

# CONTROVERSY



# CONTROVERSY

Term 1	Title	Preaching Date
Week 1	How a Christian thinks about Racism	24 Sepetmber
Week 2	How a Christian thinks about Men and Women	1 October
Week 3	How a Christian thinks about Gender & Sexuality	8 October
Week 4	How a Christian thinks about Family	15 October
Week 5	How a Christian thinks about Politics	22 October
Week 6	Week 10 from Genesis	29 October

## The Bible in a Year

Week	Passage 1	Passage 2	Passage 3
1	Acts 10	1 Corinthians 15	Proverbs 7 & 8
2	Ephesians 5:21-33	1 Corinthians 11	Proverbs 1 & 2
3	Psalms 139	1 Corinthians 12, 13	Proverbs 3 & 4
4	Deuteronomy 6:1-25	1 Corinthians 14	Proverbs 5 & 6
5	Romans 13:1-10	1 Corinthians 16	Proverbs 9 & 10

## 3-1-1 Prayer

We all care for friends and family who don't know Jesus and this should be reflected in our prayers. List below the names of 3 such people you can be praying for once a week for one minute.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# TERM 4 2023

## What is the goal of these notes?

The goal is to grow your ability to read the bible. Bible reading is essential to Christian growth and survival but it's a skill that only develops with practice. Indeed because of the spiritual apathy that's part of our fallen nature the desire to read only grows with practice! The bible is an extraordinary book. It has changed people, nations and the flow of history. That's unsurprising since it's God's book and contains God's wisdom for life. Yet, bible reading in some ways is no different to reading any other book. These notes will assist you in developing skills which will increasingly enable you to feed yourself from the bible and help others do the same.

Three ways to use these notes

### 1. Personal reading

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray asking God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

### 2. Growth Groups

- Use the section at the end of each week to prepare for your Growth Group.
- Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to.

### 3. Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

# CONTROVERSY

## **An Introduction to Controversial Issues**

We live at a time of unprecedented turmoil and change as the entire period of “Christendom” comes to an end. What is Christendom? It’s that 1600 year period of history in which biblical values were foundational for both public law and private life. It may be considered to have begun in AD 380 when the Roman emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the legally established religion of the Roman Empire and much of what we see in society today says, that period is over. The radical attack of “woke” culture on western values; the legalising of same sex marriage, the highly publicised transition of Bruce Jenner to Caitlyn Jenner, these are just a couple of signs that illustrate the truth.

What does that mean for Christians? Firstly, it’s got to change the way we think about living in a world where biblical values are angrily rejected by the social elites and intellectual gatekeepers. Secondly, it must sharpen the way we parent and care for the rising generation. But above all, it must make us consider our commitment to God’s truth which is being challenged at every point by a careless world. That’s the point of this short series which presents a good opportunity to leverage what we’ve seen in that foundational book of Genesis.

Hence we begin with what the God-inspired scriptures say about race and racism; about men and women; about gender and sexuality; about family and parenting; and finally, and I hope not too controversially, what wisdom we can glean for how to think about politics. Why this last matter? Because in an era where something as essential as personal “identity” is at stake, the powers of the state will inevitably be called on to legislate or litigate so we need all God’s wisdom in the scriptures to make our choices and stand for the truth.

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT RACISM

## Week 1: Day 1

READ GENESIS 1:26-28 & GENESIS 11:1-9

1. Racism is a longstanding evil in our society, even among Christians. What reason is given in Genesis 1 for seeing racism as sin?

2. That all humanity is created in the image of God entails a special care for every human being. What prohibitions does this equality lead to in the following verses:

- Genesis 9:6
- James 2:1-4
- James 3:9

3. Racism is part of the fallen world. How is that shown in the Tower of Babel episode of Genesis 11?

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# WEEK 1

...Day 1 Continued.

*"They come naturally to hate other cultural styles and other races in order to bolster their own security and discharge their suppressed anger... they fix upon their race, their membership in a party... and their culture as a means of self-recommendation. The culture is put on as though it were armour against self-doubt, but it becomes a mental straitjacket which cleaves to the flesh and can never be removed except through comprehensive faith in the saving work of Christ."*

Richard Lovelace – Dynamics of Spiritual Life

4. Read the quote above. What reasons does it suggest may lie behind racism?

**PRAY:** Ask God to reveal your own heart to you. Are there issues which arouse anger or frustration about other races?

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT RACISM

## Day 2

### READ ACTS 10

The Old Testament was written at a time and to a culture where the practice of enslaving others was common, yet the principles of the Old Testament and the New were both designed to mitigate against this evil and eventually of course, it was the bible which overturned the practice of slavery in the western world.

1. How is the truth above revealed by the following verses?

- Leviticus 23:22
- Leviticus 25:35-37
- Deuteronomy 14:28,29

2. While the bible doesn't condone slavery, it is full of realism since it is written to believers who live in a broken world. Such believers can survive in any circumstance. How is that truth revealed by 1 Corinthians 7:20-24?

**PRAY:** It is one thing to understand the straight forward commands of scripture and it is another to internalise its worldview and ethos. Ask God for His help in doing both.





# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT RACISM

*It is difficult for us to grasp the impassable gulf which yawned in those days between the Jews on the one hand and the Gentiles on the other. Not that the Old Testament countenanced such a divide....it affirmed that God had a purpose for [the Gentiles]. By choosing and blessing [the Jews] he intended to bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-4)...The tragedy was that Israel twisted this doctrine of election into one of favouritism, became filled with racial pride and hatred, despised the Gentiles as 'dogs', and developed traditions that kept them apart."*

John Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Bible Speaks Today*

4. What attributes do you think it required of Paul to correct Peter in Galatia?

**PRAY:** Love for the Lord creates the courage and conviction for any Christian to stand apart from their society and live a life that is radically different. Ask God to deepen your conviction in this area.

# WEEK 1

## Day 4

READ LUKE 10:25-37

Racism was an ugly blindspot in the culture of ancient Israel yet Jesus stood against it - although social justice was clearly not His mission. Today's reading gives a glimpse of this. The Samaritans were a people group despised by the ancient Israelites. Their ancestors consisted of those from other conquered nations who were deposited in the northern kingdom of Israel and intermarried with those Israelites who remained.

1. The point of this parable lies in the opening exchange about neighbours. How would you summarise it here?

2. The hero of the story is the Samaritan. He is set over and against the typical Jewish cultural models of the priest and the Levite. What commendable attributes does Jesus point to in the Samaritan?

3. It's Jesus who fulfils the role of the good Samaritan. He comes to us in our need and supplies all that's required to restore us to God. What could stop you from caring for a needy person from another race?

**PRAY:** As those in Christ we're called to live new lives that seek to conform to the image of Christ. Pray that this will be true of you as you seek to love your neighbours of other races.

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT RACISM

## Day 5

### READ BELOW

Although racism is an age-old sin, the word itself appears to be of recent origin, rarely cited before the 20th century. The Oxford dictionary defines it as “the unjust treatment of people who belong to a different race.” There is no doubt that people of all colours have inflicted this on one another throughout history. White Europeans have enslaved Africans; Asians have enslaved other Asians; Arabs have enslaved Africans and Africans themselves have enslaved other Africans.

But in recent times a new definition of “racism” has been popularised which was first coined in the 1970’s by a white social scientist named “Patricia Bigdol-Padva. She defines racism as “prejudice plus power” with the resulting implication that only those in power can be racist. The conclusion drawn and popularised in universities all over the western world is that a person of colour can NEVER be racist because they aren’t in power. However, it is assumed that white people and hence by our association- Christians are historically guilty.

1. What are some of the implications of this for the harmony of society?

2. What are some of the implications of this definition for the way we define and respond to personal sin?

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# WEEK 1

...Day 5 Continued

*The result of this redefinition has been a powerful outburst of “reverse racism”, fueled by segments of the media. This was evident when the New York Times hired Asian-American Sarah Jeong to their editorial board. She is known for her inflammatory tweets including “#WhiteMenAreBull\*\*\*\*” & #CancelWhitePeople”. A landmark 2017 article in the same newspaper by Lisa Feldman Barrett was entitled, “When is Speech Violence!” Barrett argued, “If words can cause stress, and if prolonged stress can cause physical harm, then it seems that speech...can be a form of violence.” This of course has aroused the legal category of “hate speech”.*

3. Widespread societal disharmony is a very real side effect of the popular new definition which has made its way into the church. How might vulnerable people be harmed by all this?

*It is important to note, that although first century Israel was severely oppressed by Rome, Jesus did not say much about racial justice since His mission was the gospel. Yet he did call all who follow Him to love their neighbour.*

4. How should Christians respond with compassion and thoughtfulness to ensure our thinking is right about race?

**PRAY:** Real wisdom is needed in our era to navigate the turbulent waters of identity politics. Pray that God will grant you what you need to represent Him well.

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT RACISM

## FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What reasons are given in the bible for seeing racism as sin? (Days 1 & 2)

2. Jesus is the true 'good Samaritan'. What could stop you from caring for a needy person from another race? (Day 4 Q3)

3. How should Christians respond with compassion and thoughtfulness to ensure our thinking is right about race? (Day 5 Q4)

# WEEK 1 PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

# MEN AND WOMEN IN FAMILY AND MINISTRY

The fight waged by feminism concerns the historic oppression of women, particularly but not only in societies that don't share a Judeo-Christian heritage. It's true that the Bible strongly endorses the equality of men and women and that wherever biblical Christianity has taken root it has revolutionised the status of women so we need to be confident to champion the scriptures. But the bible is not always understood, nor is it always obeyed so we need to be clear and committed to living out the truth.

## Week 2: Day 1

READ GENESIS 1:24-31

1. These are the events of the sixth day of Creation. What observations suggest the equality of men and women in God's creation?
2. Look closely at the three lines of v 27. (google the more literal text of the ESV) Noting the use of the terms "man," "male" and "female" how is equality and distinction signalled?
3. How do 1 Peter 3:7 and 1 Corinthians 11:11,12 imply the equality of men and women?
4. In what ways are you aware of inequality expressed today?

**PRAY:** Just as the church has been the place where the equality of men and women was first championed, we need to uphold that reality today.

# WEEK 2

## Day 2

### READ GENESIS 2:4-25

While men and women are equal in personhood they are not equivalent in their roles. God built an “order” into the relationships of His Creation. You caught a quick hint of this yesterday in Genesis 1:27 where it appears that the generic term “Man” in the first line of v 27 stands for all of humankind who are shown in the third line to consist of both “male and female”. Today we’ll see more of God’s “creational order” and tomorrow, why it matters.

1. How does this passage emphasise again the equality of men and women in God’s creation.

2. What observations in this passage suggest the priority of the Man? (see again Genesis 1:27 and 5:2 in the ESV)

*Many cultures not shaped by the Judeo-Christian revelation have greatly oppressed and devalued women, even to the extent of exposing female babies at birth. The scriptures sharply denounce these practices. And yet it appears that there is an order built into the created order just as there is in the Trinity!*



# MEN AND WOMEN IN FAMILY AND MINISTRY

3. Jesus is equal in personhood with the Father and yet He submits to the Father in everything. Consider the following verses. Is the emphasis in each on equality, submission or both.

Passage	Emphasis	Passage	Empasis
John 10:30		Philippians 2:8-9	
Luke 22:42		Matthew 22:46	
John 1: 1		Acts 20-28	
John 5:18-20		John 5:21-23	
John 14:28		Hebrews 1:8-9	

4. What is your reaction to the word “submission”? How does the knowledge of Jesus’ equality and yet His submission impact your thinking?

**PRAY:** Our world lacks subtlety in its thinking about equality. It thinks that submission speaks of inferiority but God does not. There is a greatness in submission modelled by Jesus that we need to honour and not belittle. Pray that God will help you think wisely in this.

# WEEK 2

## Day 3

### READ GENESIS 3:1-24

We saw yesterday that God built an “order” into the relationships of His Creation: God, the Man, the Woman, the created realm (including the serpent). It will be important to note today how this order plays out in the Fall.

1. How does Satan’s strategy in temptation completely reverse God’s created order?

2. How do both Adam and his wife contribute to this subversion of God’s order? (v’s 6 & 12) In Genesis 16:2 (ESV) how does Abraham repeat Adam’s failure?

3. How, in His judgements, (v’s 14ff) does God reaffirm His order? (note: the sequence with which He approaches the 3 participants in the Fall)

**PRAY:** Give thanks that our God is a God of order when in our sinfulness we tend toward disorder in so many things. Ask God to help you remember His order and to have the courage to keep it to the best of your ability.

# MEN AND WOMEN IN FAMILY AND MINISTRY

## Day 4

### READ EPHESIANS 5:21-33

Genesis has illustrated a male “headship” role as reflected in marriage but this point is drawn out in the New Testament. Note that the opening statement about “submission” in Ephesians 5:21 is like a paragraph title that describes the shape of the 3 pairs of relationships which will follow in 5:22ff; 6:1 ff and 6:5ff.

1. What responsibilities are commanded of husbands and wives in 5:22ff?
  - Wives 5:22ff?
  - Husbands in 5:25ff?
2. Consider the analogy between Christ and the husband in 5:25-30. What goals might a husband glean from this for the way he loves his wife?
3. Ephesians draws out further the “headship” role illustrated by Genesis. How is this “order” verified by 1 Corinthians 11:3?
4. What can a wife do to help her husband more readily lead and what can a husband do to enable his wife to joyfully and confidently submit?

**PRAY:** Husbands in a fallen world have a challenging role. To love their wives like Christ loved His church. Wives too have a challenging role: to submit to husbands who are fallen. Pray for yourselves in your humanity to do justice to God's call on your life.

# WEEK 2

## Day 5

### READ 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15

Consider 1 Timothy 3:5. An equation is drawn here between the family household and the church. That is, the order of relationships within the family should find its equivalent in the church family. The principle is expressed in a more subtle form in 3:12.

1. What encouragements are given to men and women in these verses?
2. What prohibitions are enjoined upon men and women in these verses?

*Some think that the word "quiet" in v 12 means that women must be silent but this would contradict Paul's encouragement to women in 1 Corinthians 11:4,5 The word "quiet" or "quietness" in v's 2 & 12 are words from the same root. They have the connotations of "peaceable" and "uncontentious".*

3. Many of us will have been to churches where women preach regularly and have heard that the prohibition in v 12 is simply a cultural quirk of the context in Ephesus, the church to which Paul was writing. How does the reasoning of v's 13 and 14 deny this idea?
4. How can we encourage men and women to actively pursue valuable God-honouring service in the church family?

**PRAY:** Ask God to help us as a church and as individuals to be godly men and women whose model honours God's intention.

# MEN AND WOMEN IN FAMILY AND MINISTRY

## Day 6

### READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

As we noted yesterday, Paul considered the church family to be analogous in some ways to the family unit with similar roles of headship and submission among men and women.

1. Consider the attributes for overseers in v's 1-7. What are the qualifications and what is implied about gender?

2. Consider the attributes for deacons in v's 8-13. How does it differ from the above and how is it similar?

3. It is often argued that some women are more gifted preachers than the men in a given congregation. How could you respond to this often true suggestion? How would you encourage the men and women who teach in your congregation?

4. In 1 Timothy 2 & 3 the principal requirement of those who serve is godly character. How should a godly man respond to the cultural challenge of this passage? How should a godly woman respond?

**PRAY:** Our culture, including the church today, is reacting to centuries of gender abuse, with anger and thinking which is tempted to marginalise the scriptures. Ask God to help you listen to His word and respond instead with faith and gratitude.

# WEEK 2

## FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What observations in the bible suggest the equality of men and women?  
(Days 1 & 2)

2. What is your reaction to the word “submission”? How does the knowledge of Jesus’ equality and yet His submission impact your thinking? (Day 2 Q4)

3. What can a wife do to help her husband more readily lead and what can a husband do to enable his wife to joyfully and confidently submit? (Day 4 Q4)

# WEEK 2: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

# WEEK 3

When signing forms in recent times you'll undoubtedly have answered questions as to your gender: what was it at birth and what is it now? The clear presumption is that those two may well be quite different. A stunning revolution of thought has taken place in a very short space of time that needs our consideration. It deserves compassion and care as increasing numbers of people feel that they've been born in the wrong body. But it requires clear minded insight if we are to serve wisely and direct our children well.

"Gender Dysphoria" is the medical term for the "distress experienced by those whose psychological or emotional gender identity differs from their biological sex". Perhaps a better expression is "Gender Incongruence". It's a real condition that historically has presented almost exclusively in a tiny percentage of boys but in recent times has multiplied by 4000% and mostly among young girls!

You will have friends who experience this. You may have children who suffer through it. You will be required in local schools and preschools to celebrate "rainbow days" and have your children exposed to unusual and progressive ideas. So how should you respond? Like last week, we need to begin with a word that transcends our culture since cultural ideas can change like fashion but the scriptures don't. What then do they say?

## Week 3: Day 1

### READ GENESIS 1:26-28 & GENESIS 5:1-2 (ESV)

Is "gender" a social construct? Are there more than two "genders"? In present usage, a distinction is drawn between "biological (or birth) sex", on the one hand and "gender" on the other. "Sex" is now usually categorised as "male" or "female" based on an individual's chromosomal content. (XX for female and XY for males). "Gender" on the other hand has come to refer to a person's self-representation as a "man", "woman", a "boy" or "girl", a "transgender", "fluid" or "intersex" person. Intersex refers to a small number of disorders of sexual development (DSDs) or more rarely still, chromosomal content.

When a person's gender identity aligns with their objective "biological sex", they are referred to as cisgender (cis = on this side of). When there is a clash, however, they are commonly referred to as transgender (trans = on the other side of)

It is suggested by some in the Christian community that the bible does NOT mandate that a person's biological sex reveals and determines their gender i.e. that a "female" is NOT always a "woman". And further, that the bible allows



# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT GENDER & SEXUALITY

for non-binary gender expression i.e.a range of possible genders beyond “man” or “woman”. The passages below are from the ESV which attempts to capture more literally what the original Hebrew text says.

## GENESIS 1:26-28

*26 Then God said, “Let us make man[a] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

*27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

*28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

## GENESIS 5:1-2

*“This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 2 Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man[a] when they were created.*

1. What does the bible teach in Genesis 1 about human “biological sex” or “birth sex” before the Fall?

2. Genesis 5 gives God's description of human “birth sex” after the Fall. Is there any change?

**PRAY:** Ask God to give you understanding, compassion and clear mindedness as you investigate these issues this week.

# WEEK 3

## Day 2

### READ GENESIS 2:4-25

Yesterday we saw the bible's view of human biological sex both before and after the Fall. It is binary in nature i.e. it speaks of only male and female but no third category. Today we note what is said of "gender", since providentially, this chapter uses "gender" terms instead of the biological terms we saw in chapter 1.

1. What are the only gendered terms used in Genesis 2?

*In the new world which has sprung from the gender revolution, females can take on the gendered role of fathers and males can take on the gendered role of mothers. That is, there is a switching of gender roles.*

2. What three gender roles are mentioned in verses 23-25?

*In the bible, just as biological sex is binary so too is gender. The point of the above is that "males" in chapter one who are "men" grow potentially into 'fathers' and "females" in chapter one, who are women" grow potentially into mothers and "wives".*

3. What issues in our present society does this observation address and critique?

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT GENDER & SEXUALITY

Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 19:4-5 below, where the ESV captures the original by using the word "from" instead of the NIV's paraphrase which uses the word "at".

*"He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them FROM the beginning made them male and female,<sup>5</sup> 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'?"*

4. What additional sense is captured by the word "from" instead of "at"?

The Hebrew language of the Old Testament (see brackets below) consistently expresses this binary reality at every stage of human development and in every station of life.

- son (ben) and daughter (bat)
- boy (yeled) and girl (yalda)
- brother ('ach) and sister ('achot)
- young man (na'ar) and young woman (na'arah)
- bridegroom (chatan) and bride (kalla)
- father ('av) and mother ('em)
- father-in-law (cham) and mother-in-law (chamot)
- uncle (dod) and aunt (dodah)
- manservant ('eved) and maidservant ('amah)
- prophet (navi') and prophetess (nevi'ah)
- prince (sar) and princess (sarah)
- king (melek) and queen (malka)

**PRAY:** Despite the claims of progressive gender advocates, the bible remains clear that a person's biological sex reveals and determines their actual gender which is only ever binary. Give thanks to God for the clarity of His word and pray for any you know who struggle with these things.

# WEEK 3

## Day 3

### READ PSALM 139

Some Christians, compassionately seeking to understand the dysphoria experienced by the person who ‘feels’ that they’re in the wrong body have proposed that it is possible to have a female “soul” in a male body. The bible regards human beings as “bipartite” i.e. we are constituted of two parts, body and soul (or spirit). This is expressed in Matthew 10:28. *“And do not be afraid of those who kill the body (sōma) but cannot kill the soul (psychēn). Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body (kai psychēn kai sōma) in hell.”*

1. Verses 1-16 fall into 3 parts each expressing a different attribute of God. Try to decide what attribute(s) is emphasised in each.

- V's 1-6
- V's 7-12
- V's 13-16

2. What impact does the awareness of this truth have on David the author?

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT GENDER & SEXUALITY

3. What is affirmed about God's creation of any individual, body and soul in v's 13-16?

*There is, then, no person or soul or spirit that has been created independently of the body and then placed in the body (or perhaps in the wrong body). The sex of the body, then, reveals the gender of the person."*

Rob Smith "Responding to the Transgender Revolution

4. What should I do if I still "feel" that I'm in the wrong body?

**PRAY:** Although we live in a broken world, God is still a good and loving Creator. We've been damaged by the Fall but we remain integrated whole people- body and soul. Praise God for His faithfulness to a fallen creation.

# WEEK 3

## Day 4

READ ROMANS 8:20,21

None of what is said above should be taken to suggest that the feeling of being in the wrong body (gender incongruence) is not real. It is undoubtedly real and requires our understanding.

1. What words in these verses suggest the impact of the Fall on us as human beings?

2. What faculties of our being are likely to be damaged by the Fall and how might this account for gender dysphoria?

3. In Romans 12:1,2, what clues are suggested for helping a friend who struggles with gender dysphoria or same sex attraction?

*"Our culture says: Your psychology is your sexual identity—let your body be conformed to it. The Bible says: Your body is your sexual identity—let your mind be conformed to it."*

Sam Allberry, a celibate pastor who experiences same-sex attraction.

**PRAY:** We live in an era where my psychological self perception i.e. my feelings about who I am, has come to matter more than biological facts. Pray for yourself, your family and friends so that we're not drawn into harmful confusion around these ideas but are shaped by the clarity of scripture.

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT GENDER & SEXUALITY

## Day 5

READ Deuteronomy 22:5, Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:6-9

God is a gracious and fatherly Creator who knows what's good for us and what He's created us for. Hence the scriptures are filled with His parental guidance to steer us toward a life that brings hope.

1. What activities are warned against in the following passages?

- Deuteronomy 22:5
- Leviticus 18:22
- 1 Corinthians 6:6-9

2. Like the unknowing child, we can be quick to find fault with our Father for such warnings as these. Knowing what you do of Him, why might God warn against homosexual practice?

Continued next page...

# WEEK 3

*"The immediate design of this prohibition was...to maintain the sanctity of that distinction of the sexes which was established by the creation of man and woman."*

Quoted in Rob Smith "Responding to the Transgender Revolution

3. God is not opposed to those who experience same sex attraction. Such an experience is real. But He is opposed to homosexual sex. Imagine a friend asks you why. In a sentence or two, how could you sensitively and wisely respond?

A helpful article to google: [A Christian Psychology of and Response to Homosexuality](#)

**PRAY:** We need to give careful thought to how we can most wisely respond to our friends who can't understand why the God of the bible might repudiate what our society celebrates. Ask God for His gentle wisdom in this.





# WEEK 3

## FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. What does Genesis teach about human biological sex and gender? (Days 1 & 2)

2. Some in our community experience gender incongruence, the troubling feeling that they have a gendered soul in the wrong body. What did you learn about this on Day 3?

3. Why should the Christian care about the values of our society regarding sexual identity? (Day 6 Q3)

# WEEK 3: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

# WEEK 4

The family is the cornerstone of any stable society. That's why all governments care about marriage and legislate the parameters of marriage. But there is no doubt that the family is under attack in recent decades. Many decades of slow erosion are having a profound impact, not just on your own family but on western society as a whole. Indeed it is not too alarmist to say that it is questionable whether western civilization can survive without this foundation in place! How does the Christian think about family? The bible says that parents and in particular men need to be vigilant and proactive in developing in their children a healthy love of the Lord.

## Week 4: Day 1

READ DEUTERONOMY 6:1-25

Remembering the saving works of God is a key theme for God's people in every era. The goal is that the knowledge of these things should be passed on. In the Old Testament God's foundational saving work was the rescue of His people from captivity. In the New testament God's great saving work takes place in the death of Jesus.

1. The parents of Israelite children were to take every opportunity to teach their children. What were they to teach them about God?

*All effective Christian teaching is "embodied". That is, there should be a clear link between what we live and what we teach since we can all see a discrepancy between lifestyle and words.*

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT FAMILY

2. How was the importance of what they lived, intrinsic to how those Old Testament parents taught?

3. What opportunities do parents (and grandparents) have today to teach their families the important things of Christ?

**PRAY:** Some of us are not yet parents. Some have been parents and are now grandparents. Ask God to help you be a good learner so that you will benefit others in the future.

# WEEK 4

## Day 2

### READ COLOSSIANS 3:18-21

In week 2 when we saw the roles of men and women, we noted that there is a God-given order in creation which has an important bearing on life within the family and by analogy within the church family. This order is not simply a matter of “what works” but of what “pleases the Lord”.

1. Try to describe the shape of Christian family life?

2. The goal of “pleasing the Lord” is prominent in this passage. What is needed for a person to want to please the Lord? How might parents (and grandparents) help children grow in that desire?

3. How should this passage shape the life of someone who is not married, doesn't live with their parents, or has no children?

**PRAY:** A love of the Lord is foundational to all of Christian life. Ask God to grow your love for Him. Ask Him to help you take positive action to grow this in yourself.

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT FAMILY

## Day 3

READ EPHESIANS 5:21-6:4

1. What reasons are given for this particular shape of immediate family life?
2. Parents can fail in their God-given roles of headship and submission. What impact might such persistent failures be likely to have...
  - a. A lack in the husband's leadership?
  - b. A lack in the wife's attitude of submission?
3. Every earthly father is different. What are some different ways that a father could bring up his children in the training and instruction of the Lord? Think of as many as you can.

*Discipline has been a contentious issue in family life for many decades now. Harsh discipline can exasperate children but lax discipline and a failure to keep proper boundaries will do them no good.*

4. If you are a parent or grandparent (or hope to be), try to define your disciplinary style.

**PRAY:** The godly fulfilment of our roles in family life (husbands, wives, children) preserve a delicate balance in which we may sometimes and perhaps often fail. Confess to God your faults in this and ask His help to grow.

# WEEK 4

## Day 4

### READ 1 PETER 3:1-7

The bible is incredibly practical. It does not deal with life in an ivory tower but understands the reality of a broken world. This passage is specifically about Christian women married to non-Christian men. We know that this is not God's ideal from passages like 1 Corinthians 7:39 yet for various reasons, in His sovereign appointment, it does happen & sometimes because of His mercy in bringing one partner to faith..

1. How can the shape of immediate family life change when someone is married to a partner who isn't part of their church family?
2. While this passage is specifically about a Christian woman married to a non-Christian man, how might it also affect the way a Christian husband relates to a non-Christian wife?
3. How should the fact that Christian wives and husbands are also brothers and sisters impact their immediate family life?

**PRAY:** God is sovereign over the affairs of our lives. He has appointed our circumstances and calls us to live for Him in the situation He has granted us. So whether you are married, single, or divorced ask God to help you please Him and live for His glory.



# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT FAMILY

## Day 5

READ MARK 10:13-16

In the harsh first century world of the Roman empire, children were not regarded with the affection we have for them today. They were considered to be valuable if they could assist the family to earn an income. Otherwise they were frequently cast away at birth so they did not become a burden on a struggling family. The teaching of Jesus about the value of the individual fundamentally changed this.

1. How might someone in their immediate family hinder a child from coming to Christ?

2. How might someone in a church family hinder a child from coming to Christ?

3. Christian life is lived in a community such that we all have an impact on many others. How could you help children in your context come to Christ?

**PRAY:** Consider those whose lives you impact. Pray that God will use you for their good.

# WEEK 4

## FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. Try to describe the shape of Christian family life? (Days 2 & 3)

2. Parents can fail in their God-given roles of headship and submission. What impact are these likely to have on the family? (Day 3 Q2)

- Husbands?
- Wives?

3. What opportunities do parents (and grandparents) have today to teach their families the important things of Christ? (Day 1 Q3)

# WEEK 4: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

# WEEK 5

Few of us love politics. This is especially true of the young who find it confusing, frustrating, irrelevant and boring. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Government is at best a necessary evil." Yet because of human sin it is in fact necessary! Jesus acknowledged the rightful place of government- even the tyrannous government of Rome, instructing his listeners to "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

While Jesus and the New Testament authors assure us that there is a rightful place for government, Jesus Himself says very little about it so why should I put it on our agenda? It is because we're living in rapidly changing times. Christendom, that worldview which has shaped the western world for 1600 years has collapsed and into the vacuum that remains, sinful, fallen minds are bringing many troubling challenges and calling for political endorsement. This is an age in which politics is having a greater say on important matters: education, sexuality, ethics, law, race and the freedom of the gospel itself. At such a time, Christians need to think about politics but how do we do so as Christians? That's the point of this week.

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT POLITICS

## Week 5: Day 1

### READ GENESIS 4

The mandate for human rule is given before the Fall. In Genesis 1:28 the first couple are told to “fill the earth and subdue it.” In that pristine world, rule over the created realm was in view but how much more significant this task became with the advent of sin.

1. In Genesis 4 what instances might require a governing authority?
2. God is the supreme governor of the world. What attributes does he have that suit Him to the task in a way our politicians can never manage?
3. As we'll see tomorrow, governments rule by the sovereign appointment of God for the good ordering of society and we are urged to pray for them. According to 1 Timothy 2:1-4 what is the key goal of these prayers?

**PRAY:** Spend some time now praying for those who rule us that they may order society well and enable the gospel to go out.

# WEEK 5

## Day 2

READ ROMANS 3: 9-18 & 1 TIMOTHY 1:8-11

If politicians are to govern well it is obvious that their worldview must involve a clear understanding of human nature. While in a post Christian era it is unlikely that most politicians will clear-mindedly share a biblical view, some schools of political thought (communism and forms of fascism in particular) reject it as a matter of course.

1. What does Romans 3:9-18 say about human nature?

*The bible's view of humanity is called "total depravity". It does not mean that people are as evil as possible but that every facet of their being from birth is damaged by an attitude of rebellion toward God.*

2. According to 1 Timothy 1:8-11, what aspects of life will be affected by human sin?

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT POLITICS

3. Both communism and socialism advocate high levels of government control in order to achieve the noble goal of equality for all. What problems may arise from high levels of government control without a clear understanding of human sin?

*"I am a democrat because I believe in the Fall of man. I think most people are democrats for the opposite reason....they thought mankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in the government...The real reason for democracy is...that man is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows."*

C.S. Lewis "Present Concerns"

4. In a world of sinful people, pick 3 policy areas that will require particular attention.

**PRAY:** The reality of human sin is an enormous piece for any ruling agency to factor into its thinking. Indeed, no ruler can be wise without a powerful awareness of it. Pray for yourself to be sensitive to the assumptions that your governing officials hold on this topic.

# WEEK 5

## Day 3

### READ ROMANS 13:1-7

“So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” These are Jesus’ words in Matthew 22 where He was referring to what would become a government hostile to the cause of the gospel. So what do we owe the Caesars of our day? It is clear that we owe something since the one in authority is “God’s servant for your good.” (Romans 13:4)

1. According to this passage, what responsibilities do Christians have to the government?

*The government is “established” by God (v 1) which makes us wonder about bad government. Why would God establish such an entity? For any one of a number of loving reasons that may involve our eternal good. This then raises the question as to whether a Christian should ever rebel against an evil government such as Christians did against the Nazi regime.*

2. In the book of Acts (4:17-20 & 5:29) the early Christians reluctantly rebelled against the authorities. What ground(s) for rebellion is / are suggested in these verses?

3. What attitude to the authorities is modelled by Paul in Acts 23:1-5

**PRAY:** In a fallen world, few submit willingly to the governing authorities. Ask God to help you in this, that you may speak with loving concern for the common good.



# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT POLITICS

## Day 4

READ ROMANS 13:1-10

In the political world today, various ideals will shape a government's goals: empowerment, tolerance, equality and rights are often championed on the left while freedom, responsibility, initiative and tradition are championed on the right. However the centre of the Christian ethic is love and love is always multifaceted and complex.

1. How is love for those who govern us to be expressed in this passage?

2. How is love for our neighbour related to:

a. the task of the government

b. the role of the voter?

# WEEK 5

All governments have the same broad goals but pursue them in different ways. A right leaning government may express love for the electorate by granting people the dignity of free agency and responsibility allowing those who are able, to get ahead by means of their God-given talents. However, a left leaning government may seek to demonstrate love by providing aid to the downtrodden with few conditions attached.

3. Consider the paragraph above. Do you tend to a right sided (conservative) or a left sided (progressive) view or are you in the middle?

4. Consider the above as it relates to the provision of government welfare.

a. How might a conservative government err in seeking to love the needy?

b. How might a progressive government err in seeking to love the needy?

**PRAY:** Consider Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9-11. That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." Pray that this will be true of you generally and true of you as you think about politics.



# WEEK 5

- Ephesians 4:28, 1 Timothy 5:8

- Proverbs 14:34

- 1 Timothy 2:1-4

*“Capitalism appeals because it encourages individual human initiative and enterprise but it also repels because it seems not to care that the weak succumb to the fierce competition it engenders. Socialism appeals on the other hand because it has great compassion to the poor and weak but it also repels because it seems not to care that individual initiative and enterprise are smothered by the big government that it engenders.”*

John Stott: “issues Facing Christians Today 4th Edition

**PRAY:** Ask for wisdom for our governments in the implementation of programs to help the underprivileged and vulnerable in our society

# HOW A CHRISTIAN THINKS ABOUT POLITICS

## Day 6

### REVIEW

The way in which a Christian votes may be shaped by many factors: the example of parents, (they always voted Liberal) a priority for certain policy issues (abortion, euthanasia, welfare) or because they are simply drawn to a charismatic leader.

1. As you review this week, what factors should determine how a Christian should vote? List at least three below:

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- 
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2. When the Christian votes, our goal is to love our neighbour, care for the needy and seek that which will promote the progress of the gospel. Given this, what policy areas should most concern the Christian? List at least 5 below.

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**PRAY:** Ask God to give you a love for Himself, a love for the truth and a love for the public good so that you might be a thoughtful student of politics.

# WEEK 5

## FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

1. In Genesis 4 what instances might require a governing authority? (Day 1 Q1)

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2. How is love for our neighbour related to the task of the government? The role of the voter? (Day 4 Q2)

3. How might a conservative government err in seeking to love the needy? How might a progressive government err in seeking to love the needy? (Day 4 Q4)

# WEEK 5 PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

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