

# PERSPECTIVE

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF MOUNT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH

## LGBTQ & YOU

AUG

20  
25



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## 01 ARTICLE

LGBTQ & YOU

Joseph Strickland

## 06 BOOK HIGHLIGHT

God and the Transgender Debate

Written by Andrew Walker | Recommended by Caroline Rieke

## 07 BOOK HIGHLIGHT

Compassion Without Compromise

Written by Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau | Recommended by Pat Knowles

## 08 BIBLE READING PLAN

Take Up & Read

## 09 NEW MEMBERS

Nick & Mattie Brazelton, Jesse Lambert, Bob & Cathi Selph,  
Zachary & Madison Skilling, Michael & Ally Stilley,  
Ian Witherspoon

# LGBTQ & YOU



We are well into our year of focusing on biblical manhood and womanhood. The motivation for a year of corporate reflection on this topic largely stems from our current cultural moment and a desire to glorify God in the midst of it. For several decades now, there has been a plethora of debate, advocacy, and ideological movement when it comes to the topics of sexuality, gender, and self-expression. In the dizzying speed of this movement's progression, the church has continually faced new challenges. Even now, the term "LGBTQ" does not fully encapsulate the matters at hand. There are people living in and advocating for polyamory—romantic and sexual relationships of more than two people. There are others who would say that their sense of self better aligns with certain animals than with the human species. The advances of AI-generated images and videos will likely aggravate such issues further, with some arguing that these desires and senses of self can be fulfilled harmlessly through AI.

As believers who perceive these realities, we rightly remark, "What a strange new world!" Indeed, Scripture teaches us that believers are exiles in a strange land (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pt. 1:1, 1:17, 2:11) until we enter the heavenly kingdom of God's own presence. In sojourning toward our homeland, we can face this strange new world with hope and faith in God because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pt.

1:22). We can live holy lives, knowing that we were ransomed from futile ways by the precious blood of Jesus (1 Pt. 1:18–19).

Scripture helpfully provides us with examples of what it looks like to live as exiles (1 Cor. 10:6, 11). In this article, I will take principles from the Babylonian exile and apply them to navigating the LGBTQ movement as believers. Because I don't have time to say all that could be said on this topic, I would encourage you to read John Weichel's "A Christian Sexual Ethic" in the *March Perspective* and Aaron Menikoff's "Manhood, Womanhood, & the Local Church" in the *January Perspective*. In short, I'm assuming that sex is one of many blessings of a covenant union between one man and one woman, a husband and a wife in marriage, and that engaging in sex outside of that context is sinful. I'm also assuming that it is sinful to live as though our God-given sex at birth and our gender are two separate things.<sup>1</sup> The focus here will be on navigating these issues as believers and as a church, though not in terms of our engagement with public policy.

## Tall Idols and Humble Confidence (Daniel 3)

Daniel and his companions faced many trials while in exile in Babylon. At one point, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego found themselves caught between

a ninety-foot, golden statue and a flaming furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all peoples should bow to the idol, worshipping the gods of Babylon. Having faith in Yahweh, these three Jews refused to do so. The interpretation of the Mosaic law in this instance is as clear as it gets. The first two commandments given in the Law say, “You shall have no other gods before me,” and “You shall not make for yourself a carved image. . . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them” (Exod. 20:3–4). The three Jews were quickly confronted by King Nebuchadnezzar himself. He asked, “[W]ho is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” The humble confidence of their response is amazing:

*“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Dan. 3:16–18).*

Though their lives were at stake, they were not afraid. These three Jews knew by God’s word that he would one day establish an eternal kingdom that they would forever inherit (Dan. 2:44). While exiled from the land of Israel, they were looking forward to their Homeland. As exiles ourselves, we too believe and live by the clear teachings of Scripture, knowing that we answer to God in matters of moral conscience and having confidence in our God who delivers.

We can find ourselves in similar situations to these three Jews when it comes to LGBTQ issues. In the workplace or among extended family or in social gatherings, we may have neighbors who would like us to bow to their gods of sexual “freedom” and self-indulgence. Though we may not be thrown into a furnace if we decline, we may face the flames of their reproach. In Hebrews 13:11–16, the writer uses an image of flames as representing reproach and teaches that Jesus endured such on the cross. He exhorts us to join Christ and endure the same reproach, knowing that we exiles have a “city that is to come.” We should remember from the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that God’s presence was with them in the midst of the flames. We may endure reproach or persecution when holding fast to our

biblical convictions, but Christ, having endured such sufferings himself, will be with us in the flames.

Though there has been much debate regarding the Bible and LGBTQ ideology, we shouldn’t equate the abundance of debate with the idea that Scripture itself is unclear. Scripture is abundantly clear on the topic of sex, marriage, and gender. Like Daniel’s companions, we can believe and live by the clear teachings of Scripture. We have no need for unholy alarm as the LGBTQ movement progresses into new territory; Christians, of all people, should be least surprised by sin.

### **Scandalous Churches (Jeremiah 29:1–14)**

The prophet Jeremiah sent a letter to the Babylonian exiles, giving instructions for how to live while in exile and detailing the conditions of their return. Jeremiah writes:

*“[M]ultiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf. . . . For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:6–11).*

Daniel and his companions did not try to escape their exile. They knew from Jeremiah that the people would return in 70 years’ time. Rather, throughout the book of Daniel, we see them fulfilling the commands from the LORD in Jeremiah’s letter. They multiplied and sought the good of Babylon and its people. Daniel and his kinsmen were called to live holy lives among the people of the land of their exile. Far too often, Christians, churches, and denominations are marked by trying to escape the terms of their own exile by establishing their own kingdom here on earth and effectively separating from the people of the land of exile. But God doesn’t call us to escape. The main point I want to establish here is this: the church must live among and do good unto the sexually immoral of this world.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9–13, Paul writes,

*"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world . . . since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality . . . not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. 'Purge the evil person from among you.'"*

In a passage primarily concerned with the holiness of the church and its use of discipline, Paul teaches us to associate with the sexually immoral outside the church. We can fail to do this either through commission or omission. Thinking of the error of commission, I can personally recount many stories of friends who, when coming out to their Christian friends and families as homosexual, were disowned and lost relationships. Many Christian parents feel great shame when their children choose to live an LGBTQ lifestyle. Other Christians may fear the influence that an LGBTQ family member will have on themselves or their children.

The error of omission generally takes the form of separation. I often hear brothers and sisters speaking about the blessings of fellowship, Christian education for their children, living within walking distance to so many church members, and working jobs alongside other believers. These are all wonderful things and can be faithful choices in and of themselves. But, if we as the church are to multiply in gospel fruitfulness, we must find meaningful ways to know, befriend, and love our LGBTQ neighbors. We cannot seek to separate ourselves from the rest of the world; that will only happen when we "go out of the world" to heaven. A Christian's separation from the world is his walking in repentance and holiness within a church. It is not the ostracizing of those outside the church. No, when we attempt to categorically separate ourselves from any group of people, the only thing we accomplish is the hiding of the light of Christ. Our Lord said,

*"You are the light **of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put*

*it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine **before others**, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14–16, **emphasis mine**).*

Our church has a wonderful ministry of hospitality, but if we fail to show hospitality to those outside of current or prospective members, we are putting our light under blackout curtains. How else will a world confused about sex and gender see the compelling witness of godly men and women living out God's design in the power of His grace? "Others" must see the gospel at work in our lives and hear the gospel from us. It is only then that some will "give glory to [our] Father who is in heaven."

The scandal of Jesus' ministry often centered around the unsavory types of people that he kept close. We can wonder, "How will anyone so far off, wanting nothing to do with the Bible because of its sexual ethic, come to repentance and faith?" And yet, it was "tax collectors and prostitutes" who were repenting in Jesus' time (Matt. 21:32)! May the ministry of our church be scandalous enough to associate with the sexually immoral of this world. As believers, this is part of accepting the terms of our own exile from heaven.

### **Gracious Compassion (Daniel 4)**

The debate over LGBTQ issues in our culture is marked by heated exchange. You will often hear political pundits on either side of the issue using harsh language that is not Christ-like. We should not entertain or amuse ourselves with their behavior. Nor should we use mocking and derogatory language when speaking to or about our LGBTQ neighbors. As believers saved by grace, we should be marked by speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

Scripture gives us warrant to say that a belief or action is foolish, sinful, Satanic, or even accursed; yet, we can still be marked by gentleness and kindness. Moreover, our words should flow from hearts that are marked by authentic love and compassion for our LGBTQ neighbors. As we sojourn with humble confidence in the LORD, seeking the good of our LGBTQ neighbors, we should be marked by a compassion that befits the gospel. We see a remarkable example of this in Daniel 4.



King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and sought its interpretation. Of all the king's advisers, none were able to interpret the dream. At last, the king sought Daniel's wisdom. The dream implied that King Nebuchadnezzar would be laid low for a time and lose his mind; he would be toppled from his majesty to the sad state of a wild, grazing animal. When Daniel quickly understood the dream, what was his response? Was he relieved that the wicked king who exiled his own nation would fall from his greatness, offering his nation a chance at freedom? Was he glad that the king who repeatedly tried to kill him and his companions was being judged by the LORD? No. Daniel was primarily marked by a gracious compassion, showing heartfelt "dismay" and "alarm" regarding the dream's interpretation. He said, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!" (Dan. 4:19) Despite all the king's wickedness, Daniel desired good things for the king. Daniel, in his alarm and love for the king, called Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his oppression so that he might receive mercy from the LORD (Dan. 4:27).

Many of our LGBTQ neighbors deal with immense personal and relational hardships. It might be easy for us to dismiss some of those struggles as self-imposed via their choices. However, Daniel was graciously loving towards the king even though the judgment against the king was self-imposed, at least in the sense that he'd earned it. This kind of love can only be present in hearts that love the gospel and are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself, having been tempted in every way and yet without sin, is able to sympathize with all weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). We should foster this same sympathy in our own hearts for our LGBTQ neighbors, and lovingly call them to faith and repentance.

I'm thankful that, in God's wisdom, he has not left us without guidance in his word. Think for a moment about showing compassion towards our transgender neighbors. The Bible is no stranger to people who have had their sexual organs altered through some form of surgery. In Scripture, we see many examples of eunuchs who have positions of status and authority (Dan. 1). Kings in this era had an interest in protecting their royal lineage. The employment of eunuchs in positions of authority helped limit the number

of powerful figures who could overthrow the king and establish their own royal line. So, a quick path to status and power was to become a eunuch in the king's service. Our transgender neighbors are more likely motivated by a form of self-actualization than status or power, but the means that they employ are the same. In Isaiah 56:1-8, we see the LORD himself entreating the eunuch:

*"... let not the eunuch say 'Behold, I am a dry tree'. . . . To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."*

These verses are among the most tender words of Scripture. As those saved by grace, knowing that Christ died for us while we were sinners, our hearts and words should be saturated with such tender love.

### **A Case Study: LGBTQ "Wedding" Invitations**

To help illustrate the application of the above principles, let's consider the following scenario: You receive a "wedding" invitation from a homosexual couple. As a Christian, can you attend this event? Even if you disagree with their homosexuality, would it be profitable to attend to show love to them?

The first principle is that we have a humble confidence in God's Word, live by it, and trust in our God who delivers. As we approach this scenario, we want to consult the Bible not just to address the morality of homosexuality, but to address the nature of marriage covenants, the examples in Scripture of those covenants being formed, and specifically the role of witnesses at wedding ceremonies. God's created and intended structure for a marriage covenant is the union of one man and one woman for life. Scripture never acknowledges that two people in a homosexual relationship can have any such union or covenant. In fact, when speaking about homosexuality, Scripture only addresses either the act of homosexual sex or the people who engage in it, and this without ever offering legitimacy to the relationship (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10). The "wedding" you've been invited to will not contain the formation of a true marriage covenant; it is not a wedding.

One insightful example in Scripture of the formation of a marriage covenant and the role of witnesses is the marriage of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4). When Boaz redeems Ruth to be his wife, there is a call and response between him and all the witnessing elders and people: “You are witnesses!” and “We are witnesses!” Then the entire assembly of witnesses, in praising prayer, asks that the LORD might bless Boaz and Ruth, their marriage, and the fruitfulness (children) of their marriage (Ruth 4:10–12). Witnesses are meant to affirm and celebrate the union being formed, praise God in its formation, and pray to God on its behalf. As believers, we cannot celebrate homosexuality, which God prohibits. We cannot call something a union that the LORD offers no legitimacy. We certainly cannot pray that such an arrangement would produce the fruit of children when, indeed, it never will. In this type of situation, I see little room in Scripture for a Christian to attend. Lest you attend such a ceremony unprepared, it is no formality when the minister asks, “Is there any reason that these two should not be joined in holy matrimony?” This position may be hard for some, and we will likely receive reproach for this view. But, with humble confidence, we must live by the Word and trust in our God who delivers.

The second principle is that we accept the terms of our exile. We are meant to dwell among and associate with sinful and unregenerate people. While the above view may earn us reproach, we should do what we can to preserve the relationship. Any subsequent distancing between ourselves and the homosexual couple should not be the result of any commission or omission on our part. We do not necessarily need to spend less time with that family member, nor seek to switch teams at work. We have a God who delivers, and He may yet have ordained purposes for our presence in their life. There may be no place for you at their “wedding” feast, but let’s leave a place set for them around our dinner tables.

To that end, let’s consider the third principle. We should be marked by genuine love and by words that teem with gracious compassion, calling our LGBTQ neighbors to gospel repentance. The wonderful mystery of the marriage between one man and one woman is that it is meant to be a living metaphor of the union between Jesus and the church (Eph. 5). Because of this, you can point every conversation

about gender and sexuality to the gospel. I’d exhort you to study Ephesians 5 well and use it as a conversational bridge to the gospel. Call your LGBTQ neighbors to repentance and hope.

## Conclusion

The task ahead of the church in navigating LGBTQ issues can seem monumental. As we walk down these paths, we must do so in the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We must remember that Jesus sojourned in the world, being apart from his homeland, and dwelt among a strange, sinful people. He did so while trusting in and living by every word from his heavenly Father. His heart was broken for the people among whom he dwelt, and he spoke words of compassion. More than just calling people to repentance, he himself suffered, died, and rose again to buy the redemption that we needed. One day, we will sojourn no more and will dwell in his presence. Until then, he will be with us during our time of exile. He will empower us as we lovingly call our LGBTQ neighbors to repentance and hope.

- Joseph Strickland

<sup>1</sup> See The Nashville Statement (<https://cbmw.org/the-nashville-statement/>).

## Recommended Resources:

*Is God Anti-Gay?* by Sam Allberry

*Compassion Without Compromise* by Adam Barr and Ron Citlau

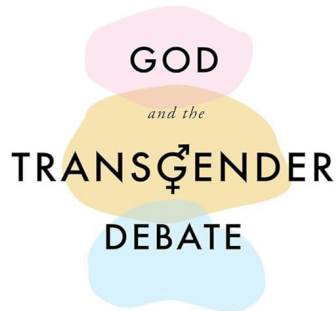
## BOOK HIGHLIGHT

# GOD AND THE TRANSGENDER DEBATE

Written by Andrew T. Walker | Recommended by Caroline Rieke

Foreword by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Andrew T. Walker



What Does the Bible Actually Say  
About Gender Identity?

EXPANDED AND UPDATED

Andrew Walker's *God and the Transgender Debate* addresses the contentious topic of transgender ideology from a thoroughly Christian perspective. He cultivates godly empathy for those struggling with gender dysphoria, reminding readers that all people, regardless of their sin struggles, are made in the image of God and possess inherent dignity.

Walker underscores the universal condition of sin, noting that all people experience pain and suffering from their rebellion against God. Christians, he argues, are called to show compassion and patience to those suffering as a result of their sin, remembering that they too were once dead in their sins but have been graciously forgiven by God. Walker stirs readers toward such compassion while clearly explaining why transgenderism is wrong.

He begins with the foundational idea that one's source of authority—whether self or God—shapes their views on gender identity. Whereas contemporary Western culture looks inward, the Christian looks to God. Central to Walker's argument is what he calls the “Genesis Blueprint,” built on three truths: (1) God created humanity in His image, (2) God created humanity distinctly male and female, and (3) God created male and female for one another—to complement one another.

Walker uses this framework to show how transgender ideology contradicts God's design. He argues that, despite cultural promises, embracing transgenderism fails

to deliver true happiness or flourishing.

Instead of affirming new identities or feelings, Walker offers a gospel-centered response to sin's pain. He points to hope in Jesus Christ, who died for those who repent and trust in Him. To those with gender dysphoria—or any sin that feels innate—he encourages a faithful, patient fight against it. This, he explains, leads to present obedience and flourishing as well as future transformation.

Walker also calls on churches to approach the issue with both compassion and conviction. He provides practical guidance for ministering truthfully and lovingly to those struggling with gender identity. The book ends by exposing the philosophical inconsistencies in transgender ideology, its contradictions with other progressive beliefs, and its failure to promote true equality.

Walker writes primarily for those uncertain about gender identity, loved ones of those who are, and churches seeking to support them. His systematic, gospel-rooted approach also applies to broader issues like euthanasia and abortion. *God and the Transgender Debate* is a thoughtful, compassionate, and biblically grounded guide that urges Christians to speak truth with grace in a complex cultural moment.

## BOOK EXCERPTS

**“The Christian answer is to locate authority, knowledge, and trust where it can find a firm stable, fulfilling foundation—in the crucified Creator. He may not always agree with our feelings or our reason— but he can be trusted, and he knows what he's talking about, and he has the right to tell us how to live.”**

– “On Making a Decision” p. 47–48

**If Christians have anything to offer in this contentious age, it is truth, and we should not shy away from that truth. But equally, if we use truth as a blunt force trauma against those who are coming to grips with what discipleship means, woe to us. Woe to us if we demand conformity from those who are struggling more than we are willing to walk alongside them while they are struggling.**

– “Challenging the Church” p. 136



## BOOK HIGHLIGHT

# COMPASSION WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Written by Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau | Recommended by Pat Knowles

FOREWORD BY Kevin DeYoung, author of *CRAZY BUSY*



Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau

*Compassion Without Compromise* is a helpful book to broaden our understanding of homosexual sin and the transformational power of the gospel. Reading this book will help you become better equipped to guard the truth of the gospel by defending it against false teaching within the church, love those bound in the sin of homosexuality, and encourage you to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The authors encourage the reader to see how the transformational power of the gospel cleanses us from our sin and gives us a new identity in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 6:9–11).

Why read the book? I believe you will find it helpfully challenges your understanding and better positions you to exercise your responsibility as a Christian. We are encouraged and called to love others, share the good news of Jesus Christ, and hold fast to the truth of God's Word. The authors caution us to be alert to specific revisionist arguments. They provide a guide for us to hold fast to Scripture that speaks the truth against sin along with the only true hope for those in bondage to sin.

In our culture, homosexuality has been politicized and normalized to a point of broad acceptability, which includes the legal protection of same sex marriage. In this shift of expanding public opinion, we as Christians should not be surprised to see and feel its effect in our lives and the Christian church in America. The

book concludes with a series of questions and answers that move readers toward practical application of what it looks like to love others with the same compassion as the "good Samaritan." All in all, the book aims to help us understand and hold out the true hope of the gospel to everyone who struggles with sexual sin—especially homosexual sin

## BOOK EXCERPTS

**"For any follower of Jesus, our identity is in God himself, specifically the person and work of Jesus Christ. We are no longer the sum of our actions, desires, biological inclinations, or cultural pressures. We are his. This is true for everyone, even gay and lesbian strugglers. So we can say clearly without equivocation, that the gospel can change one's identity."**

– Chapter 8: "Spots on the Leopard" p. 105

**Using scripture as our basis, we have made the case that the gospel provides the way forward in a culture, very confused on the issue of sexual intimacy. Our sexual sin, whether homosexual or heterosexual in nature, leads us out of the garden of God's blessing and into a wasteland. The gospel provides a way back.**

– Chapter 9: "When Push Comes to Shove" p. 115

# BIBLE READING PLAN

## AUGUST

# TAKE UP & READ

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message.  
Take Up & Read!

August 1	Hebrews 12:1–11
August 2	James 1
<b>August 3</b>	<b>Proverbs 3:1–12</b>
August 4	Matthew 8:28–9:8
August 5	Mark 5:1–20
August 6	Luke 8:26–39
August 7	Mark 2:1–12
August 8	Exodus 34:1–9
August 9	Luke 5:17–26
<b>August 10</b>	<b>Matthew 8:28–9:8</b>
August 11	Proverbs 3:13–35
August 12	Job 28
August 13	Psalms 1
August 14	Ecclesiastes 7
August 15	Colossians 1:24–2:5
August 16	James 2

<b>August 17</b>	<b>Proverbs 3:13–35</b>
August 18	Proverbs 4
August 19	Ephesians 6:10–18
August 20	Psalms 119:9–16
August 21	Colossians 3
August 22	1 John 5:1–12
August 23	James 3
<b>August 24</b>	<b>Proverbs 4</b>
August 25	Proverbs 5:1–23
August 26	Ephesians 5:22–33
August 27	1 Corinthians 6:12–20
August 28	Matthew 5:27–30
August 29	1 Thessalonians 4:1–12
August 30	James 4
<b>August 31</b>	<b>Proverbs 5:1–23</b>

\*Sermons in Bold



# NEW MEMBERS



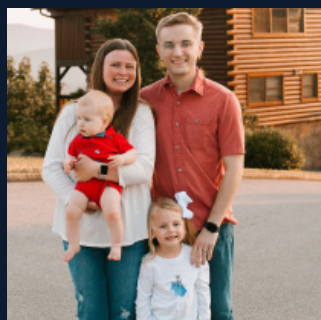
NICK & MATTIE  
BRAZELTON



JESSE  
LAMBERT



BOB & CATHI  
SELPH



ZACHARY &  
MADISON SKILLING



MICHAEL &  
ALLY STILLEY



IAN WITHERSPOON

"We must grasp once again, the idea of church membership as being  
the membership of the body of Christ and as the biggest honour  
which can come a man's way in this world."

MARTIN LLYOD-JONES



MOUNT VERNON

BAPTIST CHURCH

[MVBCHURCH.ORG](http://MVBCHURCH.ORG)