

Week 2: Expressive Individualism and Sexuality

NCAC Adult Sunday School

November 13, 2022



How would you answer the question, “Who are you?”?

Key Resource: *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* by Carl R. Trueman (Crossway, 2022)

Course Goal: To better understand how a changing concept of self has led to this “strange new world” in which we now live and to consider what Scripture teaches about how we should respond.

- We’re not here to condemn the world, but to understand our culture so we can reach our neighbors.
- As we discuss the brokenness of the world, we need to recognize that we’re each broken ourselves.

WHAT IS THE MODERN SELF ?

Trueman claims the unifying factor in the cultural shifts we are witnessing is the changing notion of “self.” We now live in a world that promotes “expressive individualism” and encourages “authenticity.”

Self: The “real me” that each of us discovers by looking inward to our own feelings rather than by considering external factors and objective truths. In today’s culture, authority is given to our inner feelings, and these inner feelings are assumed to be the absolute indicator of our true selves.

Expressive Individualism: The outward expression of one’s inner feelings, based on the belief that each of us must be free to publicly express what we feel inside without the constraints of tradition, religion, or society. Seen in slogans like, “You do you,” “Be true to yourself,” and “Follow your heart.”

Authenticity: Living out our true selves before others, which is believed to be good, healthy and necessary if we are to experience true, personal fulfillment. Those who allow themselves to be bound by external constraints would be considered to be living *inauthentic*—and thus less fulfilling—lives.

VIDEO: “The Truth about Expressive Individualism”

Where do these ideas of self, expressive individualism, and authenticity align with biblical truth?

Where does the modern concept of these ideas have the potential to go wrong?

THE WORLD'S CHANGING CONCEPT OF SEX, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

“Expressive individualism” is perhaps seen most clearly in the modern “sexual revolution”:

*“...the **sexual revolution** does not simply represent a growth in the routine transgression of traditional sexual codes or even a modest expansion of the boundaries of what is and is not acceptable sexual behavior. Not at all. Rather, it is the repudiation of the very idea of such codes in their entirety.*

“More than that, it has come in certain areas, such as that of homosexuality and transgenderism, to require the positive repudiation of traditional sexual mores to the point where belief in, or maintenance of, such views has come to be seen as ridiculous and even a sign of serious mental or moral deficiency...If the individual’s inner identity is defined by sexual desire, then he or she must be allowed to act on that desire in order to be an authentic person.” (Strange New World, p. 25)

Where do you see in our culture the idea that people must be free to express and experience their sexual desires and sexuality?

What language is used to discredit those who dissent from the sexual revolution?

How the world currently distinguishes between sex, gender, and sexuality:

Sex: Although this term can be used to refer to sexual activity, it is also used as a biological term to distinguish between being male, female or intersex “based on reproductive, anatomical, and genetic characteristics.” (*National Institute of Health*)

Examples Include: Male, Female, or Intersex

Gender: “Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.” (*World Health Organization*)

Examples Include: Man, Woman, Nonbinary, Genderfluid, Bigender, and Agender

Gender Identity: Gender Identity is “the internal sense of self that states your gender, regardless of your sex assigned at birth.” (*WebMD*)

Gender Expression: Gender Expression is “how you express your gender identity. Gender expression (or gender presentation) is a combination of clothing, physical appearance, behavior, and mannerisms that convey your gender identity.” (*WebMD*)

Sexuality: "Sexuality is often used interchangeably with sexual orientation, but it covers more than that. Sexuality is a term for someone's behavior, attraction and identity, as well as their likes, dislikes, pleasures, fantasies, intimacies, preferences and more." (CNN)

Examples Include: *Straight, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, and Asexual*

What ideas in our culture's current views on sex and gender might involve some truth?

VIDEO: "A Mistake Christians Make Regarding the LGBTQ+ Movement"

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

The Bible teaches that God created just two classes of gender, and our gender is central to our identity:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

The Bible teaches that sex is a good gift from God intended to serve marriage by allowing not only reproduction, but also the opportunity for a husband and wife to bring mutual pleasure to each other.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:27-28)

"Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1 Corinthians 7:5)

The Bible teaches that God expects us to honor sexual parameters and boundaries He has set for us:

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

The Bible teaches that each of us was designed by God with care, and thus we should accept and be thankful for the body God has given us, rather than wish we had a different body or gender:

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:13-14a)

The Bible teaches that though all men and women are created by God in His image and thus of equal value, God does not want people of one gender presenting themselves as being of the other gender:

“A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.” (Deuteronomy 22:5)

The Bible teaches that Jesus agreed with the Scripture's view of sex, gender, and sexuality:

[Jesus] answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?” (Matthew 19:4)

The Bible teaches that God's design of marriage must be embraced if marriage is to properly illustrate the spiritual truths it was intended to communicate:

“This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:32, following a teaching on the union and the roles of husbands and wives in marriage.)

The Bible teaches that sexual experiences are not necessary for personal fulfillment or authenticity and are not part of what makes you truly human:

“I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.” (1 Corinthians 7:7. Consider as well the life of Jesus, John the Baptist, and many others in Scripture who prove that lifelong singleness and celibacy are also good and to be celebrated.)

The Bible teaches that rejecting God's design for sex and sexuality will not only lead to judgment, but is itself evidence that God's judgment has already come:

²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1:21-27)

What are the implications of Romans 1 as we consider our engagement with society on this issue?

How would you explain to a friend who is suspicious of the Christian perspective on sex and gender why God's design is good?