



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
**Volume 17 Number 45**  
**December 7, 2022**

**Transgenderism and a Biblical Worldview**

By Freddy Davis

AJ Buckley, a transgender Episcopal priest and associate rector at Saint David of Wales Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon, made this statement: "For me as a non-binary person, I've been to so many churches where they don't have a bathroom that I feel like I can use, and so I'll just not go to the bathroom there." For that reason, Buckley made some changes at his church. He has done such things as:

- putting up signs on bathroom doors that say, "Please us the restroom of your choice,
- including pronouns on name tags, and,
- preaching to "siblings in Christ," rather than "brothers and sisters."

**What Is Being Proposed?**

National Public Radio did a report on the topic of transgenderism in churches in which they interviewed Buckley and got his take on how churches should deal with people who claim to be transgender. The report made several significant points.

- Transgender religious leaders say Scripture should inspire inclusive congregations.
- Pro-transgender voices are emerging within Christianity.
- Many Christians are rethinking the biblical stories they think they already know.
- Transgendered people read themselves into Scripture the same way all people see themselves in biblical characters.
- Transgender Christians practice a faith that fits their bodies.

These points are an expression of a theologically liberal point of view, and they directly challenge biblical values. This challenge involves opposition

to several particular traditional biblical concepts. It promotes theologically liberal beliefs regarding the notions of:

- Inclusivism
- Homosexuality's place in the church
- The nature of biblical hermeneutics (interpretation)
- The validity of personal interpretation of Scripture
- The personal nature of values and lifestyle

So, exactly what is being proposed and how is it different from biblical teachings? To answer these questions, lets take these five points one by one.

***Inclusivism***

Theological liberals promote the idea of "inclusion" as an end in itself. It emerges from their belief that "God loves everyone." Well, of course God does love everyone. But there is a difference between loving people and accepting their false beliefs and behavior. Acceptance of a person is not the same thing as accepting a person's beliefs and behavior.

God has clearly revealed in Scripture that He is holy, and the nature of that holiness. He goes on to reveal that people who are not holy (morally perfect based on the biblical revelation) are sinners and separated from Him. His love comes into play not in that He accepts unholiness (sin) into His presence, but that He provided a way for our sin problem to be resolved – by faith in Christ because of His atoning death and His resurrection from the dead.

Thus, God's love does not lead to inclusivism in the way Buckley is trying to promote it. Rather, His love is demonstrated by the fact that when we repent of sin and turn our lives over to Him, He forgives us and

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welcomes us into His family. Those who doggedly hold onto their sin in defiance of His revelation are still loved by Him, but do not become a part of His family. Buckley's understanding of "inclusivism" is simply not a biblical concept.

### **Homosexuality's Place in the Church**

Another belief that theological liberals promote is that pro-transgender voices are emerging within Christianity. In order to claim that, though, they have to do some interesting contortions. It is not actually that these pro-transgender voices are just now emerging. This has been going on for some time.

What is new is that their voices are now being amplified and accepted in a way that did not used to be the case. It is only in recent times that high profile cultural leaders and the media have begun loudly promoting the homosexual agenda – which is giving a kind of cover to the theologically liberal churches that also wish to promote that cause. As a result, it has now become culturally acceptable in many quarters to shout from the rooftops what did not used to be accepted.

The problem with homosexuality is not simply a matter of homosexuality itself being bad. While it gets a lot of attention, it is actually just one of many sexual sins – all of which have been revealed by God to be wrong. Rather, the problem is that it, as with all other sins, separates us from a holy God who will not fellowship with sin.

The fact is, pro-transgender voices are not emerging within Christianity. They are emerging within organizations that claim to be Christian, but which don't hold biblical beliefs. These voices are outside of the true church.

### **The Nature of Biblical Hermeneutics (Interpretation)**

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. It is a particularly prominent element in the study of Scripture, but is certainly not limited to biblical interpretation. In fact, any kind of literature is subject to interpretation.

There are particular rules that legitimate hermeneutics must follow. People don't simply get to read a text and make up a random interpretation for themselves. The intent is always to determine what was meant by the writer of a given text. When people stray from the rules that get at that information, they have ceased interpreting the text and have moved on to reading into it according to a personal agenda.

When those who follow theological liberalism assert that "Many Christians are rethinking the biblical stories they think they already know," what they are really saying is that they have abandoned trying to interpret the biblical text, and have moved on to reading into the Bible their own personal agenda. Regarding those who try to justify a transgender lifestyle, that is exactly what they have done – they have reinterpreted the text using non-legitimate hermeneutical principles.

The biblical text does not justify a transgender lifestyle whatsoever. In fact, it refers to homosexual behavior as sin. Illegitimate hermeneutics leads to illegitimate interpretation of Scripture.

### **The Validity of Personal Interpretation of Scripture**

The idea of creating one's own personal interpretation of Scripture is very similar to what was just discussed regarding hermeneutics, but has a slightly different focus. This idea emerges out of the postmodern philosophy that is so prominent in modern society.

Postmodernism asserts that everyone can legitimately have their own truth.

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Thus, when transgender people assert that they are "reading themselves into Scripture," what they mean is, they are imagining their own personal way of interpreting Scripture that includes justification for their lifestyle.

Ultimately, there is no legitimate "personal interpretation of Scripture." The Bible is based on an objective revelation from God, and says what it says. It is not up to human beings to come up with "personal interpretations," but rather to discern what God has revealed, and conform their lives to that.

***The Personal Nature of Values and Lifestyle***

Finally, so called "trans Christians" claim to practice a faith that fits their bodies. In other words, they do not look to Scripture to define the values and lifestyle they practice, but look to their own personal values and lifestyle as the basis for defining their Christian faith. This is exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches about the source and nature of a Christian's values and lifestyle.

When a person becomes a Christian, God performs a transformation to give the individual an entirely new nature – one that conforms to His ideal of holiness. The entire sanctification aspect of salvation is focused on the believer working to conform his or her life to the image of Christ. Anyone who tries to redefine that is completely outside of the teachings of Scripture, thus outside of the Christian faith.

**What Is Wrong with this Liberal Transgender Theology?**

The very essence of transgenderism is based on a false belief about the nature of sexuality. It is an attempt to literally change the very structure of reality. God created the natural universe to exist in a particular way, and attempting to turn a man into a wom-

an or a woman into a man is a rejection of God's creation, thus a rejection of Him.

But it is not only an attempt to restructure physical reality, it is also an effort to change God's plan for humanity itself. God created male and female primarily for relationship with Himself. But He also created them so that they could enter into a relationship with a person of the opposite sex where they would become "one flesh." Obviously this entry into a marriage relationship can involve producing children, but it also involves creating a spiritual bond that completes the individuals. This marriage relationship was specifically created to be entered into between a man and a woman for life. Any attempt to change that structure is spoken of in Scripture as a sin against God.

Liberal transgender theology is not biblical theology. Adherents do not read the Bible in order to understand God's intent concerning mankind. Rather, they begin with their own non-biblical theology and attempt to read their philosophy into Scripture. Their approach involves an illegitimate approach to hermeneutics, and is not capable of discerning God's will based on the biblical text.

The fact is, inclusiveness in the way transgender religious leaders use the word is not a biblical concept at all. Of course, church congregations that are inclusive by welcoming everyone, no matter who they are, for the purpose of helping them come to know Christ, lead them to reject sinful lifestyles, and help them grow in their faith, is absolutely what God desires in a church. But defining "inclusiveness" as being willing to simply accept sin is not of God.

A biblical worldview recognizes God as holy, just, and love. As holy, He will not fellowship with sin. As just,

He judges sin. And as love, He has provided a way for the sinner to receive forgiveness for sin (salvation). Every individual, no matter who they are, is a person made in the image of God and is loved by Him. We should do no less. At the same time, we cannot change God's revelation to suit ourselves. Rather, we are called to reject sin and conform our lives to His holiness.

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