

# PASTORAL PRIMER

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*Gender Identity, God's Design, and  
Walking in Newness of Life*

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

CHURCH ALLIANCE



## 02

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There's a lot of talk about gender identity these days. We innately long to feel at home in our skin and to be comfortable with who we are. But where should humanity look to find its true identity? In union with Christ.

*“How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:2-11 ESV)*

We see that union with God was the plan from the very beginning. Being united with God was done to enrich all creation with His love, goodness, beauty, wisdom, and truth. God desired human beings, made in His image and likeness, to cultivate, steward, and expand His righteous reign and rule worldwide.

Humans were not only created in God's image but were also made distinctively male and female.

Genesis 1:27 (ESV) tells us that men and women are integral to God's ongoing project in this world, and their biology plays a central role:

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

God then tells these co-laborers of creation that there is essential work He wants them to do.

*“And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ESV)*

Ultimately, this speaks to God's creative genius. But it also testifies to the reality of God's design for humanity and its flourishing.

At the outset of Scripture, God mercifully laid out His design for humanity— calling all of us to understand, respect, embrace, and follow Him. The biological reality of being created male or female is central to His creation — and genuine human flourishing means abiding by this God-ordained design.



## 03

When we follow Christ and submit to God's design, plans, and purposes, we become more fully human, like the image-bearers He created us to be.

But one significant spiritual reality gets in our way: The Fall.

In the creation account in the early pages of Genesis, we see that sin and corruption sought to distort and upend God's rule and reign at every turn. We're keenly aware of the brokenness ushered in by Adam and Eve when they decided to reject God's truth for a lie. This brokenness now permeates all of God's good creation. It affects us in several ways. St. Paul teaches that all creation is in "bondage to corruption" (Romans 8:21 ESV). Death is in the world and our bodies. This experience of death also creates anxiety, causing us "through fear of death [to be] subject to lifelong slavery" (Hebrews 2:16 ESV).

The corruption of the world also turned each human being toward the self in profoundly unhealthy ways. Before the fall, the man and woman were "naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25 ESV). Immediately after their primal act of disobedience, they hid themselves from the presence of God (Genesis 3:7-8 ESV). Each human is, by nature, "incurvatus in se"—turned in on the self (St. Augustine). Man does not fear, love, or trust in God. Everything is measured by what pleases the self.

It is that condition that makes people in our day susceptible to the confusion of gender identity. We're seeing a rapid rise in individuals—particularly adolescents and teens—questioning their biological reality. Our society is all too eager to entertain and unquestioningly affirm their confusion.

But Christ, through His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, offers to rescue us from this downward spiral. He came to bear the weight of our humanity to save us from ourselves, our confusion, and our sin. The writer to the Hebrews emphasizes that by assuming a human nature into His person, the Son of God understands every temptation we experience:

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16 ESV)*

We all face temptation in various ways. So, there's no room for condemnation of those whose struggle with sin differs from ours. We are all broken, susceptible to sin and corruption, and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23 ESV). God commands us not to judge others when we have sin present in our own lives (Matthew 7:1-5 ESV).

Christians have a moral obligation to speak the truth in love. We must be humble and compassionate when dealing with others. Philippians 2:3 (ESV) says,

*"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."*

## 04

And the Apostle Paul says in Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV):

*“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

In love is how we present the truth—with humility and grace.

Ultimately, the truth needs to be shared and known. As we saw in Genesis, biological reality is essential to God’s creation and truth. When we abandon the biological reality regarding the sexes, serious consequences may include devastating, irreversible physical and psychological harm.

Male and female are not malleable categories or artificial social constructs that can be adjusted to suit an individual’s feelings or sexual desires. When we ignore or reject this truth, we ignore God’s desires and design for His beloved image-bearers. We exchange truth for a lie.

So, let’s be kind-hearted, humble, and compassionate truth-tellers. Let’s make known God’s good design for His image-bearers. Let’s open our doors and hearts to those struggling with issues of gender identity. Let’s seek to understand them better so that we can walk beside them in humility and friendship.

And let’s look to Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV) to be our guide in this endeavor:

*And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Jesus conquered death for us. And He will conquer death in us. Whatever crosses you face, take them up and follow Him. He will not leave you nor forsake you. Jesus will be with you—even through the valley of the shadow of death until we stand on the new earth of the new creation and confess, *“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:55-57 ESV).