



The Way

June 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Two years after I was born, athlete Bruce Jenner captured America's attention by achieving unprecedented success in the 1976 Olympic Games. Many at the time looked to him as the epitome of masculinity. This all changed last year when Jenner appeared on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine, surgically altered and cosmetically appearing as a woman. Jenner has since become the face of the current debate on transgenderism.

This debate was recently heightened by a "Letter on Transgender Students" from the Departments of Justice and Education, under the direction of the Obama administration. While creatively called "guidelines," these guidelines were accompanied by the threat of withheld Title IX funding for schools which do not adhere to them. Thus, schools which do not allow girls to use boys' restrooms can expect to be penalized. Locker room use is also included.

Some disturbing features of the president's letter include the following:

* Either a student OR a parent may notify the school that they wish to be treated as the opposite sex. (Emphasis mine.) In other words, boys need not tell their parents that they wish to use the girls' restrooms. Parents can be completely bypassed.

* There is to be "no medical diagnosis or treatment requirement." It matters not what medical or mental health professionals says. Only the word of the student is to be considered.

* When it comes to sports, schools may not "rely on overly broad generalizations or stereotypes about the differences between transgender students and other students of the same sex." If you want to know where this is eventually going, imagine a six foot six transgender male on the girls' basketball team, pushing, trampling and dunking upon a petite five foot four female who clearly didn't know what she was signing up for.

* When it comes to overnight school trips, a school "must allow transgender students to access housing consistent with their gender identity and may not require transgender students to stay in single-occupancy accommodations." Thus, your teenage daughter may be required to literally share the

same hotel room with someone of the opposite sex while on that senior trip.

Ronnie Floyd, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention responded to these guidelines saying, "It's an outrageous attack on our Creator Himself, upon human sexuality and morality and a further advancement of the flagrant attack on religious freedom in our culture." Some states are seeking legislative solutions to this problem. Independent businesses are chiming in as well. One major retailer, Target, has explicitly stated that it will no longer restrict the use of their bathrooms to anyone based on gender.

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best to respond."*

All of a sudden, what used to be common sense is a diving line in the sand. In light of these events, Christians are asking how to best respond. First of all, the Bible is clear that gender differences are real and created by God. In the very first chapter of the Bible, we are told that man was created separate from the rest of creation, being made in

God's image. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female." Notice the connection between maleness and femaleness and the image of God in us. Jesus affirmed this order when asked about marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:4. He clearly defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Furthermore, the fifth commandment, in telling us to honor father and mother, assumes the fulfillment of these gender roles. In short, gender is at the core of who we are. The Bible could not be more clear on this issue.

It is also important to understand the real reason why this debate is happening. In Romans chapter one, the Apostle Paul describes mankind's rebellion against God. He said that man suppresses the truth, knowing from nature of God's existence and attributes. Refusing to believe, their minds are darkened and they worship creation instead of the Creator. What happens when man rebels against God as Creator? When man rebels against the Creator, he also rebels against creation or the *created order*. And part of the created order – at the *heart* of the created order – is maleness and femaleness. Thus, according to Romans one, homosexuality (along with the overall rejection of gender roles) is part of mankind expressing contempt for God and rebellion against God. Every step our society has taken in the "sexual revolution" has been a declaration of independence from God. This is the big issue: In spite of God's goodness towards us, man does not want God to rule over him.

One reason why we are having this debate is because the issues of homosexuality and transgenderism are inseparably linked. How so? If marriage can be redefined (as it now has), it must be redefined

based upon the premise that gender is meaningless. If gender is meaningless, then logically speaking, one's gender is whatever one makes it. If gender is whatever one makes it, then one is forced to make a distinction between gender identity and biological sex. One domino falls and another is knocked down. Everything we are seeing became inevitable the moment Obergefell Vs Hodges was decided last year.

"This is the big issue: In spite of God's goodness towards us, man does not want God to rule over him."

If this means ignoring basic science, so be it. Perhaps you were taught in high school biology that the presence of a Y chromosome yields a male and the presence of two X chromosomes yields a female. This is an inconvenient truth for the LGBT crowd. The concept of gender identity, thus, was created to get around this scientific barrier. It is a completely social construction with no basis in science or reality.

The question we face is this: How should the church respond?

1) Stand firm on biblical convictions.

We must remember that maleness and femaleness point to Christ and the Church. We see in our differences a picture of the gospel. Furthermore, if the Bible cannot be trusted when it speaks about gender differences, it cannot be trusted when it speaks about anything: life, death, heaven, hell, salvation, forgiveness, etc. What is at stake in the transgenderism debate? For the Christian, absolutely everything.

2) AVOID unbiblical extremes.

Some respond to the transgen-

derism debate by fleeing to extremes just as unbiblical as the one they are criticizing. For example, there is no rule that says Johnny must enjoy playing with tanks. If your little girl does not like *Frozen*, you need not fear. Remember, godly men in the Bible like David played the harp. Women like Jael and Deborah were warriors. I'm not suggesting that women should be on the front lines of battle, but we need not force children into roles we have created for them.

3) Expect the world to be the world.

Do not think it strange that our society is walking down this path. I like what John Piper had to say on this point: "If Christians give most of our time to bemoaning and criticizing the world for acting like the world, our vision of God and His glorious future for His people will become smaller and smaller, and that could be a greater tragedy than the moral tragedy we are living in." How true that is! We must be willing to speak to the cultural issues around us, but we must not allow the cultural issue of the moment to distract us from the gospel. We cannot become so transfixed upon the current debate that the gospel gets lost. We must be known for the gospel, even as we oppose certain things.

4) See transgender persons with compassion, not contempt.

It wasn't long ago that transgenderism was listed as a psychological disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or the *DSM*. It is unfortunate that it was ever removed. The suicide rate for transgender persons is a whopping twenty-seven times that of the national average according to an article in the Dayton Daily News. Different studies report that anywhere between 41-50% of all transgender persons attempt suicide. The suicide rate is so high in the

transgender community, it by far surpasses even the suicide rate of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, which is also tragic.

Some will claim that this incredibly high suicide rate is because of discrimination against transgender persons. And yet, these rates have remained steady even with the outpouring of support from the media, Hollywood and other spheres of influence. Let's face it. The tide of support is in favor of the transgender community. Yet even with that support, up to half of transgender persons will prefer suicide to their current condition.

Believe it or not, that suicide rate is even higher for those who undergo transitional sex change surgery. The first hospital in America to perform sex change surgery was John Hopkins. Fourteen years later, they ceased doing so, concluding that patients who were surgically altered to resemble the opposite sex were worse off for having done so. A 2011 Swedish study also states that the risk of suicide is higher for people who had the surgery versus the general population.

Personally, I believe if you have a beating heart, you should have compassion for anyone who is hurting enough to take their own life. We must remember that God loves transgender persons and Jesus died for transgender persons. The gospel provides hope for whosoever will believe. Yes, a man or woman who identifies as the sex opposite their biological reality can experience the peace they long for. But it is not found on a surgeon's table, it is found in the gospel. And we are the ones who must speak the truth in love.

5) DISCIPLESHIP.

We must teach believers, particularly new believers, what the

Word of God says about gender differences. Our children should hear from us what they can expect to see in the world, before actually seeing it. Parents, you have a job to be proactive and not reactive. As a father, I don't like that I have to do it. But I have to do it!

6) Demonstrate where transgenderism takes us.

If a person's gender can be separated from biological reality, then it cannot stop there. The moment you accept transgenderism, you must also accept transracialism. If a person feels that they identify as another race, this must be treated as fact. If a Caucasian self identifies as African American, he or she must be granted access to the same minority scholarship as someone with an actual African ancestry. The same can be said of age. If a fifteen year old self identifies as a twenty-one year old, he or she must be served alcohol. Russell Moore said it best: "Peoples and neighborhoods and nations and cultures cannot live this way." The ideology of self identification leads to a complete breakdown of society. This is where we are today.

"John the Baptist lost his head for telling Herod he could not have his brother's wife. Today, Christians may lose their heads for insisting that Herod cannot be his brother's wife."

7) Be willing to suffer for your beliefs.

Russell Moore again mentioned

that John the Baptist lost his head for telling Herod he could not *have* his brother's wife. Today, Christians may "lose their heads" for insisting that Herod cannot *be* his brother's wife. And yet, whatever the price, we must be faithful to God. We must remain true to His word. We must allow ourselves to be misunderstood and mischaracterized and even penalized. It matters not if we live or die. It only matters that we are faithful to God.

And please do not think that this issue does not affect First Baptist Church of Homestead. Do not think that transgender persons have never walked through our doors. They have, you just didn't know it. I have personally counseled transgender persons, graciously inviting them to repent. We have had parents who didn't know how to explain to their children that *grandpa* was now a *grandma*. We must remember that transgenderism not only destroys transgender persons, but their families as well. And some of those families will be our own. More than ever before, we need the wisdom and grace of God to be in the world but not of it. We must not bury our proverbial heads in the sand. We must be ready to courageously and compassionately speak on this issue and any issue on which the Word of God speaks.

On another note, please pray for me while I am in Haiti June 25-July 3. I will be leading pastors' conferences, preaching evangelistic meetings and engaging in personal evangelism. This is my first time traveling to Haiti. Pray for God to guide our steps, use us and empower us in ways we could not imagine.

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor.

*Pastor
Howard*



Happy Birthday!

6/02 - Nevaeh Miles	6/07 - Greg Wells	6/15 - Devyn Housh	6/26 - Sylvan Pile
6/02 - Hector Morales	6/07 - Edward Zdancewicz	6/15 - Evan Jones	6/27 - Ruth Campbell
6/02 - Faith Van Wambeck	6/09 - Yolanda Biichle	6/17 - Kadie Lopez	6/28 - Nichole Sincore
6/03 - Lauren Garner	6/10 - Arturo Borrero	6/18 - Elise Stutz	6/29 - Phyllis Carpenter
6/04 - Crystal Ferreira	6/10 - Jaime Gomez	6/19 - Brianna Dorelien	6/30 - Nathalie Norestin
6/04 - Jamie Garner	6/10 - Jesse Morgan	6/20 - Howard Harden	
6/05 - Luis Lohuis	6/10 - Alexz Pita	6/20 - Angelica Garcia	
6/05 - Joshua McMillan	6/11 - Lucille Allen	6/22 - Pascale Louise	
6/05 - Selenia Perry	6/11 - Jesse Dickson	6/22 - Fred Oliveira	
6/05 - Daniel Santana	6/12 - Tarra Young	6/23 - Gustavo Albarado	
6/06 - Era James	6/13 - Leonardo Garcia	6/24 - Rosie Morales	
6/07 - Olga Cedano	6/14 - Diana Hennion	6/24 - Carlos Perez	
6/07 - Tejani Job	6/14 - Etel Martinez	6/24 - Tatiana Rodriguez	
6/07 - Ali Jones	6/14 - Dean Sourber	6/24 - Kyle Sweeney	
6/07 - Megan Jones	6/15 - Nila Castro-Headley	6/25 - Andrea Morris	
6/07 - Noah Soto	6/15 - Monica Goedhart	6/26 - Lori Diehl	
6/07 - Tejani Vicioso	6/15 - Rebekah Goodwin	6/26 - Nicole Melley	



Music Ministry



It's summertime and school will soon be out with family vacations around the corner, *but don't leave until you attend* Vacation Bible School, **Submerged!** June 20th through the 24th, starting at 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. Pre K4 to sixth grade. For all children attending, as well as all workers, go to www.fbchomestead.org to enroll. It's as easy as one, two, three. You are guaranteed a fantastic time! See Lynda Melton or myself

if you would like to help in any way. Keep aware of the supply list that will be posted soon, if you would like to donate items. Our FBC family are so giving!

Another exciting event planned is Steve Green in concert here at FBC! You will not get tired hearing about this exciting performance, August 21st. I am extremely thrilled to share this musical news. Our adult choir will be singing with him along with

our children's choir. Steve has expanded his talents by singing in Spanish, so for my Spanish singing friends, you are greatly needed in the choir as well. Mark your calendar now!

Singing for HIM,
Pam



Stewardship

May 2016

Contributions for May 2016:	\$ 47,079.49
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 58,243.75
YTD Contributions:	\$ 423,491.00
YTD Budget:	\$ 407,706.25

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Father's Day Cookie Drive

June 19 & June 26

All proceeds will go to help support our Student Ministry Summer Mission Trip



2016
Graduation
Recognition

June 12, 11:00 a.m.



28205 SW 125th Ave, Homestead, FL 33030

Join us Thursday, June 24, 11:30 a.m., as we serve meals and distribute Bibles to the homeless.



First Things First
MEN'S
PRAYER
BREAKFAST

All men are invited Saturday,
June 4, 8:00 a.m.



VBS Student
Helper Training
June 14, 7:00 p.m. or
June 18, 9:00 a.m.

Training is required, you will not be allowed to help if you did not attend one of the training sessions.



Youth Summer Mission Trip
Covenant College Lookout Mountain, GA
July 4 -10

If you are able to help make it possible for a student to go by making a financial contribution of any amount, please see Joe Friman.

Vacation Bible School

June 20 - 24, 8:30am - 12:30pm



Pre-k4 thru Grade 6. Preschoolers must have been 4 by 9/1/15. Register online www.fbchomestead.org or call the church office 305-247-1662.

ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

29050 SW 177th Ave
Homestead, FL 33030



Summer is one of my favorite seasons in Student Ministry. Teenagers are out of school and the opportunities for ministry expand tremendously! There are some *fantastic* opportunities in the next few months for students and my prayer is that you would take advantage of them! Here's a look at what's taking place this month.

First, beginning on June 15, our regularly scheduled Wednesday **ENCOUNTER** service will be held at a different location each week. We call these Wednesday nights **Epic Encounter Excursions** or **E3** for short. Each week we'll travel to a different location and combine fun and games with music and a message. This summer's schedule is available to pick up in the youth room or online at our Student Ministry website: 633students.org.

Second, on Saturday, June 11, we'll have our annual **Summer**

Kick-Off where we officially ring summer in with a bang! The event will be held from 1:00 – 7:00 pm at the Mendheim's home. Each student is to bring a 2 liter drink and a bag of chips to the event. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Third, we'll be recognizing our graduates on Sunday, June 12 in all three services. I hope you'll be there and join me in congratulating and celebrating the accomplishments these students have worked hard to achieve.

Fourth, VBS is just a few weeks away! All students who are interested in helping this year need to register online as a helper and **MUST** attend one of our mandatory training events on either Tuesday, June 14 @ 7:00 pm or Saturday, June 18 @ 9:00 am.

Fifth, in an effort to try and enhance communication, we are testing out a text-based remind system. If you are a student or a parent of a student in our ministry and you are interested in receiving

text message reminders of Student Ministry events, simply text "@633sm" to the number "81010."

Finally, this month's core value I'd like to highlight is **Compassionate Ministry**. This core value highlights the truth that believers have been given a spiritual gift that God wants them to use to serve others in love. Regardless of age, gender, social status, income level, physical limitations, etc., **every** believer has been gifted to serve. Our ministry wants to help students discover their gifting and then provide them with an outlet to use it to serve others. Every member is a minister!

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you and to serve with you for the glory of God!

For His Glory,
Joe

