

## Do Feelings Define Reality? [Slide 1]

To introduce today's sermon I would like you to listen to this four minute video clip on interviews taken at the University of Washington. [Watch video clip from You Tube from the Family Policy Institute in Washington](#). What you heard in that video were some clear assertions that what a person feels about themselves actually defines their reality. Whatever gender a person feels they are defines what they truly are. When the interviewer pressed the issue, you could see that students started to waver. It became harder for them to agree with his self-assessment that he was actually a six foot six Chinese woman.

Now before you write these interviews off as dopey college students, recognize that they were parroting what they heard from professors and from liberal progressives and radical feminists. As far back as the Women's Conference in 1995 in Beijing, China and probably earlier than that, influential leaders were saying that gender is not determined by biology but is actually a social construct imposed on people by society. One feminist writer expressed it this way: "Although many people think that men and women are the natural expression of a genetic blueprint, gender is a product of human thought and culture, a social construction that creates the true nature of all individuals."

According to feminists and others the way to combat this oppressive assignment of gender by the culture is to let everyone choose what gender they are. People should be able to decide whether they are male, female, homosexual, lesbian, or transgendered. I think now there are more than those five categories. How do you decide what gender you are? By what you feel inside. The reality of male or female according to this viewpoint is now determined by your inner feelings rather than by biological reality.

This appeal to feelings is the standard apologetic for homosexuals, lesbians, and transgendered people who routinely argue that they are the way they are because since childhood they always felt like they were the opposite gender. Those who have a religious or Christian background will often tack on the claim that God made them that way, that he is the one responsible for their feelings being at odds with their chromosomes.

[Slide 2] What is the problem or problems with letting people define their own reality based on what they feel? Why can't we just be tolerant and accept them for who they think they are? If that is all that was at issue, we could just let people live in their own little world. We may think they're wrong, but why not just let them live in peace believing what they want? The reason is because it never stops there. Liberal progressives and LGBT people don't just want tolerant acceptance, they want to force others to conform to their worldview.

Transgender people not only want us to accept their self-definition, they want to force us to accept them using what we consider is the wrong bathroom. They want to force businesses to allow them to use the bathroom they choose, thereby compelling everyone who disagrees with them to abide by their definition of reality. And as the State of North Carolina found out, they will attempt to force their beliefs by economic boycotts and other measures to punish those who don't agree. In our own backyard, former Mayor Anise Parker rammed through a bathroom ordinance in Houston to allow people to use the public bathroom of their choice and then tried to intimidate pastors by subpoenaing their sermons. That's not tolerance. That's intolerance when you try to punish someone for not believing as you do.

World Magazine reported in October 2012 that a federal judge ordered Massachusetts prison officials to provide a tax-payer funded gender reassignment surgery to a transgender inmate who

killed his wife. The inmate sued the State claiming that gender reassignment surgery was a medical necessity for him. US District Court Judge Mark Wolf said, “There is no less intrusive means to correct the prolonged violation of Kosilek’s Eighth Amendment right to adequate medical care.” So, the citizens of Massachusetts have to help pay for this inmate’s elective surgery whether they believe in it morally or not.

The same kind of intolerance shows up in the abortion debate, especially with the attempt by the Democrats to repeal the Hyde Amendment so that the Federal Government can pay for abortions. Abortionists may say they want government out of people’s bedroom when it comes to regulating abortion, but then they want government, meaning you and me, to help pay for those abortions that we consider morally evil. That is gross hypocrisy to try to get the government tax system to pay for abortions.

In Canada, Trinity Western University had to go to court because accrediting agencies would not accredit the school’s Law program or teacher education program because they held traditional views on marriage.

Liberal progressives argued that they just wanted homosexuals to have the same right to marriage as heterosexuals, but that is not all they wanted. When business owners did not want to cater to gay weddings they fined and jailed those who did not morally agree. Performers and government officials have lost opportunities or jobs because they did not agree with gay marriage. The first reason, that defining reality by feelings is a problem is because it will end up in coercion and punishment of those who don’t agree with their feelings, as it always seems to happen.

[Slide 3] The second problem with defining reality by feelings is unintended negative consequences. The real problem with the bathroom bills is not so much the threat from transgenders, although people who share the bathroom with transgenders may feel uncomfortable and their rights violated. The real problem is with sexual predators. If you cannot legally keep a man out of a woman’s bathroom how do you know whether he is truly a person suffering from gender dysphoria versus being a sexual predator. Already we have a number of cases on record where sexual predators or voyeurs accessed female bathrooms in order to look at women undressing or to take pictures of them or worse. Given human depravity, these are reasonable concerns.

Allowing males who feel they are women to compete in female sports will destroy female sports due to unfair competition. These are all unintended negative consequences of denying reality.

[Slide 4] A third problem concerns the harm we do to LGBT people themselves. We need to tell people their feelings are messed up, that there is something wrong with them when their feelings do not match reality and do not match God’s word. Rosaria Butterfield, was a practicing lesbian for many years until the Lord saved her. Listen to her words:

A few years ago, I was speaking at a large church. An older woman waited until the end of the evening and approached me. She told me that she was 75 years old, that she had been married to a woman for 50 years, and that she and her partner had children and grandchildren. Then she said something chilling. In a hushed voice, she whispered, “I have heard the gospel, and I understand that I may lose everything. Why didn’t anyone tell me this before? Why did people I love not tell me that I would one day have to choose like this?” That’s a good question. Why did not one person tell this dear image bearer that she could not have illicit love and gospel peace at the same

time? Why didn't anyone—throughout all of these decades—tell this woman that sin and Christ cannot abide together, for the cross never makes itself an ally with the sin it must crush, because Christ took our sin upon himself and paid the ransom for its dreadful cost?

We have all failed miserably at loving fellow image bearers who identify as part of the LGBT community—fellow image bearers who are deceived by sin and deceived by a hateful world that applies the category mistake of sexual orientation identity like a noose. And we all continue to fail miserably. On the biblical side, we often have failed to offer loving relationships and open doors to our homes and hearts, openness so unhindered that we are as strong in loving relationship as we are in the words we wield. We also have failed to discern the true nature of the Christian doctrine of sin. For when we advocate for laws and policies that bless the relationships that God calls sin, we are acting as though we think ourselves more merciful than God is.

May God have mercy on us all.

Walt Heyer was born male and lived for a while as a transgendered woman. What confused him was that early in his life his grandmother clothed him in dresses, withheld affirmation from him as a boy and lavished praise on him when he was dressed as a girl. She made him promise to never tell his parents what they were doing. Walt grew up, got married, but could not shake the feelings that he was a woman.

At the age of 42 Walt sought out a gender psychologist who assured him that he suffered from gender dysphoria and Walt underwent surgical change and presented as a woman. The change did not address the deep wounds in his soul and did not bring permanent relief. He went for psychiatric help and was diagnosed with dissociative disorder he developed to deal with the cross-dressing by his grandmother and later sexual abuse by an uncle. He later confronted the gender specialist who recommended his surgical change and that man admitted he should not have approved Walter for surgery. No one spoke the truth to him that his feelings were wrong.

A few years back, Calvary Assembly of God in Orlando, Florida accepted a man who had complete sex reassignment surgery, and even allowed the person to do volunteer maintenance work at the church. The individual agreed to use a gender-neutral restroom in the office rather than upset females in the women's restroom.

One day, the individual appeared in the church administrator's office, weeping and confused. The person said that after extensive counsel, he realized that God didn't make creative mistakes and he resumed a male identity.--- Christianity Today Feb. 2008, p. 57

When our feelings don't match reality it's usually because something has happened to corrupt our feelings. We need to work on changing our feelings, not our reality.

God is a good God, as we learned from Jason last week. If he tells us not to do something or if he creates us a certain way, the best thing for us is to follow his plan, not try to circumvent it with our own reasoning or feelings. We do no good when we shield people from the truth out of a mistaken fear of hurting their feelings.

I call this the idolatry of feelings. We make decisions based on our feelings rather than based on God's truth and his righteousness. Whatever we supplant God with, that thing is an idol. In this case our feelings become an idol when we go with them rather than with what God says.

[Slide 5] I'm going to spend the rest of our time providing a Biblical correction to the problem. I found this to be a somewhat difficult task because the Bible has very little to say directly about feelings, which should tell you something right away. But the Bible does warn us about our capacity for self-deception and our need to look outside of ourselves for wisdom.

Look at Jeremiah 17:9-10 on your outline. Let's read that. Read. Because of the Fall and the entrance of sin, our heart, our thoughts and feelings have been terribly corrupted, so that we are capable of great self-deception. We dare not rely on our thoughts and feelings alone.

One of the rationalizations people make about homosexuality is that God made me that way and therefore it must be okay for me to fulfill the desires he gave me. This is a terrible misunderstanding about human nature. It is true that God made and formed each of us in our mother's womb. It is not true that everything about me is the result of God's creation. The other part of the story is that sin affects every aspect of our being from conception onward. The doctrine of total depravity means that every part of me; body, mind, feelings, personality, every part has been tainted by sin. I can't claim that what I feel is the result of God. My feelings are just as easily the result of sin.

How do we tell the difference between God's influence and sin's influence? That is the reason we have a Bible. When we read in the Bible and it clearly states in both the OT and the NT that homosexual behavior is sin and that God never tempts anyone to sin, then we know that those same sex attractions are not the result of God's work but are the effects of sin. Everyone is affected by sin. Whether it is homosexual lust or heterosexual lust or greed or pride or jealousy or whatever, those things are the result of sin, not the result of God's work.

We read and follow the Bible because it proclaims the objective truths that challenge the falsehoods and deceptions that my sinful heart entertains. That is why my first step should not be asking what my feelings are saying, but rather asking what God has declared in his Word.

Proverbs 28:26 says, "Read." We either trust in our own heart, our own thoughts and feelings, or we live by wisdom. Wisdom is found outside of us, not within us. God is the source of wisdom, not us.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Read." We must trust in God and in his truth, not in our own understanding. To acknowledge God in all your ways means that you make all your decisions based on God's truth, not based on your own understanding of things. Even in the church there are people who ignore God's truth and follow the thinking of the culture. When you ignore God and follow the wisdom of the world you become entrapped in sin and you help keep others entrapped in sin. People don't escape their private hells until they stop relying on worldly wisdom and they begin to follow God's wisdom.

This is why going along to get along with the world is not the loving thing to do. People need to hear the truth, however unpleasant and painful it may be to them, because it is the only way they will ever be free from sin and be able to live a truly joyous, spiritually healthy life. We are not helping people when we affirm their feelings and withhold God's truth from them. You may feel better about yourself in the short term by not sharing God's truth and not upsetting them, but you're not going to feel better in the long term when God asks you why you withheld the truth they needed to hear.

Don't limit your awareness of the problem to sexual or gender issues. They are sometimes the most obvious problems, but there are all sorts of areas in which people's feelings don't match

reality. They may be anorexic, but think they are fat. They may be beautiful, but think they are ugly. They may be competent, but think they are failures. They may be valued, but think they are worthless. Feelings often distort reality.

[Slide 6] Where is wisdom to be found? We look outside ourselves for wisdom. Look at Proverbs 2:1-6. Read. Wisdom is something you have to search for like treasure because you don't automatically possess wisdom. It is not found within you. It is found without. Wisdom begins as verse 5 says with a proper fear of God where I recognize his authority and power over my life and I respond with an appropriate deference and respect for his holiness and his justice. As I get to know God I will grow in true wisdom because the Lord gives wisdom. He has the wisdom. I get it from him. Part of it he has recorded in the Bible. Part of it I receive through the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Part of godly wisdom is not to argue with God about how he has made you. Let's read Romans 9:19-21. The chromosomes in every cell in your body proclaim your true gender. Your anatomy proclaims your true gender. Hopefully, your feelings agree with the reality of who you are, but if your feelings do not agree, then there is something wrong with your feelings. Something has happened in your life that has damaged and distorted your feelings. This damage may have happened very early in your life, so early that you don't remember the actual cause of the damage. I believe people when they say they have always felt that way. I believe they may truly not have had a choice in how they feel. Nevertheless, as real as our feelings appear, they are not always accurate. They are not a reliable indicator of truth. They can mislead.

It used to be that most people understood that feelings are not solid truth, that feelings shift and change, and are not a reliable foundation upon which to build your life. People used to understand that. Now we idolize our feelings and elevate them to a trusted position they cannot sustain. Feelings truly are the beach sand of our life. If you build your life or your identity on them, the tides of time and eternity will send your building crashing down. The wise person builds their life on God's wisdom.