

Reflection Questions: Matthew 19:1-5 & Genesis 1

For the message, "In the Beginning There Was Love" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on October 3, 2021

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Matthew 19:1-5

1 Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. **2** And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. **3** And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" **4** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

Key Question: What does it mean to follow Jesus when it comes to love, sexuality, and the body?

A summary of the message: What we think about love, sexuality, & the body begins with what we believe about God.

Key Points:

- God's creation of gendered bodies was a part of God's original design for humanity.
- When God created humanity as male and female, God declared it to be very good.
- The story of the Gospel is written within our sexuality (the Bible begins and ends with marriage)

QUESTIONS

1. In answering the Pharisees question, he takes them back to Genesis 1 (Matthew 19:4) and 2 (Matthew 19:5). In doing so, Jesus is taking them and us back to the beginning, immersing us in a story.

- Do you tend to connect what you think about love, sexuality, and the body with what you believe about God? Why, or why not? Discuss.

2. Jesus says that in the beginning, God created humans as male and female. By stating this, we hear Jesus saying that it was God's idea originally to give us bodies—male & female bodies. Let's reflect on this together.

- Christianity teaches that matter matters, that this physical world is good, and that God created our bodies, and declared everything He made "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Do you find it easy or challenging to embrace this original *goodness* of creation and bodies? How do you process the fact that sometimes it doesn't feel like our bodies are good?

- Christopher West in his book, *Our Bodies Tell God's Story*, writes, "The root 'gen'—from which we get words such as generous, generate, genesis, genealogy, progeny, gender and genitals—means 'to produce' or 'to give birth to.' A person's *gen*-der, therefore, is based on the manner in which that person is designed to *gen*-erate new life.' A person's gender is determined by the kind of genitals he or she has."
- What do you find helpful about this quote? What is confusing or causes questions to come to your mind?
- (Note: We should be aware that while a person's sex and gender have usually been thought of as the same thing, today, these words are sometimes used to indicate a distinction, with 'sex' referring to a person's biology and 'gender' describing a person's internal sense of themselves as male or female, or sometimes it's left open to self-definition.)
- Sam Alberry writes in his book, *What God Has To Say About Our Bodies*, "Being embodied is a fundamental part of what makes us human. You cannot fully be you without a body. You cannot fully be you without your body. It is a gift. It is part of your calling. Your way of being human includes your body and your sex."
- What do you find helpful about this quote? What is confusing or causes questions to come to your mind?

3. In our Sunday study of this teaching of Jesus, we noted that the Bible opens with a wedding (Genesis 1 & 2) and ends with a wedding (Revelation 19ff)—that God originally designed marriage to be a picture of the union and communion that Jesus will have with his bride, the church.

- We'll explore this more as the series unfolds, but for now, is this a new concept for you or have you heard about it before?
- In her book, *Rethinking Sexuality: God's Design and Why It Matters*, Juli Slattery asks, "Why is sexuality important to God?" Then she answers,

"Because sexuality is a holy metaphor of a God who invites us into covenant with Himself.... Written within your sexuality are echoes of an eternal, invisible truth.... When God created sexual desire to awaken our longing for love, even marriage is not the ultimate fulfillment of that desire. Marriage is the shadow, the foretaste, the metaphor of the true longing to be known, embraced, accepted, and celebrated by our Creator. This means our sexuality is infused with a significant spiritual purpose, regardless of our marital status."
- How does Slattery's words help you to connect the dots with what God created in the beginning, and what God ultimately created us for, namely union and communion with Him?