

(Excellent!) Questions asked at CCH in our studies on Genesis on 10th October 2021.

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh". Gen 2:24. Here are some further reflections on the questions that we didn't have time for in our Q&A last Sunday. These answers are very compressed and incomplete (and please weigh them against the Bible). I'd be happy to talk further about any of these or any related matters in person. First can I stress that **we welcome all in our church whatever their sexuality, experiences or views.** With love from Charlie. revcharlienewc@gmail.com

DIVORCE

If divorce isn't God's ideal, but we know that many of us Christians have been divorced, in our church, wider family and friends, how do we discuss it and support each other, with Christian love?

- Marriage is to reflect God's grace shaped committed love shown to us in Christ. He doesn't stop loving us!
- We need both to recognise the biblical ideal (see [Matt 19:1-12](#) and [Malachi 2:16](#)) and also the fallen reality of our broken lives (adultery/sexual immorality is given by Jesus as a reason for divorce in [Matt 19:9](#)).
- We need to be honest with one another about this, neither excusing sinful decisions surrounding divorce in the past, nor condemning marriages in the present.
- Life groups and prayer triplets are a good place for discussing these things with great care, acknowledgement of the pain, and application of the overflowing grace that Jesus gives to repentant sinners. There is no condemnation for those in Christ!

SINGLENES

If God says man needs woman to be helped, yet Paul says it is better to be single, how do we put those together since Paul doesn't contradict God. Has the need changed, or who are helpers are changed?

- Yes singleness is a gift in [1 Cor 7](#) (see also [Matt 19:11,12](#)). Singleness permits singlemindedness and is undervalued in churches today where we may have a worldly bias towards "coupledom". Many of us will spend much of our lives single.
- Our ability to rule over the world, and our ability to reflect God in his image is not dependent on being married. Ruling over the world is a humanity wide project.
- Paul says that it is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Cor 7:9) and marriage is the appropriate context for sexual desire.
- We want CCH to be a church where those who are single (for whatever reason) thrive because they find love, intimacy and friendship within the care of the family of the church. See also: [The Plausibility Problem](#)- Ed Shaw.

HOMOSEXUALITY- see also Chris Lowe's talk in the evening [here](#).

Genesis is evidence that marriage before the fall was just for heterosexual, but why do we insist on maintaining this ideal in an imperfect world. It's not consistent with loving our neighbour as ourselves.

- Yes, it is right to remember [Genesis 3](#) and the fall that follows [Genesis 2](#). But that is actually a reason why the rest of the Bible sees homosexual practice as a departure from the Genesis 2 pattern, not a new equivalent development.
- Loving our neighbour means sharing God's good ways, even though they are sometimes difficult or unpopular. It is perfectly consistent to love our neighbours by sharing with them what we feel God's good ways are, even though they may choose to disagree, in which case we go on loving them anyway!
- We must never imply that homosexual sins are worse than others (and we all struggle with all sorts of sins). There is always a great danger of hypocrisy.
- See also the excellent website <https://www.livingout.org/> for some real-life stories.

Will there be a chance to hear other views/interpretations on the subject of sex and homosexuality in the bible? I know other churches are doing Living in Love and Faith course, for example.

- The Church of England's official position on sexuality remains [Lambeth 1:10](#) which rejects "homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture" while commending pastoral sensitivity to all, irrespective of sexual orientation.
- The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) material is available for anyone to read [here](#). It is a significant piece of work produced by the Church of England seeking to represent a range of different opinions on the subjects of marriage, sexuality, gender. Let me know if you would like to engage with this material with others.
- Personally, I find the LLF material flawed in its insistence that this is a secondary issue that Christians must agree to disagree on. I don't think that is consistent with [1 Corinthians 6:9](#). Homosexuality is listed in [Romans 1](#) and not [Romans 14](#).
- It is always important when weighing different perspectives on a controversial topic that we measure carefully what is being said against what God says in the Bible, both in terms of its overarching story (biblical theology) and individual verses in context.

There are senior members of the CoE who are publicly advocating for same sex marriage. Should we remain in an organisation that tolerates this kind of unbiblical thinking in its ranks?

- While the church's teaching hasn't changed (see above), many are calling for the CofE to follow the [Episcopal Church of Scotland](#), [Methodists](#) and [Church in Wales](#) in blessing same sex unions and working towards "equal marriage".
- We should seek to have a voice in these discussions, and graciously share what we believe the Spirit to be saying to the churches in the Scriptures.
- Evangelicals within the CofE have produced a video here explaining our understanding of the goodness of God's ways regarding sex at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vl8bb65vOiE>
- There could come a point where individuals and churches feel that in conscience they cannot remain in fellowship with others commending the blessing of sin.

There are examples of healthy sexual relationships outside of marriage where both people are content. Can this still be seen as damaging?

- There is much to be valued in all sorts of relationships. We have lots to learn from one another, seeing God's common grace in all. (Watch 3mins from Rosaria Butterfield [here](#) on how she learned hospitality within the LGBT community). But contentment, consent or happiness is not the only mark of a healthy relationship.
- If God says that a sexual practice is not to be commended, then we need to trust him. It is not always possible to see that something can be damaging until later on.
- See the book, "[A better story](#)" - Glynn Harrison.

GENDER

ASSUMING: 1. Woman wasn't literally made from a man's rib 2. God did not create male "or" female. WHY do many evangelical Christians insist we are "either" male or female.

- See further down for my understanding of the kind of literature we have in Genesis.
- God made us male and female (Gen 1:27). Every cell in our body is marked XX or XY. Having said that, the fall has affected our bodies, thinking and desires.
- Around 0.5% of the population may have some intersex characteristics.
- Many today find themselves confused about their gender. See Vaughan Roberts' short book on "[Transgender](#)" and others there about Gender Dysphoria.
- God himself shows feminine characteristics in the Scriptures (Isa 66:13, Isa49:15, 42:14), though the pronouns used in OT and NT for God and Jesus are masculine.
- Whatever your identity/gender/label or not, Christ can make you a child of God!

MORE FROM GENESIS

How do we know “one flesh” is talking about sex?

- Because in [1Cor 6:16,17](#) Paul quotes this verse and applies it to sexual practice.

What genre of literature do you understand the start of Genesis to be? Eg is it literal history/science?

- I don't see Genesis 1-11 as a scientific text book. I do believe it to be God's theological revelation of what happened historically.
- It has some elements that are in common with the book of Revelation (significance of numbers, talking beasts, etc). So there may be some picture language (eg in the talking serpent, creation of woman from a rib).
- As a geologist and a theologian, I believe that science when correctly understood, and the Bible when correctly interpreted will not be in contradiction because God is behind both! Happy to talk more about this.
- For more info look at the [Bethinking.org](#) website for students.

1. So did Eve evolve or was she made from Adam's rib?

2. If we evolved then surely sex existed before this passage takes place. How would you respond?

- Evolution is a contested process both within the scientific community and the church, though depending on our understanding of the “days” in Genesis 1, it may not be inconsistent to think that God may have used a form of evolution to bring about his creation.
- However, Paul speaks in [Romans 5](#) of Adam as a real human, through whom sin came into the world.
- See John Lennox “[Can Science explain everything?](#)”

“It was very good”. Charlie said that it was because mankind had been made that it was “very” good. Could it instead be that he'd simply finished creating?

- Yes there may be a sense of “very good” simply because we are at day 6, but the amount of space given to the creation of mankind shows the centrality of humanity in God's purposes. Given passages like [Psalm 8](#), it would be consistent to think that things are “very good” because of man now created as the crown of God's creation. Also the finishing is emphasised on the day of rest: [Day 7](#), not day 6.

A FEW QUESTIONS THAT ARRIVED LATER....

In Gen. 2 we read that woman is created as equal to man and to work alongside him. You pointed out that she was made from a rib and so could be said to be at his side and not above or below him. How is it then that there is are many Christians who don't agree with women speaking / teaching / preaching in Christian or other church meetings?

- I believe the Bible teaches absolute equality and partnership of the sexes, and at the same time a godly ordering and submission that has some similarity with Jesus submitting to his Father (with whom he is fully God)- see [1 Cor 11:3](#). This is not about women being a doormat, nor undervaluing the many teaching roles women are to have (eg [Titus 2](#)) but encouraging the men to step up and take up leadership in the church and family. [1 Cor 14:34-35](#) (which needs to be read in context of [1 Cor 11:1-5](#)) and [1 Tim 2:11-14](#) apply this "headship" to church roles. At CCH we believe that only two roles are restricted to men, eldership (overall leadership of the church) and preaching on a Sunday. For more info see [here](#) and [here](#).

1. It is all very well to quote scripture verses and thoughts to support a Christian arguments for those who may know and even believe the Bible, but how can we help non-Christians who don't believe the Bible and have no real interest in changing their ways?

These answers are primarily for Christians (though I hope they are helpful to all)! I would encourage non-Christians to just start reading the Bible even if they don't think that it carries any authority as the words of God (eg reading through [Mark's gospel](#)- you may find our talks on [Mark](#) helpful too). They will meet the wonderful person of Jesus Christ who so clearly claimed to be and proved to be God's King! Once we come to him for help and forgiveness as our Lord and Saviour, we find him teaching us how to live!

2. Is it against God's teaching to feel attraction for the same sex but not indulge in sex, or is it just the act of sex with a same sex person that's wrong?

I don't believe that same-sex attraction is sinful. It is when an attraction turns into a desire and into a sin. [James 1:13-15](#) talks about this escalation of desires, something that we all need to fight against whatever our sexuality. See the [Living Out](#) website for plenty of stories of people who have found help to stay pure in this area.

3. Youngsters today are often influenced by social media, the internet and their peers and see LGBT as a good or right way to live. They are often led by such ideas to think that they are gay or should go along with this way of living. If they don't they may be out in the cold and friendless. How can we help them if they are not believers?

It's not easy being a youngster today in a climate where anything goes! I would say to all young people, don't panic, don't listen to everything you read on social media, and don't feel you have to do everything that society tells you to do! But open your Bible and see how wonderful Jesus is. He accepts you for who you really are, he loves you when others abandon you, and he provides for you within a family (the church) with a loving and caring community (at least that is what we are trying to be!) He will give you strength to go his way even when it is hard, and he will forgive you when you fail. Come to Jesus and turn to him. Although we spend a lot of time talking about and thinking about sex, he is more important and wonderful!