

# / by design series study guide

Speaker: Rosemary Flaaten

Date: March 9/10 2019

**PURSUE RELATIONSHIP:** Opportunities to connect as a group

1. What is one thing you miss from “the good old days”? (e.g. drive in movie theatres, a great restaurant that closed down, less traffic, etc.)
2. In the sermon we read from Genesis 1:27 where God made humans as male and female. In her message, Rosemary said, “...both genders are needed to provide a full reflection of God.” In your experience, how have you witnessed how men and women complement each other?
3. At times our society, and even our churches, have “...put boxes around what it means to be male and female.” How have you felt that gender stereotypes have held you back from being who God created you to be?

**PURSUE GOD:** Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Read Genesis 1:27-30. From this Scripture, what do you notice about humanity’s source of identity, relationships, and work?
2. Read Genesis 3:16-19. From these verses, what do you notice about how sin impacts our identity, relationships, and work?
3. In her sermon, Rosemary talked about how Copernicus revolutionized the way we understand the relationship between the earth and the sun. In what areas of your life do you struggle with keeping God at the centre of your life instead of having God revolve around you?
4. In our society, “gender” is a politically and socially charged word. How would you summarize and contrast the messages of the Bible with the messages we hear from society about gender?

**PURSUE MISSION:** Seek to be the community of God’s people in your community

1. Rosemary talked about “gender dysphoria” as “the very real experience of distress that is associated with the incongruence between your psychological and emotional gender identity (in other words how you see yourself and feel on the inside) and your biological sex. This dysphoria/incongruence is real, it’s painful, it’s earth shattering for you and probably your family.

What would it look like to welcome someone in the church who is struggling with gender dysphoria?

What would it look like to support someone who is struggling with gender dysphoria?

2. Rosemary said, “It doesn’t matter your sexual orientation or gender preference, it doesn’t matter whether you struggle with pornography, addictions, greed, lying, gluttony or breaking the sabbath. It’s Jesus who shows each of us who we really are. It’s only an encounter with Jesus that changes us from the inside out.”

The woman at the well had an encounter with Jesus (John 4:1-30).

In Jesus’ interaction with her, what was he focused on: The woman’s ethnic background, sexual background, and religious beliefs?

Or her identity as a person created in the image of God and His ability to truly quench her ‘thirst’? Discuss.

3. What can we learn from this Scripture in how we can help others have an encounter with Jesus?

4. How is this weekend’s message encouraging and equipping you to lean in with love, uphold truth and offer hope?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

*Start praying that God will identify people in our lives, or bring people into our lives, who are struggling with sexual identity and gender identity so that we have the opportunity to show love, offer hope, and uphold the truth.*

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THE WORD (NIV)

Genesis 1:27-30; Genesis 3:16-19; John 4:1-30

Further reading: Psalm 70:5; 121:1-2; Proverbs 18:13; Matthew 19:11-12; Colossians 1:21-22

Mark Yarhouse, *Exploring Gender Dysphoria*

# / by design series study summary

This message is about gender, but it's not about gender roles. It's about what it means to be created as men and women who are made in the image of God. Our 'By Design' series at CSC is focused on what Scripture tells us about how God designed us, and that includes our gender. "Gender" is a loaded word at this point in our history and society: It is politically and socially charged, a topic fraught with division and confusion. Not too long ago when you filled out various forms one of the questions would be, 'Sex: Male or Female'. Now forms regularly include at least a third option for gender, 'Other'. In many places you'll find more options. Facebook has 71. So why is this the new reality? Why are there now multiple options to what used to be a two-option question?

The answer is rooted in the issue of gender dysphoria, described as "the experience of distress associated with the incongruence wherein one's psychological and emotional gender identity does not match one's biological sex." Our society has decided that instead of two genders, male and female, assigned at birth based on human physiology, we now can decide our gender based on how we self-identify, and this gender can land anywhere on a wide spectrum. Another factor is that too often we have placed boxes around the male and female genders and tried to define what being a male and what being a female should look like.

The topic of gender is tightly interwoven with identity. If we want to have a grasp of gender, we have to have a solid basis for where our identity comes from. In a God-centric worldview, *God* is the one who defines who we are and how we should live. And we find our place, our identity, in His story in the very beginning of the Bible. Genesis 1:27-31 says:

So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.  
God blessed them and said to them,  
"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."  
God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Humans are unique because we are made in the image of God. That is the core of our identity. Not only are we made in God's image, we are made in His image *as male and female*. Both genders are needed to provide a full reflection of God. God made humans male and female, both bearing the image of God, both equal and unique. For the majority, gender identity and the way they express their gender is pretty straightforward. But a number of people experience genuine and intense distress around this area of their lives. We cannot dismiss that gender dysphoria/incongruence is real, it's painful, and it's earth-shattering both for those who experience it and for their families. It can also have a major effect on one's walk with God, because no one asks to suffer with incongruence between their body and how they feel inside. One of the Bible's core messages is that God created the world, and it was good. But in Genesis chapter 3, sin enters the world, and afterwards every human being is born into a fallen existence where there will be disorder and variation. We all experience sickness, pain, loss, crushed dreams, broken relationships, struggle and temptation. But the message of the Bible is also that God is here to walk with us through the pain and to give us hope for the future, not only in this life but in the life to come. When we reach the New Testament we see that Jesus himself affirmed that the Creator made humans male and female, and he redeems the mess started in Genesis 3, reconnecting humanity with God and restoring us to our true identity. We firmly believe that an encounter with Jesus, the Son of God who loves us so much that he gave up his life for us, changes everything. In him we find the love, hope, and truth of God.

So how do we as followers of Jesus hold out this hope, love and truth to others? First, we need to repent of times when we've given simple, trite answers to really tough questions, without compassion. We need to move beyond responding that way so that we can truly welcome others and listen to them - hearing their story. We need to learn to love, and yet at the same time uphold truth, as Jesus did when he interacted with the woman at the well (John 4).

Our problems will not be fixed by changing our bodies. Getting the body we want is not going to fix everything. This is true for those with gender dysphoria, but also those struggling with their weight, self image, physical disability or illness. It doesn't matter our sexual orientation or gender preference, it doesn't matter whether our struggle is with pornography, addiction, greed, lying, gluttony or breaking the sabbath. It's Jesus who shows each of us who we really are. It's only an encounter with Jesus that changes us from the inside out.