

GENDER ISSUES & THE BIBLE

Transgender questions today carry an urgency unimaginable even five years ago. Most churches and Christians find themselves exposed due to their lack of theological and pastoral preparation.

GENDER IDENTITY: According to the Human Rights Campaign, gender identity is “the innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither.” Some common terms you might hear or read to describe people who don’t identify with being put in traditional male or female categories are gender neutral, non-binary, gender nonconforming, agender and gender fluid. Transgender refers to someone whose identity does not correspond to their assigned sex at birth and cisgender refers to someone who does identify with their birth sex.¹

THE NATURE OF GENDER

GENESIS 1:27 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

The Bible knows no other gender categories besides male and female. While men and women in Scripture may express their masculinity and femininity in a wonderful diversity of ways, Scripture still operates with the binary categories of men and women. You are one or the other.²

Some claim that eunuchs in the Bible show a third “gender-neutral” option. They were not a new gender category, Eunuchs were men who were born without the ability to beget children, whether through castration or congenital defect. As such, the existence of eunuchs in Biblical times does not open the door for a multitude of modern-day genders. Consultation of all the standard Classical, NT, and Patristic Greek lexicographers reveals no Greek lexicon lists hermaphrodite, androgyne, or any other term related to intersex, transgender, or homosexual persons for the term eunuch.

GENESIS 2:18-24 18 The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” **19** Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. **20** So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. **21** So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. **22** Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

THE BROKENNESS OF OUR WORLD

Our world has been forever broken and changed since sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden. This entrance to sin has affected all of creation. The reality is that we live in a fallen world with symptoms of the fall all around. As we live in this fallen world, we also choose to sin which multiplies the fall and compounds the problem.

¹ <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/9904/christians-and-gender-neutral-pronouns>

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/what-does-the-bible-say-about-transgenderism/>

The Fall Leads to More Falling

ROMANS 1:20-28 **20** For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **25** They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. **27** In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

Sin, by its nature, confuses and complicates issues that God has otherwise made clear.³

Creation is Broken and Longs for Restoration

We must be careful not to assume that what we see and experience here on earth is as it should be.

ROMANS 8:19-21 **19** For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope **21** that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. **22** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

The Christian worldview is one that acknowledges that creation has been disrupted and is not the way it once was, nor how it will eventually be in the New Creation (Genesis 3; Romans 8; Revelation 21). No part of our existence in the universe has been left undisturbed by sin's effects. This means that the brokenness of creation reaches into every corner of our lives — even our minds and hearts. As a result, every human struggles with the brokenness of our own bodies, desires, and thoughts. And to the same degree, every human can find their true identity by recognizing that the God who made them has also saved them and will one day restore them.⁴

Intersex Individuals

The anomaly of intersex individuals does not undermine the creational design, but rather gives another example of creational “groaning” and the “not the way they are supposed to be” realities of a fallen world.⁵

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/transgender-pronouns.html>

⁴ <https://www.thegoodbook.com/blog/news/2017/07/28/transgender-debate/>

⁵ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/what-does-the-bible-say-about-transgenderism/>

Transgender Individuals

The growing trend of questioning gender identity despite their biological sex is to be seen in light of Scripture no matter our own feelings or confusion, we should act in accordance with the biological reality of God's design.

GENDER DYSPHORIA: The word "dysphoria" is a clinical term for *unease* or *dissatisfaction*. *Gender dysphoria* is the feeling that your emotional and psychological identity doesn't match the biological sex you were born with. There are two types of gender dysphoria:

Early onset gender dysphoria involves someone's distress over their sex that begins in early childhood, usually between the ages of 2 and 4. According to Psychology Today, only a small number of children with gender dysphoria will continue to have symptoms in later adolescence or adulthood.

Rapid onset gender dysphoria, an increasing social phenomenon, affects teens and adults who have identified with their own biological sex for years, then decide they want to change genders and sometimes alter their bodies.

The logic behind transgender thought is: if transgender feelings are real, then they are therefore also good and blessed by God. The Christian worldview on gender and sex takes into account not only the creation of a biological man and a biological woman, but also love, marriage, fidelity, and God's design for reproduction.⁶

How to Help

1. Focus on the overall theme woven in Scripture (and in nature) that male and female are equally valuable and complementary — each displaying aspects of God as their differences work together.
2. Let individuality flourish within healthy, Biblical limits. The mistake a lot of parents make when their child exhibits traits that are more commonly associated with the opposite sex is to react in fear or anger. Instead, watch for opportunities to help them enjoy and develop their talents and interests in the context of still being a boy or a girl.
3. Remember the difference between acceptance and approval. As Christians, we are commanded to love our neighbors (Mark 12:31) and to treat others how we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). The call to love our neighbors, however, is not a quid pro quo that permits us to affirm whatever our neighbor wants to be affirmed.

But remember: those who experience gender dysphoria are not necessarily trying to win a culture war. They need to know that (even while we may not agree with them) Christians love them, are there for them, are ready to listen to them and seek to understand the pain they are facing, and deeply desire what is best for them. Compassion and dignity for dysphoric individuals are not in tension with disagreeing with transgenderism as a social movement.⁷

PREFERRED PRONOUNS: Pronouns are not an insignificant issue. How a person wants to be referred to communicates how that person understands himself or herself at their

⁶ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/a-biblical-perspective-on-transgender-identity-a-primer-for-parents-and-strugglers/>

⁷ <https://www.thegoodbook.com/blog/news/2017/07/28/transgender-debate/>

deepest, most intimate level. This means that language has deeply significant meaning embedded in its usage. The use of language is an attempt to name and give meaning to reality. Pronouns and gendered names, therefore, refer to a reality in which the transgendered individual is wishing to live.⁸ What should we do if our conscience doesn't allow for use of preferred pronouns?

- Avoid pronouns if you can.* If at all possible, avoid using pronouns altogether. Think to yourself: How often are you in conversation with a person where you have to refer to this person's pronoun in the third person? Not very often. So, avoid pronoun use altogether.
- Use their preferred first name.* Depending on the context and relationship, if (for example) someone is a biological male who requests to be called by a feminine name, it is acceptable to use their preferred name on the grounds that names are not intrinsically gendered.⁹

4. Keep an eye on the bigger priority. Understanding sexuality as God intends is actually a God-designed picture for seeing and understanding more about Him. Sexual morality is not merely an end unto itself. In other words, the most important issue in God's eyes is a person's heart and connection to Him. Keep that bigger priority as your focus, too.¹⁰

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11 **9** Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men **10** nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone. Our salvation isn't contingent upon what we do but is 100% dependent upon what we believe about ourselves and Jesus. When we are saved, the Spirit of God lives in us to convict us of our sins, to empower us to live a Godly life and to equip us for ministry. With Christ's forgiveness and the Spirit living in us, we aren't who we were before we put our faith in Christ.

Can a person who claims Christ continue in these sins and still be a Christian? The key issue is the difference between inheriting eternal life and inheriting the kingdom of God. We inherit eternal life (salvation) by faith alone. We inherit the kingdom of God (blessings, rewards) based on faith-based actions. If a believer continues in their past sins, they are forfeiting future blessings. NOTE: If a person claims to be a Christian, but shows no signs of Spirit-led, Bible-driven conviction and action, their salvation should be confirmed and they should be disciplined to live the new life they have in Christ.

⁸ <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/he-she-ze-zir-navigating-pronouns-while-loving-your-transgender-neighbor/>

⁹ <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/he-she-ze-zir-navigating-pronouns-while-loving-your-transgender-neighbor/>

¹⁰ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/a-biblical-perspective-on-transgender-identity-a-primer-for-parents-and-strugglers/>