

Parents:

For the past couple of months, we have been taking the High Schoolers and Middle Schoolers through a series called “God is ____, I am ____” in which we cover the theological basics of who God is and what He has done and what those truths mean for our identity and how we live. In January we began with the doctrines of creation, God revealing Himself through creation, and man being made in the image of God. During small group time, the students had a slew of questions regarding sexuality, homosexuality, and even abortion. The Youth Council of First Pres thought it might be pertinent to address these topics in the Wednesday night teaching series so that we might give honest answers to the honest questions that are being asked. The Session of Elders at our Church also affirmed this course of action. So for the next four Wednesdays, our plan is to cover these subjects during the teaching time for the next four weeks.

With these sensitive subjects there are other factors to consider. First of all, Wednesday night is a mixed crowd with High Schoolers and Middle Schoolers both present for the same teaching. Secondly, we recognize that it is the right, privilege and responsibility of parents to address these particular subjects with their children. With these things in mind, the theological approach to the teaching will be a focus not upon sex, but on men and women, as whole persons, being made in the image of God with dignity value and worth.

According to our Western secular worldview, people are evolutionary products born of random chance with no inherent dignity or worth. Our bodies, then, are viewed as biological machines with no intrinsic purpose. With this worldview, there are no moral standards for how I use my own body or how I treat others. Even as Christians, we can view the body as a temporary evil that we leave behind when we die and go to heaven. The Scriptures, though, talk about man and woman, **their bodies and souls**, being made in the image of God with value and worth. Even when sin enters the picture, God does not discard His good creation but seeks to redeem it. Thus, Jesus’ death and resurrection results in not only the redemption of our souls but the new heavens and earth where we will live with our renewed, resurrected bodies. Our bodies, along with our souls, are important to God, an integral part of who we are and how God has made us. Therefore, the way we use our bodies and treat the bodies of others must be according to His will and for His glory. These truths have implications for how we treat the opposite sex, LGBT issues, abortion, and even racism, the topics we will cover during the month of March.

For the whole month we will be rooted in Romans 1 where Paul addresses the fact that when we suppress God and try to make creation do what it’s not meant to do, we sinfully dehumanize ourselves and others, failing to live according to the purpose for which God has made us. But as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6, Jesus forgives us and redeems us from that life of sin so that we might become who we were truly meant to be, a people who joyfully reflect the glory of God as men and women who bear His image. Again, this will not be a “sex talk”, nor will it be sensational or explicit. Rather, the teaching will focus on what it means to be made in the image of God.

Additionally, I will be putting all of these teachings on the Youth Ministry podcast (a recording of my teaching available on the internet). As I said, we will be scratching the surface on these topics. The podcasts will be there for you as a parent to delve deeper into these topics with your children if that is your wish. You can find the podcast anywhere where podcasts are made available.

Below are some short summaries of the teachings:

1. People matter- God made us in His image as whole persons. Jesus redeems us as whole persons. It is our duty to use our bodies for His glory and according to His will. Are you treating others around you with respect? How are we treating the opposite sex? Are we relating to the opposite sex according to God's will and His glory?
2. Homosexuality- According to our cultural narrative, sex isn't something we do but who we are. While sexuality is part of our God-given identity, it is not the sum total of who we are. Rather, our identity is rooted in reflecting the holiness of God. This is the end to which we were redeemed by Christ. We will also talk about relating to those in the LGBT community with grace and truth.
3. Abortion- Mary Miller will talk about becoming a mom in her young twenties. The thought of having children was scary and overwhelming. But, by God's grace in Christ, being a mom has been such a blessing. God made us to have kids within a marriage and children are also made in God's image with dignity and worth.
4. Racism- God made diversity for His glory. Jesus is in the business of redeeming people from every tribe and language and people and nation to worship Him for His glory.

As you well know, these topics hold so much weight in our culture today. We also recognize what a privilege and responsibility it is to disciple these young people in this day and time. Please pray for wisdom for us as we seek to address these topics in a Biblically wise way, to the glory of Jesus Christ.

If you have any questions or concerns please email me at shane@fpclw.org or call me at (863) 604-5204.

-Shane Miller