speak out against it? What's God's view on marriage?

know where to turn (that's apologetics)

Genesis 1:27; Gen. 2:21-24; Romans 1:21-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11,18; Leviticus 18:22.

**1 Peter 3:15** *But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

4<sup>th</sup>, know the gospel. It's our responsibility to know it. Do you know it? Can you state it? Do you yourself believe it?

It one's thing to speak out against the insidious godlessness that is taking our culture by storm, it's quite another to offer an alternative to a sinful lifestyle that God does not and will not honor.

Gospel Scriptures:

**Romans 3:23** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

**Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Romans 5:8** *But God demonstrates his own love in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us.*

**Eph. 2:8-9** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Romans 10:9-10** *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

**Jn. 3:16-17** *16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

**Romans 2:4** *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*