



Christian Citizenship

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God’s kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God’s Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the “public square” with our message of Christ’s mercy for all. Please pray for God’s will to be done... in Jesus’ name.

Identity Matters

The response to “gay pride” is not pride in heterosexuality. Or any “sexuality.” The answer is humility. “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life” (Proverbs 22:4). The Scripture says: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). In humility, we give thought to our identity.

Identity matters. It can be shaped by the language and words we use. What we call a boy or girl matters. Since the 1960s, both government and church schools have desired to help children “be comfortable with their sexuality.” Tempted by the progressiveness of the world, Christian schools have identified boys and girls as “sexual from birth.” But what does this mean? What did it mean to Alfred Kinsey, the man who coined the phrase? What does it mean to any teen or adult who was ever described this way as a child?

The focus on sexual identity is nearly everywhere, from a young man’s smartphone to a young girl’s clothing (or lack of). During prom season, it is common to hear even a mom say, “Doesn’t my daughter look sexy?” But how does God identify us? In Baptism, He calls us His own child! Because of what Jesus Christ did for us, we have one eternal identity, one worth greater than any other. Baptized or unbaptized, the human creature does not identify himself or herself, but is identified by the Creator.

In the midst of his struggle against homosexual desires, Christopher Yuan began to understand his true identity. “My identity was not ‘gay’ or ‘homosexual’ or even ‘heterosexual,’ for that matter. My identity as a child of the living God must be in Jesus Christ alone . . . God never said ‘Be heterosexual, for I am heterosexual.’ He said, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” (*Out of a Far Country* by Christopher Yuan.)

What can we do? Remember that the Lord identifies us in His prayer: “Our Father who art in heaven.” Teach children to think and live as sons and daughters who glorify not themselves, but God the Father (1 Cor. 10:31). Be alert to false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-2; 18-21). Resist being conformed by the world (Ro. 12:1). Be humble (Prov. 16:18-19; Is. 2:12; Mt. 23:12). Live in anticipation of Jesus’ coming (Titus 2:1-2; 11-14).

Please pray for men and women to be set free from wrong identity and pride... in Jesus’ name.

Sex Education and Singleness

In classrooms and at home, well-meaning teachers and parents have been speaking to children about “the gift of sexuality.” This is not only ambiguous, but also very different from “God’s *design* for sexuality.” After saying “thank you” to the giver, we often decide what we want to do with the gift. But “God’s *design* for sexuality” tells us that God the Creator has the plan and purpose for male, female, desires, intimacy, and procreation.

When we speak about God’s “gift of sexuality,” we turn eyes toward the *created* (the gift, the right to enjoy it, the creature, that is, us); but when we speak about God’s *design* for sexuality, we turn eyes toward the *Creator*, the Designer, the Authority. God’s design for sexual intimacy is within the boundaries of one man/one woman marriage, but His design for male and female is **not** bound by marriage. To be labeled a “sexual being” shadows our vocations of manhood and womanhood. Boys can be mentored to work, build up, protect, and engage in daily life without sensual implications. Girls can be mentored to help, encourage, counsel, and build relationships without sensual suggestions.

What impact might years of sex education (or even abstinence education with a focus on “waiting” for the “joys of marital sex”) have on an unmarried man or woman? Might he or she be tempted to believe they’ll never be all they were meant to be if they don’t marry and enjoy sexual intimacy? There is liberation for the single man or woman in knowing that Jesus Christ was not married and yet He was fully human.

Also liberating for the Christian man or woman is knowing who we will be in heaven. Jesus tells us that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage . . .” (Matthew 22:29-30). It does not appear that “sexuality,” sexual desires, or sexual behavior are part of our eternal personhood. If earthly marriages are no longer binding in heaven; if, indeed, we “neither marry nor are given in marriage,” then neither is our identity here on earth sexually bound. In heaven, we will be the person—male or female, body and soul—that we were on earth only perfect in every way.

Christians should want to affirm sexual intimacy as the “good,” “one flesh” union of husband and wife that God created it to be. After all, this is how He brings children into the world! However, the exaggerated place of sexuality in cradle to grave sex education can be hurtful to the single man or woman. A “sexual” identity tempts us away from the friendships that unmarried brothers and sisters in Christ should be free to enjoy.

The baptized child of God can live fully as a male or female without ever experiencing sexual intimacy. Self-control, as evidenced by the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 7:7) is a “fruit of the Spirit.” We can rightly say that with self-control comes order and strength for life. Mature manhood or womanhood is not dependent upon sexual intimacy. Man does not become man by getting married and being “one flesh” with his wife, nor does woman become woman by getting married and being “one flesh” with her husband.

What can we do? Define “sexuality.” (There are multiple definitions depending upon who is advocating for it.) Learn for yourself how Planned Parenthood and SIECUS define “sexuality” by visiting their websites. Contrast the origin and founders of sex education with biblical manhood and womanhood, chastity, human relationships, marriage and procreation. Come to grips with the fact that sex education was intended by its founders to be “a social movement.” Help boys and girls to understand that being male or female is a vocation; it is a way for us to live with purpose and bring glory to God. Believe that mature manhood and womanhood are not dependent on being married; thus, not sexually driven. Encourage parents to read *The Failure of Sex Education in the Church: Mistaken Identity, Compromised Purity* by Linda Bartlett. Please visit www.ouridentitymatters.com.

Please pray that men and women—married or single—endeavor to live holy lives... in Jesus' name.

Helping to Carry the Cross of SSI

Does sex education in the church unintentionally place people who carry the cross of same-sex attraction (SSI) outside the church family? With a strong emphasis on the “gift of sexuality” and the “wondrous joy of sex in marriage,” do you think that sex education in the church too easily forgets about our brother or sister in Christ who practices celibacy but battles same-sex desires? We love our Christian neighbor who struggles with homosexual desires when we help them trust their identity as a baptized child of God. They—like us—have the promise of abundant life in Christ (John 10:10), not where we will find fullness of sexuality, but complete holiness and everlasting life with God.

In a sin-tainted world, a “sexual” identity can take us captive. “After all, this is who God made me to be.” But God has no desire for us to be in debt to our own flesh and bound to live according to its faithless ways. He calls us to be holy. A “holy” identity is all about God the Father claiming us as His dear children. In Christ, our fallen nature has no claim on us. Our flesh side may tempt us, but we aren’t obligated to obey its impulses or satisfy its desires. Why? Because we “did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear” (Ro. 8:15). In a biblical sense, holy usually means “set apart for God.” It means being different from the sensual world. It means that neither our identity nor our behavior is common. Something that is common is useable by anyone. But we are useable by God. The baptized child of God is encouraged to be “a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work” (1 Tim. 2:21). God is the Master. The house is our body. Our good work is to turn eyes away from self to God.

What can we do? Read! Listen! Recommended books on the topic of same-sex attraction (SSI) include: *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story* by Christopher Yuan; *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness & Homosexuality* by Wesley Hill; *Why Not Same-Sex Marriage: A Manual for Defending Marriage Against Radical Deconstruction* by Daniel Heimbach; *Forgive Us Our Sins: Homosexuality in the Light of God’s Truth* by Scott I. Barefoot and Richard D. Starr; and *Sexual Morality in a Christless World* by Matthew Rieger. Two websites are christopheryuan.com and rosariabutterfield.com.

Please pray for humility... in Jesus' name.

