

PASTORAL CARE GUIDE

Navigating through Gender and Identity Issues

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INTRODUCTION

In our ever-changing world, the complexities surrounding gender and identity have become pressing issues facing both society and the Church. As followers of Christ, we are called to be salt and light, engaging with the cultural challenges of our time and extending God's love and truth to all people. It is with a heart filled with empathy, truth, and love that we present this Pastoral Guide—a resource aimed at equipping pastors and church leaders to navigate the complexities of gender and identity issues with grace and biblical understanding.

The role of the Church in addressing these complex issues cannot be underestimated. As ambassadors of Christ, we are called to be agents of transformation in our culture, seeking to understand and care for those who are struggling with gender and identity. Our mission is not to condemn or reject, but to extend a hand of compassion, guiding individuals towards a deeper understanding of their identity in Christ.

This Pastoral Guide is designed to serve as a tool for pastors and leaders in their efforts to minister effectively within their communities. It provides insights and practical guidance on various aspects, including understanding the biblical perspective on gender and identity, defining commonly used terminologies, offering support to individuals who struggle with these issues, equipping parents to care for children facing these challenges, and guiding the Church to engage with love and truth.

First and foremost, this guide emphasizes a Christ-centered approach. Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith, and His teachings are the bedrock upon which we base our understanding of gender and identity. Grounded in the truth of God's Word, we aim to navigate these issues with sensitivity and wisdom, always mindful of the unique struggles and experiences of individuals.

With empathy as our compass, we recognize that those who wrestle with their gender and identity face deeply personal and often painful journeys. The pastoral care we offer should reflect the compassion of Christ, providing a safe space for individuals to explore their questions, doubts, and fears. Our goal is to walk alongside them, guiding and encouraging them towards an authentic understanding of their identity in Christ.

Additionally, this guide acknowledges the vital role of parents in supporting and caring for children who may be grappling with questions of gender and identity. It offers practical advice and resources to equip parents with knowledge and love, enabling them to nurture their children's emotional and spiritual well-being.

Furthermore, the guide equips the Church as a whole to engage with these issues. The body of believers must approach gender and identity discussions with both truth and love, recognizing that our convictions should be grounded in Scripture while our interactions are marked by grace and humility. The Church is called to be a welcoming community, embracing individuals from all walks of life and offering a redemptive path towards wholeness.

Lastly, this Pastoral Guide defines the role of believers in society today. As Christians, we are called to be witnesses for Christ in every sphere of life. By engaging thoughtfully and lovingly with gender and identity issues, we have the opportunity to bring the transformative power of the Gospel to bear on these important conversations, shining the light of Christ's love in the midst of confusion and pain.



In the pages that follow, this guide seeks to equip pastors and leaders to navigate the complex terrain of gender and identity issues with empathy, truth, and love. May it serve as a resource to help us fulfill our calling to minister to all individuals, extend God's grace, and foster a deeper understanding of the beauty and diversity within God's creation.

THE BIBLICAL POSITION ON GENDER AND IDENTITY

Section One

This document has been prepared to represent the Mannahouse Eldership's agreed upon understanding of what the Bible clearly teaches regarding topics related to gender. It is meant to lay a doctrinal foundation that can be applied pastorally to promote understanding, clarity, and healing.

The Bible addresses the concept of gender by stating God's creative intent and design. It also gives us clear guidance regarding how we are meant to view, value, and treat every person God has created to bear His image.

As our creator, God alone has the right to define our personhood. Accepting and surrendering to His definition of us is the foundation of healthy identity. Rejecting God's creation and His definition of it is an act of rejecting God Himself.

Except for the first two, the flow of the points below is meant to follow the general order of how these topics unfold in Scripture, rather than listing them in a hierarchy of importance. We believe that the starting point of addressing issues is the revelation of God's thoughts on the matter as revealed in Scripture. Our thinking must be based in His revealed truth while our approach to others must be an expression of His amazing love. For this reason, we intentionally begin with the first two numbered points below.

Following are some key summary points that arise from the Biblical research (the Scripture references included are not exhaustive but are a representative sampling):

1. When a person's sense of identity, whether regarding gender dysphoria or sexual attraction, deviates from God's intent and design, he or she can believe in Christ, surrender to him, and be born again with a new heart and identity, which aligns with God's intent and design in all areas (John 3:1-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17). While all Christians are new creatures in Christ, they must remain vigilant in the ongoing battle against their old sinful nature with its desires (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 13:13-14; cf. Ephesians 6:10-17) and are called to "put off" the old sinful thoughts and habits, and to "put on" thoughts and habits in accordance with their new nature in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:1-17). Struggling against temptation, which comes via the old sinful nature, is not a sin, but entertaining it and surrendering to it is (Hebrews 12:4; James 1:12-15). Yet in the process of sanctification, believers can overcome such temptation by surrendering to the Holy Spirit, who always provides a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 5:16-18).
2. As a church, we have grace, patience and compassion for all people bound in sin or struggling with it. Scripture directs us to teach and correct believers within the church, not to judge unbelieving individuals outside of it (1 Corinthians 5:12), to whom we offer the gospel which frees people from sin and death through Christ (Romans 6). Once saved, we encourage all believers to stand firm in their new Christian identity, endeavoring by God's grace to put off their old sinful thoughts and desires and to put on Christ in those areas instead – whatever those particular areas may be (Ephesians 4:17-32). While all sin is shameful, we do not shame or stigmatize a believer who fights the good fight against sin, the flesh, and the devil. We are committed to impartially and patiently teach, counsel, encourage, forgive, and restore one another by God's grace and through



his word as we all journey together in the ongoing process of sanctification (Galatians 6:1-10; 1 Timothy 3:16-17). Those who struggle against old sin-nature habits, thoughts and desires manifesting in areas of sexual or gender identity are not to be treated with any less patience, sincerity, and love (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1-2).

3. The Bible declares that God created the first human beings with distinct genders, male and female (Genesis 1:27; Mark 10:6). The Bible only ever identifies these two genders.¹
4. God's stated purposes for creating humans as male and female included bearing His image, reproducing mankind, and extending His dominion (Genesis 1:27-28). Notice that the pronoun "them"² implies that all the stated purposes are shared by both men and women.
5. The image of God is passed on through parents as God intimately forms whole humans – both material and immaterial components – in the womb (Genesis 2:7, 4:25–5:3; Psalm 139:13-16). The God who created mankind as male and female in the beginning also forms them as male and female in the womb. "From the beginning" he has not changed the design He called "good" (Matthew 19:4).
6. One major purpose for which God created male and female was so that the two could partner together in the covenant of marriage (Matthew 19:4-6). This established a Biblical pattern in which both men and women labor together to fulfill God's purpose in the broader covenant community (Genesis 2:20-25, Ephesians 5:22-33).
7. Marriage is progressively revealed as a picture of God's ultimate purpose in creating the church as a covenant community in which both men and women together comprise the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33, Hosea 2:14-23, Revelation 19-22).
8. God intended males and females, whether married or single (1 Corinthians 7), to partner together in fulfilling His purpose (Genesis 2:18, Joel 2:28-29, Galatians 3:28).
9. God defines a person's gender and does not acquiesce to his or her gender preferences. For example, God considers dressing and presenting as the opposite sex to be an abomination as it mixes and corrupts His created order for gender (Deuteronomy 22:5, cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16).³ Homosexual desires and activity likewise represent a corruption of God's created order for gender (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27). Passages such as these teach that abandonment of God's created order with respect to His design and purpose for gender is a rejection of Him as Creator and Lord.

¹ Well over 100 verses use some word for man/male alongside woman/female in a matter that teaches binary distinction; and other gender categories are never offered. E.g., Gen. 5:2; Exod. 35:22; Jer. 30:6; Matt. 19:4; Acts 5:14; 17:12; 1 Tim. 2:8-10.

² In the language of the Bible, third person plural pronouns (translated "they" or "them") may imply plurality or collectivity, and third person masculine pronouns are often gender neutral when addressing a group of both men and women, but such pronouns never imply ambiguity or fluidity along a gender spectrum.

³ Some argue that this is only a prohibition against certain pagan rituals involving crossdressing; but nothing in the context suggests this. Rather, the context presents a chiasm with laws regarding dress (v. 5), animals (vv. 6-7) and house (v. 8) followed in reverse order by laws regarding field (v. 9), animals (v. 10) and dress (vv. 11-12). The theme uniting this passage is the prohibition against improper mixture in violation of natural order. (See E. Merrill, *New American Commentary*, v. 4.)



10. In Scripture, neither removal of reproductive organs nor barrenness results in a change of a person's gender identity (Matthew 19:12, Genesis 25:19-21, Psalm 113:9).
11. The Bible never endorses a person deciding, exploring outside, adding to or removing his or her gender.⁴
12. In Matthew 19:12, Jesus mentioned that some few people were born with a physical irregularity that made the normal sexual and reproductive expression within marriage impossible. This statement was almost certainly intended to include intersex people – those born with both male and female biological traits. Jesus did not condemn such people. Instead, he compassionately underscored the difficulty of accepting the fact that some must forego marriage, sexual intimacy, and reproduction, whether by way of their calling and gifting (“eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom,” such as Paul in 1 Cor. 7) or by congenital deformation (“eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb”). Elsewhere, Jesus said that a man had been born blind neither because of his sin nor the specific sin of his parents, but that God would nonetheless be glorified by his work in the man (Jn. 9:3). Likewise, while mankind’s fall into sin is the basis for disease and death (Gen. 3; Rom. 5; 8), those experiencing these things are not necessarily under God’s direct judgment by them. Therefore, Christians ought to exercise understanding, charity and compassion toward intersex people, and Christian pastors should help them navigate matters like sense of identity, marriage, singleness, etc. Such a burden can be alleviated in Christian fellowship (Gal. 6:2) and might be used by God to draw a believer closer to Himself, rely more on His grace and grow in spiritual maturity (2 Cor. 12). As stated above, the rare exception of intersexuality cannot be used to define gender as God designed it (binary, male or female) nor to justify transgenderism.
13. Due to the fallenness of creation there may be people born with chromosomal or genital deformities (Matthew 19:12 John 9:1-5). Such intersex individuals are uniquely men and women made in God’s image experiencing the tragic effects of a sin-sick world. Our hope is that they (alongside their parents, doctors, counsellors, pastors, etc.) find divine grace to navigate their unique biological situation with trust in God who works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).
14. The rare occurrence of a person born as intersex cannot be used to redefine God’s original design as to gender as defined above. A thing is defined by its perfections not its exceptions.
15. We conclude, therefore, that in God’s sovereign order of creation human gender is binary and accords with biological sex to the effect that only biological males are men and only biological females are women⁵ in the eyes of God – a design which cannot be redefined or changed by such means as human alteration or subjective sense of personal identity.

⁴ This point is considered an argument from silence.

⁵ The experience of intersexuality is not a contradiction to this principle in that it represents an irregularity in God’s created order resulting from the fallen sate of the world (as mentioned above).



BIBLICAL ASSESSMENT OF SELF IN A CULTURE LOOKING FOR IDENTITY

Section Two

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The quest for identity has been part of the human experience since the beginning of time. Mankind's ongoing search to establish their place in this world has been expressed repeatedly in basic philosophical questions such as, who am I and what is my purpose for existence? People want to know where they fit into the rest of reality. They strive to discover their Identity which involves more than just figuring out who they as individuals are. It involves finding out how they as a person relate to all the other people. They struggle to determine if they are the same as others, or if they are better or worse than others are. By trying to establish their Identity, people believe that their efforts will help them figure out where they fit into the larger body of individuals called humanity.

Identity can be used to define a person's sense of self. That can then be used to help people to see themselves as superior or inferior to others. Establishing a person's identity has been the driving force that pushes individuals to work hard for the end goal of accumulating wealth and power. Great effort is often expended in the hope that such accomplishments will earn a person a happier life and favorable recognition from others. Thus, these accomplishments help to secure a person's value among others. This pursuit to be something special has also caused others to push their bodies to their limits to break human records and to be considered the best in a certain area of activity. What is behind much of this is a deep desire to be identified by others as someone special and living a worthy life. Achieving this recognition is then interpreted by the one doing all the work to conclude that their life is being lived well.

As the population of the world increases it becomes a greater challenge to maintain individual significance. Everyone finds themselves in the midst of a sea of other people all striving to achieve some special recognition. Today social media has become the arena where so many people flaunt edited images of themselves in pursuit of earning more "likes" than anyone else. Public speakers are driven to do and say things more outlandish than anyone else just for the purpose of establishing a moment of uniqueness. The fear of so many people today is that their lives will be lost in the pool of humanity without any personal significance. If this happens, that person's life would be considered meaningless and considered to have no value.

Sociologists have put extensive effort into constructing differing theories about how people form their identity. These are all ways of trying to help people understand what things determine how they see themselves. These experts form ideas about what identity is. They then use ideas to determine how a person's identity can affect the behavior of individuals.

Identity is defined as a self-constructed notion of a person's true self. It is who a person thinks he or she is. Different theorists choose what they believe is the key factor used to determine one's identity. Some theorists believe that a person's job or economic status is the key factor in their identity (Oyserman). For those people their identity is in what they do or have. For others the key factor is their gender or physical appearance. Those people will then put great effort in maintaining their physical appearance so they can maintain their desired identity.



Sociologists will define identity as either an individual or social matter. Individual identities are those aspects of a person's life that make them unique from all other people (Carter). Their social identity is that which associates people with membership in a specific group or type of people. Whichever of these two will be deemed more important is determined by the context which people find themselves in. In some situations, a person does not want to be like others so they will try to secure a personal place of superiority. For others being recognized as part of a group gives them security and social clout. Context determines which is most important. Once a person settles on their identity it will become the foundation of their whole life. All other areas of life will be affected by it. Their worth and acceptance from others is believed to be determined by the identity they assume. This is especially true during a time when national values are changing, and people are jockeying for their place.

Much of what is happening in our culture today is the outworking of people's view of their identity. Lines of social distinction are forming based on how people see themselves compared to other individuals and groups around them. The racial unrest focuses on how people from one ethnic group see those that are members of another group. Economic lines are drawn between people based on their yearly income. Lines are drawn between those upholding biological genders against people who think they can define their personal gender for themselves. Republicans oppose Democrats. Conservatives oppose Liberals. Gays oppose straights. What group an individual sees themselves being part of immediately sets them against those of another group. These lines of distinction are getting more established every day. Society has become more divided than ever.

It would be one thing if these conflicts only existed in the secular arenas of society; but they don't. The culture of any society will eventually work its way into churches. When people come to our churches, they bring with them the identity battles that they face in life outside the church. Before long the same unrest that is experienced in the general public ends up in the pews of the churches. Conflicts seen in the news become conflicts experienced in the church. Once this happens there is great pressure on the members of a church to figure out where they will stand in the conflict and, as a result, lines of distinction form within a congregation.

What complicates the identity discussions in church are several important truths. First, God sees people differently than how people see others. God's analysis of a person is based on different criteria than ours. He does not look at mere appearances or accomplishments. He looks at people's hearts (1Sam 16:7). He searches their hearts and motives behind their actions (Rev 2:23). Secondly, an individual's self-assessment is not always accurate. Sometimes people underestimate their true condition (Rev 2:9). At other times individuals overestimate themselves (Rev 3:17). They convince themselves that they are better off than they really are. It becomes apparent that we all need help in seeing who we really are. We need an outside, objective assessment of who we really are.

Much of the search for identity focuses on natural characteristics: ethnicity, gender, and political association (Oyserman). These natural things are then elevated to represent the primary aspects of a person's identity. After forming one's identity, a person will then communicate it to others in a way that places its most highly valued elements at the beginning. "I am Irish Catholic". "I am a second-generation Polish immigrant". "I am a Black Christian". People arrange the modifiers according to what is most important to them.

Once the priority is in place, those things that are first in values become the ones that a person is most sensitive about. If a person's nationality is their priority, then they will react more strongly to anything they see as belittling that nation. If a person's political association is their priority, then they will be easily



offended if a person from another political party gets voted into office. The more important these issues are to a person the more they will react if they feel others are trying to devalue them.

This is the way natural people in the world function. The question, however, arises, “Is this the way that things are to function in the church?” Are Christians to have the same identity system as people who live by natural, worldly values? Are the priorities of Believers the same as those living by purely worldly values? Before a Believer accepts Christ as their personal Savior they most likely got defensive about things that mattered most to them. Now that they have been “Born Again” those priorities are not to stay the same (Matt 6:33; Col 1:18).

If a person, before they came to faith, felt that their identity was belittled by others they may have easily gotten angry and retaliated. After they become a Child of God, they learn that they are to respond in love and pray for those that offend them (Matt 5:44-45). This demonstrates a change; it is a change in a person’s values because there has been a change in their identity. They are now a Child of God and are expected to respond differently than they used to. Their new identity is to lead to new behavior (Ph 1:27; Col 1:10). Is this change normal for a Believer? Is it something that the Bible teaches? Can we say that by coming to Christ all things are to become new, including a person’s identity (2Cor 5:17)?

Following is a look through the Bible at the topic of personal identity and how it relates to God’s people. Different sections of the Bible will be looked at in an attempt to see that this idea is not just in one two passages. It is in fact represented in all sections of God’s Word.

Personal identity in the Old Testament:

- A. The culture of the Old Testament world was communal in nature. Individuals were identified by the family or tribe they were part of. This group identity was very important for survival. Who was eligible for inheritance and land rights was determined by a person’s association with a group. When the nation of Israel entered into a special covenant relationship with the Lord they took on the collective identity of being His people (Ex 19:5-6). Once they took on this new identity, they were required to change the way that they lived (Deut 7:5-6). From that point on only the Lord was to be their God. If they violated the requirements of their covenant with God, He promised that He would scatter them among the nations that He was not in covenant with (Lev 26:33). The prophet Hosea even went as far as to say that once the nation of Israel repeatedly violated the covenant requirements, they had with God that the Lord would then change His relationship with them. In Hos 1:10 the Lord actually said, “You are no longer My people”. The nation went from being the Chosen Nation to being Not My People. Their identity changed with their unlawful behavior. Maintaining their new identity of being God’s people meant that they had to live differently than they had lived in Egypt. Old ways of life had to be changed to maintain their new identity,
- B. When God called Abraham in Gen 12:1 He required him to leave his country, his relatives and his father’s house. To follow God would require Abraham to separate himself from key elements of his past. His nationality and association had to change. He had been Chaldean. That had been his former national identity. To follow the Lord would involve a complete change from all that. His lifestyle changed from a city dweller to a tent dweller. He could not worship the idols that his father had worshiped any more (Josh 24:2). There was to be a clean break from his past. The Lord started a brand-new thing with Abraham. He never referred to Himself as the God of Terah. He identified Himself with Abraham who made the changes.



- C. In Gen 17:5 the Lord came and brought Abraham into a very personal aspect of covenant relationship. Abraham is commanded to circumcise all the males in his family including himself. As part of that activity, the Lord changed Abram's name to Abraham. The covenant was bringing Abraham into a completely new identity. This new name was different from the one he had grown up with. His former name was related to his social standing in his family and hometown. This new name connects him directly to the promises that God had made to him about a nation that would descend from him. New name indicates new identity. This is an important point that is seen throughout the Bible. On numerous occasions God changed people's names: Sarah, Peter and Paul. All their experiences with God brought each one into a place of new identity.
- D. When the Law was given to the nation centuries later God let the nation of Israel know that the Law was unique to them (Deut 4:7-8). Not every nation had access to that great law. Throughout the Pentateuch the Lord let them know that certain violations of the Law would result in an individual or family being "cut off" from the rest of the nation (Ex 12:15 19; 30:33; Lev 9:20). To be part of the nation of Israel required a certain lifestyle. To violate that would lead to a person no longer being identified as part of the nation. Identity required certain behavior.
- E. The story of Ruth communicates the importance of identity change for a person that joins him or herself to God. Ruth 1:16-17 shows the heart of Ruth when she stated that she is willing to identify with a new people and a new God. This demonstrates the clean break that she is willing to make in order to follow God to her future. Her switch was not just words. It was so complete that she would later be recognized as a member of the community of Israel. She was included in the genealogy of both David and Jesus showing that she was fully accepted into this new social situation.
- F. Finally, the Book of Proverbs gives some good advice about establishing a person's identity. Pro 22:24-25 tells the reader to not associate with a person that gets angry. The reason for avoiding association with such a person is that by being around them for much time could eventually result in a person learning their lifestyle. Some people can have a negative influence on those that associate with them. Eventually they take on the nature of the one they spend time with. The opposite is also seen in Pro 13:20. If someone hangs around a wise person you can become wise just like the other person. People will tend to take on the nature of those they spend time with. To transition from being a bad person will need to include identifying and being around good people. A person's identity will be affected by those they associate with.

Personal identity in the New Testament:

Personal Identity In the life and ministry of Jesus:

1. When Jesus began to teach the crowds about the Kingdom of God, He made it very clear that the social values in God's Kingdom were different than they were in the world. For instance, the person that wants to be great in the Kingdom must lower him or herself to being the servant of everyone else (Matt 20:26). He that wants to save his life must be willing to lose it (Mark 8:35). The things that are valuable to man are not necessarily important to God (Luke 16:15). This is related to our topic because the personal identity that might be important to people may not be important to God at all. The world may highly esteem a person of strength. The Lord highly esteems the poor in spirit.



2. Jesus made it known that He identified personally with people who obeyed his commandments (Matt 12:50). He referred to them as being part of His spiritual family. His tie with these people would be so close that it even exceeded many of the natural connections that He had with family. Heb 2:11 says that Jesus was not ashamed to be identified with Believers. His willingness to be associated with humans made it important that His followers would willing to not be ashamed to associate with Him (Mark 8:33; Luke 9:26). Scripture indicates the days would come when being identified with Jesus could be the cause of trouble for His followers. It is in those times that they should not be offended to identify with Him (Matt 11:6).
3. Jesus also taught that being a disciple had a cost attached to it. Because not everyone would believe in Him, the Believer may find that faith in Jesus will separate them from relationships with their own family members (Luke 14:26; Matt10:37). The cost of discipleship could lead to the loss of relationships with people a Believer once identified with (Matt 16:20; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Becoming a Christian had the potential of totally changing a person's social identify. Social identification is a strong tie, but identifying with Christ may result in changes that would radically affect those associations.
4. Of all the passages dealing with the transition that Jesus made when He came to earth and lived as a human, one of the most significant is in Philippians 2. It states clearly that Jesus in His pre-incarnate state was in a place where He was equal with the Father. The incarnation, however, required Him to leave that state and take on the nature of a servant. To go from His exalted position of equality with God to the lowly place of being a mortal slave was huge. It is, however, the very things that Jesus' followers will be asked to duplicate. They are to acquire the same mindset that Jesus had that enabled Him to make that sacrifice. Jesus being willing to let go of His identification with the Father to identify with us is the model of what Believers must let go of to identify with Him. Our identity with the world must be something we are willing to let go of to completely identify with Him.
5. The gospels list several ways that the Believer is to identify with Jesus Christ. The Believers are to:
 - a. To take on His yoke and learn about Him (Matt 11:29-30)
 - b. To follow Him (John 21:19, 22)
 - c. To deny themselves (Matt 16:24).

Personal Identity In the Epistles:

1. Epistle writers also describe how Believers are to identify with Jesus. The Believers are:
 - a. To be conformed to His nature (2Cor 3:18; Eph 4:12-13).
 - b. To be baptized into His life and death (Rom 6:3-4)
 - c. To follow His example (1Pet 2:21).
2. Several of the epistle writers identified themselves as servants of God. This was the primary identification that they used to communicate how they saw themselves.
 - a. Paul (Rom 1:1; Php 1:1 and Titus 1:1). He would state this identification before he would refer to any gifting or relationship with his reading audience.

- b. James (James 1:1)
 - c. Peter (2Peter 1:1)
 - d. Jude (Jude 1:1)
 - e. John (Rev 1:1)
3. The term servant or bondservant is translated from the Greek word *doulos*. This term is used to describe a person who is totally subservient to another person who they recognize as their master or owner. The New Testament writers saw themselves as being owned by someone else (Danker 260). They were totally devoted to Jesus Christ to the disregard of their own interests (Thayer 158). For these writers, their whole identity was lost and replaced with a sense of total service to Jesus. Jesus became their identity. As Paul summarized in Gal 2:19, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me".
 4. In Eph 2:10-15 Paul says that in Christ the distinction between Jew and Gentile has been removed. The Lord takes both of them and brings them together forming "one new man". The former ethnic and spiritual difference between them disappeared in their mutual relationship with Jesus. From that point on neither of those groups could identify themselves as they used to. Their identity changed in their connection to Jesus.
 5. Paul also had to warn the Christians in the Corinthian church about their divisive nature. They had developed an identity of being only associated with a certain type of ministry. This is described in their saying "I am of Paul" , "I am of Apollos" and "I am of Cephas" (1Cor 1:12-13). These people in the church had come to a place of forming their identity around other human leaders. They did this with the idea that such association made them superior to other members of the church who were not part of the group they associated with. Paul had to say that this type of thinking was both carnal and very immature (1Cor 3:1-4). The Church was to identify with Jesus first and not to human ministries that they felt an attraction to.
 6. New Testament authors used different descriptive titles to refer to the members of the churches. Over 75 titles or names are used in Scripture for the Church. Some of them describe Christians as:
 - a. Called- 1Cor 1:9, 24; Gal 1:6
 - b. Chosen- 1Cor 1:27-28; Col 3:12; 2Thes 2:13
 - c. The Body- 1Cor 12:12; Eph 1:22-23
 - d. Brothers/sisters- Rom 8:29; 14:16; 1Cor 1:1
 - e. Saints-Rom 1:7
 - f. New Creations- 2Cor 5:17; Gal6:15
 - g. One new man- Eph 2:15
 - h. Servants- 1Cor 4:1; 2Cor 3:6
 - i. Children of God- John 11:52; 1John 3:10
 - j. Children of light- Eph 5:8

These titles all refer to the Believer's relationship to Christ or to other members of the redeemed community. These terms have nothing to do with ethnicity, gender, political association or personalities. They all have to do with the Believer's relationship to Jesus and His followers. These became the identity of the Church.

7. Of all the ways used in the New Testament to describe Christians, the most common is the phrase “In Christ”. There are different ways of expressing this particular relationship: “In Him”, “In Christ”, “In Christ Jesus”. Paul himself used the phrase 164 times in his letters. The phrase is used to describe the relationship a person has with Jesus Christ. This relationship is how every aspect of the Believer’s relationship with God is connected (Grudem 840). Being “in Christ” is how all aspects of the work of redemption are applied to the life of every Believer. No blessing of God to a Believer is awarded them due to nationality or social caste. It all comes to those untied as one group that is bound in relationship to Jesus Christ. Being “in Christ”, or rather being a Christian is the key identity of New Testament Believers.
8. The Epistle to the Philippians provides some of the most extensive material about personal Christian identity to be found in Paul’s writings. The historic context is important in determining why Paul said what he did in this letter. The city of Philippi was a key city in Macedonia. It had been awarded the prestigious identity of being a Roman “colony” (Acts 16:12). This status allowed the citizens of this city to enjoy privileges that many other towns did not have. Due to this, the citizens of Philippi held this status as a key element of their identity. The people took great pride in their political and social status. The people were consumed with who they were and the benefits that such a status granted them (Marshall 214).

When Paul started a church in this town, he found that this mentality was one he had to address. This happened because once Philippian people accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ others in their society began to look at them differently. Being part of the group called Christian was not popular. Just as Paul had suffered hardship when he was in this town, so the new Believers suffered the same way. The status they had before they became Christians disappeared. Now instead of a favorable social status they were despised. This is a new and undesired situation that some of them did not care for. They had to learn how to accept their new situation.

Paul had to admonish the members of the church to not let their new social demotion get to them. They had to focus on living a life worthy of their heavenly calling and not that of social acceptance (Ph 1:27). They were to develop a perspective that considered the wellbeing of others more important than their own personal wellbeing (Ph 2:3-4). They also had to be reminded that their primary citizenship was now heavenly and not Roman (Ph 3:20). These Believers had to be willing to let go of things that used to be very important to them.

Paul presented his own life story as a model for the Philippian believers to follow. He goes over the things from his past that were of great value to him before he came to know Jesus as his savior.

Philippians 3:4 although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless (NASB).

What had been important to Paul was his nationality, ceremonial qualifications, family tie and religious fervency. He was the best at what he was. In Gal 1:13-14 he mentions that in



religious zeal he surpassed all his contemporaries. He was the poster child for Judaism yet this all changed when he accepted Jesus. The things that he had before used to establish his identity and superiority began to lose their importance. They were replaced with a new personal identity.

Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (NASB).

Paul's identity was no longer in the things that he had previously valued so much. In fact, those things had not just diminished in value, they were now considered worthless. He was willing to let go of his nationality, his family association and his social status. All that Paul wanted was to be identified with Christ. He wanted to share in all the things that were part of Jesus' life. His desired identity was to be found "in Him". He says in verse 13 that he was forgetting the things that were behind him, he was pressing on to a new goal. That goal was the upward call of God in Christ. For him to be identified with Christ was what was most important.

9. Paul also describes the Christian's identity in Christ another way. In Eph 2, he uses the term "formally" to describe his readers. Before they came to Jesus they lived the same way the rest of the world did. They were far away from God and were in darkness. Now that all changed. They changed their whole orientation of life now that their focus was on Jesus. So complete was this change that Paul refers to them becoming a "new self" (Eph 4:24). They took on a whole new identity.

This same idea lies behind Paul's words to the Corinthian church. Before they came to Christ, some of the members of the church had been actively involved in various sinful lifestyles. After their conversions, that former life of identity was changed. These saints were justified, washed and sanctified. Not only was their status before God changed, but their lifestyle also changed. No longer were they Stealing Christians, Drunken Christians or Homosexual Christians. Those things were not part of their new identity in Christ. They were part of a new kingdom and a new lifestyle. Their identity did not now reflect their former life. It now reflected the one they were in relationship with,

Personal Identity in the Apocalypse:

The Book of Revelation presents an amazing panorama of visions that are associated with the end of human history. It is filled with images of creatures and cataclysms that will occur prior to and at the return of Jesus Christ. One of the images presented involves a mark that will be placed on the foreheads of individuals. These marks had a significance of the culture of the day that John wrote. They were an identification mark. They represented a god or political system that an individual identified with. Throughout the book there were two distinct marks. One was the mark of God and the other was the



mark of the Beast. Whatever mark was on the forehead of an individual marked who that person identified their loyalty to. It is a mark of identity. Those with the mark of God were those that stayed loyal to Him throughout all the challenges of those days. Whoever had the mark of the Beast were those identifying with the godless system of the world. By following the occurrences of these marks through Revelation it becomes very apparent that one of the dividing characteristics of the last days is identity. What identity a person bears on their body and mind determines their destiny through those times.

This may help us understand why personal identity has become such a big issue over the last several years. That is because it will be a big issue in the last days. Whatever identity becomes important to people will determine where they position themselves during the challenge that lies ahead. This makes the selection of identity very important. It is not about what is trendy or socially accepted; it is about who people are connected to. People's identity associates them with very different ways of life. People's identity determines the destiny that they will face. Choosing wisely which identity a person will take on is a very crucial influence on their future.

Conclusion:

Amidst all the ancestral searches and social demonstrations are billions of people trying to find out who they are. Add to this the millions of edited selfies in social media and it is obvious that people's identity has become very important in our culture. People will choose to identify with whatever lifestyle or ideology they believe will gain them significance in life. They will choose an identity that they believe will gain approval from those around them. They want their lives to be accepted and important.

Seeing all the effort that people put into establishing a positive identity for themselves it is no wonder that Satan will use that very thing to distract many people away from the purposes of God. The desire for the prize of an accepted identity will become the source of the temptations they will face. This is seen in the temptation of Jesus. After Jesus' baptism, the voice of the Father established Jesus' identity. The Father said "You are my son in whom I am well pleased". It was this very thing that Satan then used to get Jesus to fall for his evil schemes. He said to Jesus "If you are the Son of God". Satan twisted the significance of Jesus' identity to manipulate Him into doing things unacceptable. He implied that being that Son of God gave Jesus the right to use His position to acquire personal desires and gain control of worldly things. Jesus responded by letting Satan know that being God's Son made it imperative to only do the things that upheld the ways of the Father.

Jesus' life is to be our role model for the challenging times we find ourselves in. Faith in Jesus Christ has enabled Believers to become sons and daughters of God (John 1:12). That unique position becomes our identity. The pressures of our day tempt us to pick a different identity that will allegedly be more important. We will be tempted to add ethnic, gender or political characteristics to who we see ourselves as. In the end those things are often placed in the front of our identity as though they are the priority in identifying who we are. The tragedy is that they will all fall very short of the recognition of being accepted as a child of God.

We must be alert to things that present themselves as more important than being part of God's redeemed family. We must be careful to not let social concerns become more important than being accepted by God. As noble as some of these things may seem, they only relate to things experienced in our short lives on earth. They grow pale to the eternal destiny that awaits the redeemed community as they live out



their eternity in God's presence. We must not find our significance in things that will pass away with this world. We must stay true to the vision that has been given us of life beyond this one.

As you review each of the above sections, it would be important to stop, reflect and ask yourself the following four questions:

- Based on what you've read, what truths did you learn about identity?
- What personal application can you make from what you learned?
- What is the Holy Spirit guiding you to do in response to what you've read?
- How will the truths you've discovered here shape how you relate to others?

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DEFINING GENDER TERMINOLOGIES

Section Three

In today's rapidly evolving society, discussions surrounding gender and its various terminologies have gained significant attention. These conversations reflect a growing confusion regarding God's original design regarding gender and identity and the attempt of culture to identify means in which to classify their distorted views. As Christians, it is essential to approach these discussions with a spirit of love, compassion, and an earnest desire to understand and embrace all individuals, regardless of their gender identity.

Within the framework of Christianity, the concept of love is paramount. The Bible teaches that every individual is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and as such, we are called to love and respect one another unconditionally (Mark 12:31). In line with these teachings, this section aims to define gender terminologies within a Christian perspective, emphasizing the importance of Christian love as we engage with these topics.

This section will carefully explore key gender terminologies that have emerged in contemporary society. We fully understand that the Bible presents only two genders: male and female. Yet in order to reach, engage and help those who are struggling through these complex issues, a broader understanding of these terms being used is essential. By stating these terms in this section, by no means assumes that we embrace or support these views of genders. They are presented to the reader as a means in which to discern the times and seasons in which we live and be better equipped to lovingly address those who have embraced these ideologies.

By providing definitions and explanations, we aim to foster an environment of comprehension, fostering open and respectful conversations. Throughout this exploration, it is our conviction that Christian love can serve as a guiding principle, enabling believers to engage in thoughtful dialogue without compromising their core faith values.

Ultimately, as followers of Christ, we are called to reflect His love and acceptance. This section aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender terminologies from a Christian perspective, emphasizing the importance of Christian love in understanding, supporting, and embracing individuals with diverse gender identities. By cultivating an environment of compassion and empathy, we can bridge the gap between differing perspectives, fostering unity and promoting the inherent dignity of all people, regardless of their gender identity.

Which is it: Gender or Sex?

Changes in the secular culture are also changing our vocabulary. For example, the term "gender" no longer means only *male* or *female* in the broader culture in which we live. Instead, gender now takes into account *identity* and *expression*. (According to [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com/health/gender) there are 64 terms that describe gender.)

There is even disagreement on the number of biological sexes. [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/18/health/gender-biology.html) states that "biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male; along that spectrum lie at least five sexes — perhaps even more." While many people talk about sexual orientation, there is no agreement based on legal, medical, or psychological definitions.



Those of us committed to the Christian worldview base our view of gender and sex on [the biblical book of Genesis](#): “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’”

Therefore, 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 reproduction.

What is gender dysphoria?⁶

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. This developmental crisis, seen especially among adolescents, is seemingly associated with “peer contagions” such as:

- Social media influencers celebrating the ideology of gender fluidity.
- Peers embracing transgender behavior as popular and trendy — and as an avenue for social celebration or unique recognition.
- Clubs sponsored within public school systems to promote acceptance of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) identity framework.

Certain factors tend to coincide with gender dysphoria. The following conditions are [found in greater numbers within the trans population](#):⁷

• Low self-esteem • Anxiety • Depression • Lack of identity • Eating disorders	• Personality disorder⁸ • Self-injury • Autism spectrum disorder⁹ • Sexual trauma¹⁰ • Gender trauma
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⁶ Focus on the Family Website Article, 2023 “What is Gender Dysphoria?”

⁷ <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/mental-health-types-illness>

⁸ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17671917/>

⁹ <https://www.autismspeaks.org/expert-opinion/gender-identity-and-autism>

¹⁰ <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/03/21178/>



UNDERSTANDING TRANSGENDERISM TERMINOLOGY

Understanding the culture — and how to respond in a Christ-like manner — often begins with understanding its terminology. Although most Christ-followers do not embrace the majority of gender terms, it is still important to understand the terms being used. Here are just a few terms often used by the transgender-identified community:

This list below was compiled in 2023. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, as new terms may emerge over time. It is important to remember that gender identity is deeply personal, and individuals may have unique understandings and experiences that cannot be fully captured by any predefined list. Here are some commonly used gender identities and their definitions:

Biblical Terms

1. **Male:** An individual who identifies as a man and aligns with the biological male gender.
2. **Female:** An individual who identifies as a woman and aligns with the biological female gender.

Most Common Terms¹¹

1. **Transgender:** An umbrella term used to describe individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone assigned female at birth who identifies as male is a transgender man, while someone assigned male at birth who identifies as female is a transgender woman.
2. **Non-binary:** An umbrella term for individuals who do not exclusively identify as male or female. Non-binary individuals may identify as a combination of genders, as neither male nor female, or as a gender entirely outside the binary spectrum.
3. **Genderqueer:** An identity often used by individuals who do not conform to traditional notions of gender. Genderqueer individuals may see themselves as fluid, not strictly identifying with either male or female, or may embrace a more expansive understanding of gender.
4. **Genderfluid:** A gender identity characterized by a shifting or fluctuating experience of gender over time. Genderfluid individuals may identify as different genders at different times or in different contexts.
5. **Agender:** An identity used by individuals who do not have a specific gender identity or who identify as having no gender.
6. **Bigender:** A gender identity in which an individual identifies as two genders simultaneously or fluctuates between them.
7. **Two-Spirit:** A term originating from Indigenous cultures in North America that encompasses a range of gender identities outside the binary. Two-Spirit individuals often embody both masculine and feminine qualities.

¹¹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/different-genders>



8. **Androgynous:** A gender identity or presentation that combines both masculine and feminine traits, blurring traditional gender distinctions.
9. **Demigender:** A gender identity in which an individual partially identifies with a particular gender. For example, someone may identify as demigender female, indicating a partial identification with being female.
10. **Gender questioning:** A term used to describe individuals who are exploring and questioning their own gender identity, often seeking a better understanding of their authentic selves.

Other Terms Used

1. **AFAB:** Acronym meaning “assigned female at birth.”
2. **Aliagender:** A [nonbinary](#) gender identity that doesn’t fit into existing gender schemas or constructs.
3. **AMAB:** Acronym meaning “assigned male at birth.”
4. **Androgyne:** Someone who has a gender presentation or identity that’s gender-neutral, androgynous, or has both masculine and feminine characteristics.
5. **Aporagender:** Both an umbrella term and nonbinary gender identity describing the experience of having a specific gender that’s different from man, woman, or any combination of the two.
6. **Binarism:** Generally, binarism refers to the gender systems and schemas that are based on the existence of two opposing parts, such as man/woman or masculine/feminine. More specifically, binarism is a type of sexism that erases ethnic or culture-specific nonbinary gender roles and identities.
7. **Body dysphoria:** Body dysphoria is different from [body dysmorphic disorder](#). It refers to a specific type of [gender dysphoria](#) that manifests as distress or discomfort with aspects of the body. This may include anatomy, shape, size, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics, or internal reproductive structures.
8. **Boi:** A term, primarily used in LGBTQIA+ Communities of Color, that typically describes someone who has a presentation, sexuality, or gender that’s considered “boyish.”
9. **Butch:** Primarily used in LGBTQIA+ communities, this term typically describes someone with a presentation, sexuality, or gender that’s considered masculine. Butch doesn’t necessarily indicate the other terms that someone might use to describe their presentation, sexuality, or gender.
10. **Cisgender:** A term used to describe people who exclusively identify with [the sex and gender they were assigned at birth](#).
11. **Cishet:** A term that refers to someone who is both [cisgender and heterosexual](#).



12. **Cisnormativity:** The assumption that a person identifies with the sex or gender they were assigned at birth, or that having a cisgender gender identity is the norm.
13. **Cissexism:** A [form of oppression](#) that discriminates against those who aren't cisgender.
14. **Demiboy:** This [nonbinary](#) gender identity describes someone who partially identifies with being a boy, man, or masculine. The term demiboy tells you about someone's gender identity but doesn't convey any information about the sex or gender assigned to someone at birth. A demiboy can be cisgender or trans.
15. **Demigender:** This umbrella term typically includes nonbinary gender identities and uses the prefix "demi-" to indicate the experience of having a partial identification or connection to a particular gender. This may include:
- demigirl
 - demiboy
 - demienby
 - demitrans
16. **Demigirl:** This nonbinary gender identity describes someone who partially identifies with being a girl, woman, womxn, or feminine. The term demigirl tells you about someone's gender identity but doesn't convey any information about the sex or gender assigned to someone at birth. A demigirl can be cisgender or trans.
17. **Dyadic:** This describes people who have sex characteristics — such as chromosomes, hormones, internal organs, or anatomy — that can be easily categorized into the binary sex framework of male or female. Dyadic conveys information about someone's sex characteristics but doesn't indicate anything about their gender.
18. **Feminine-of-center:** This describes people who experience their gender as feminine or femme. Some feminine-of-center people also identify with the word "woman," but others don't. The term feminine-of-center tells you about someone's gender identity but doesn't convey any information about the sex or gender assigned to them at birth.
19. **Feminine-presenting:** This describes people who have a gender expression or presentation that they or others categorize as feminine. Feminine-presenting is a term that captures the part of someone's gender that's shown externally, either through aspects of their style, appearance, physical traits, mannerisms, or body language. This term doesn't necessarily indicate anything about the way someone identifies their gender or the gender or sex assigned to them at birth.
20. **Femme:** This is a label for a gender identity or expression that describes someone with a gender that is or leans toward feminine. Some femmes also identify with the term "woman," while many others don't. Femme indicates the way someone experiences or expresses their gender and doesn't provide any information about the gender or sex assigned to them at birth.



21. **Female-to-male (FTM):** This term is most commonly used to refer to trans males, trans men, and some transmasculine people who were assigned female at birth. It's important to only use this term if someone wants to be referred to this way, as some trans men and transmasculine people use terms that don't include or indicate the sex they were assigned at birth.
22. **Gender apathetic:** This term describes someone who doesn't strongly identify with any gender or with any gender labels. Some gender apathetic people also use terms that indicate their relationship with the sex or gender assigned to them at birth — such as cis apathetic or trans apathetic — while others don't. Generally, people who are gender apathetic display an attitude of flexibility, openness, and “not caring” about how gender identity or presentation is perceived and labeled by others.
23. **Gender binary:** Also known as gender binarism, this term refers to gender classification systems — whether cultural, legal, structural, or social — that organize gender or sex into two mutually exclusive categories such as man/woman or masculine/feminine.
24. **Gender dysphoria:** This is both a [medical diagnosis](#) and an informal term used to communicate challenging feelings or distress people experience in relation to gender. The medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria refers to a conflict between someone's assigned sex (as male, female, or intersex) and their gender identity. When used informally, gender dysphoria describes interactions, assumptions, physical traits, or body parts that don't feel affirming or inclusive of someone's expressed or experienced gender.
25. **Gender expansive:** An umbrella term that's used to refer to people who subvert or don't conform to society's dominant view of gender. This could include trans people, nonbinary people, people who are [gender nonconforming](#), and more.
26. **Gender expression:** Gender expression is the way someone expresses gender through behavior, mannerisms, interests, physical characteristics, or appearance. It's often but not always described using terms such as masculine, feminine, neutral, androgynous, conforming, or nonconforming. The words used to describe someone's gender expression are dependent upon social or cultural norms and stereotypes and may change over time.
27. **Gender identity:** This is the way someone experiences gender internally as part of their core sense of self. Gender identity can't be assumed based on appearance, anatomy, social norms, or stereotypes. Gender identity isn't determined by assigned gender or sex, and often develops or changes over time.
28. **Gender-neutral pronouns:** These pronouns aren't stereotypically or culturally categorized as masculine or feminine or for men or women. Gender-neutral pronouns are used by both cisgender and transgender individuals as a way to affirm and convey important information about who they are and how they want to be referred to. Examples include:
- they/them/theirs
 - ze/hir/hirs
 - ze/zir/zirs
 - xe/xem/xyr
29. **Gender nonconforming:** This term is used to describe people with a gender expression or presentation that's different from cultural or social stereotypes associated with the person's perceived or assigned gender or sex. Gender nonconforming isn't a gender identity, though some people do self-identify using this term. It doesn't convey any information about the way someone experiences gender internally.



More accurately, gender nonconforming is a term used to describe physical traits in relation to socially and culturally defined gender categories. People of any gender — cis, trans, or nonbinary — can be gender nonconforming.

30. **Gender normative:** A term used to describe gender traits or identities that are perceived to fall within social norms and expectations.
31. **Gender presentation:** Similar to gender expression, gender presentation refers to the way someone uses behavior, mannerisms, interests, physical characteristics, or appearance to convey or present a particular gender externally.
32. **Gender questioning:** A person who's questioning one or multiple aspects of their gender, such as their gender identity or expression.
33. **Gender roles:** The interests, behaviors, and mannerisms that a society or culture assigns to a particular gender or to the things expected of a person based on their assigned, perceived, or actual gender. Gender roles change over time and across cultures.
34. **Gender variant:** Similar to gender nonconforming, gender variant is an umbrella term used to describe people with a gender identity, expression, or presentation that's different from the perceived social norm or dominant group. Some people dislike this term because of its potential to perpetuate misinformation and negative stigma about noncisgender gender identities and nonconforming presentation being less "normal" or naturally occurring.
35. **Genderf***** [Asterisks inserted to remove profanity]: Similar to the term "gender bender," this term involves the act of combating or dismantling the gender binary and stereotypes through a gender identity, expression, or presentation that challenges existing norms and expectations in a given cultural context.
36. **Gendervoid:** A term that describes someone without a gender identity. Although it's similar to agender, gendervoid is usually associated with a feeling of loss or lack.
37. **Graygender:** A gender term that describes someone who experiences ambivalence about gender identity or expression, and doesn't fully identify with a binary gender that's exclusively man or woman.
38. **Intergender:** A nonbinary gender identity that describes the experience of having a gender that falls somewhere in between woman and man or is a mix of both man and woman.
39. **Intersex:** An umbrella term that describes people who have sex characteristics — such as chromosomes, internal organs, hormones, or anatomy — that can't be easily categorized into the binary sex framework of male or female. Intersex conveys information about a person's sex characteristics but doesn't indicate anything about their gender identity.
40. **Masculine-of-center:** This term describes people who experience their gender as masculine or masc. Some masculine-of-center people also identify with the word "man," but many others don't. The term masculine-of-center tells you about someone's gender identity but doesn't convey any information about the sex or gender assigned to them at birth.



- 41. Masculine-presenting:** This term describes people who have a gender expression or presentation that they or others categorize as masculine. Masculine-presenting captures the part of someone's gender that's shown externally, either through aspects of their style, appearance, physical traits, mannerisms, or body language. This term doesn't necessarily indicate anything about the way someone identifies their gender, or the gender or sex assigned to them.
- 42. Maverique:** This nonbinary gender identity emphasizes the inner experience of gender. It describes those who experience gender or have a core gender identity that's independent of existing categories and definitions of gender, man, or woman, masculine or feminine, and androgynous or neutral.
- 43. Misgender:** [The act of](#) referring to someone using a gender pronoun or gendered language that's incorrect, inaccurate, or not inclusive of the person's actual gender identity.
- 44. Male-to-female (MTF):** This term is most commonly used to refer to trans women and some transfeminine people who were assigned male at birth. It's important to only use this term if someone prefers to be referred to this way, as some trans women and some transfeminine people prefer to use terms that don't include or overtly indicate the sex they were assigned at birth.
- 45. Multi-gender:** This umbrella term is used to describe people who experience more than one gender identity. Other gender labels that fall under the multi-gender umbrella include:
- bigender
 - trigender
 - pangender
 - polygender
 - In some cases, gender fluid may also fall under this umbrella.
- 46. Neutrois:** This nonbinary identity and umbrella term is used to describe people who have a gender that isn't exclusively man or woman. Neutrois can be a broader term encompassing other gender identities, such as nonbinary, agender, genderfluid, or genderless.
- 47. Nonbinary:** Also referred to as "enby," this is a gender identity and umbrella term for gender identities that can't be exclusively categorized as man or woman. Individuals who are nonbinary can experience gender a variety of ways, including a combination of man and woman, neither man nor woman, or something else altogether. Some nonbinary individuals are trans, while many others don't. Whether a nonbinary person is also trans typically depends on the extent to which that person identifies, even partially, with the sex and gender assigned to them at birth.
- 48. Novigender:** People who use this gender identity experience having a gender that can't be described using existing language due to its complex and unique nature.
- 49. Omnigender:** A nonbinary gender identity that describes people who experience all or many gender identities on the gender spectrum simultaneously or over time. Similar to pangender.
- 50. Pangender:** A nonbinary gender identity that describes people who experience all or many gender identities on the gender spectrum simultaneously or over time. Similar to omnigender.



- 51. Polygender:** This gender identity term describes the experience of having multiple gender identities simultaneously or over time. This term indicates the number of gender identities someone experiences but doesn't necessarily indicate which genders are included in the given person's polygender identity.
- 52. Sex:** The [classification of a person](#) as male, female, or intersex based on the existing system of organizing human bodies and biologies. This system is based on chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.
- 53. Sex assigned at birth:** This refers to the act of assigning or designating a particular sex to a person based on their chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. This is often done by medical professionals during pregnancy or immediately after childbirth. The sex a person is assigned at birth doesn't determine or indicate anything about their authentic gender experience or identity.
- 54. Social dysphoria:** A specific type of gender dysphoria that manifests as distress and discomfort that results from the way society or other people perceive, label, refer to, or interact with someone's gender or body.
- 55. Soft butch:** Both a gender identity and term used to describe the nonconforming gender expression of someone who has some masculine or butch traits, but doesn't fully fit the stereotypes associated with masculine or butch cisgender lesbians.
- 56. Stone butch:** Both a gender identity and term used to describe the nonconforming gender expression of someone who embodies traits associated with feminine butchness or stereotypes associated with traditional masculinity.
- 57. Third gender:** Originating in non-Western and Indigenous cultures, third gender is a gender category that includes people who have a gender that can't be exclusively categorized as man or woman, or is different from man or woman.
- 58. Transfeminine:** A gender identity label that conveys the experience of having a feminine gender identity that's different from the gender or sex that was assigned at birth.
- 59. Transgender or trans:** Both an umbrella term including many gender identities and a specific gender identity that describes those with a gender identity that's different from the gender or sex assigned at birth.
- 60. Transmasculine:** A gender identity label that conveys the experience of having a masculine gender identity that's different than the gender or sex that was assigned at birth.
- 61. Transitioning:** The act of making physical, social, medical, surgical, interpersonal, or personal changes that help to affirm gender or address gender dysphoria.
- 62. Transsexual:** Falling under the transgender umbrella, [transsexual](#) is a word that was medically and historically used to indicate a difference between one's gender identity (i.e., the internal experience of gender) and sex assigned at birth (as male, female, or intersex). Transsexual is often (though not always) used to communicate that one's experience of gender involves a [medical diagnosis or medical changes](#) — such as hormones or surgery — that help alter anatomy and appearance to feel more



congruent with gender identity. Due to a fraught history, the word transsexual can be contentious and shouldn't be used unless someone specifically asks to be referred to this way.

- 63. Trigender:** This gender identity describes the experience of having three gender identities, simultaneously or over time. This term indicates the number of gender identities someone experiences but doesn't necessarily indicate which genders are included in a given person's trigender identity.
- 64. Two-spirit:** This umbrella term was created by Native American communities to bring traditional Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality into Western and contemporary native education and literature. Each First Nation tribe has its own understanding and meaning of what it means to be two-spirit, so this term can have many definitions. Two-spirit generally refers to a gender role believed to be a common, acknowledged, accepted, and praised gender classification among most First Nation communities, dating back centuries.

Although this list may seem exhaustive, it is inevitably incomplete due to the ever-changing terms of society.

It is important to approach these terms with respect, empathy, and a willingness to learn from the experiences of individuals who identify with them. Each person's gender journey is unique to them, and it is essential to create an environment of understanding and support, guided by Christian love.



CARING PRINCIPLES FOR PASTORS AND LEADERS

Section Four

In the realm of gender and identity, we recognize that people often grapple with personal struggles for a variety of reasons. As Christians, it is crucial that we approach those struggling with open hearts and embrace those without judgment while seeking to understand before seeking to be understood. In this section, we aim to provide guidance to help pastors and leaders to support those who are navigating the complexities of their gender and identity. We aim to embark on this process committed to a Christ-centered approach of compassion.

Acknowledging the diverse paths that lead individuals to wrestle with their gender and identity, we recognize that these struggles can be deeply personal and multifaceted. Our role as Christians is not to condemn or reject, but to embrace and extend a loving hand of understanding. This requires setting aside preconceived notions and biases, allowing us to meet people where they are and listen to their stories with empathy.

It is important to note that 83% of LGBT people were raised in the church and 51% left the church after they turned 18 years old. The reasons aren't primarily theological; they are relational. Only 3% of LGBT people who left the church said they left because of the church's teaching on marriage and sexuality. The main reasons why they left had to do with relational problems not theological ones. They were dehumanized, isolated, shunned, or simply kicked out of the church once it was discovered that they experienced same-gender love.

May these principles help guide us to reverse this tragic trend and may our efforts result in loving all people and helping them to find hope and healing.

Key Principles to Embrace While Caring For Those Who Struggle

Build a Relationship

In order to effectively minister to individuals facing personal struggles with gender and identity, we must prioritize building relationships. Genuine connection and trust are foundational in providing a safe and supportive environment where people can share their deepest fears, doubts, and questions. By investing time, effort, and care into building relationships, we create a space where individuals feel valued and heard, enabling them to open up, and explore their struggles with authenticity.

Be Led by the Holy Spirit

In this process, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. Recognizing that true transformation and restoration can only come through the work of God, we approach these journeys with prayerful dependence on His wisdom and discernment. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts hearts, illuminates truth, and leads individuals toward a deeper understanding of their identity in Christ.



Biblically Grounded Guidance

Offer guidance rooted in Scripture, leading individuals to God's truth and His design for their lives. Share biblical teachings on identity, sexuality, and purpose in a loving and sensitive manner, helping them discover God's plan for their unique journey.

Prayerful Dependence

Recognize the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and transforming lives. Seek wisdom and discernment through prayer, relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance to navigate conversations and provide appropriate support. Trust in God's transformative power as the ultimate agent of change.

Compassionate Understanding

Seek to understand before seeking to be understood. Listen attentively and empathetically to their stories, recognizing the uniqueness of their struggles and experiences. Show genuine care and compassion as you walk alongside them in their journey.

Unconditional Acceptance

Embrace individuals without judgment or condemnation, demonstrating a Christ-like love that accepts them for who they are. Create a safe and non-judgmental space where they can share their experiences and feelings without fear of rejection.

Holistic Support

Provide holistic care that addresses emotional, spiritual, and practical needs. Offer resources, counseling, and support groups that can assist individuals in navigating their struggles with gender and identity. Collaborate with mental health professionals when necessary to ensure comprehensive care.

Respect for Autonomy

Recognize and respect an individual's autonomy and agency in their journey of self-discovery. Encourage them to explore and discern their own identity, while offering guidance and support along the way. Help empower them to make informed decisions about their lives while remaining grounded in biblical principles.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of utmost importance when coaching a person who is struggling with gender confusion. Respecting and upholding the privacy of individuals is crucial in fostering a safe and trusting environment. As a coach, it is essential to communicate clearly and explicitly about the confidentiality boundaries and reassure them that their personal information and experiences will be kept confidential unless there are legal or safety concerns. By maintaining strict confidentiality, we can create a space where individuals feel comfortable opening up and sharing their innermost thoughts and emotions, facilitating their personal growth and journey towards self-discovery and acceptance.

Don't Lose Sight of the Objective

Ultimately, our hope is for individuals to experience transformation and full restoration into who they are called to be in Christ. This restoration involves a deep healing of the heart, a renewal of the mind, and a



rediscovery of one's true identity as a beloved child of God. Our desire is to walk alongside individuals on this journey, offering support, guidance, and the unfailing love of Christ.

By adhering to these care principles, we can create a supportive and loving environment where individuals who struggle with gender and identity can find understanding, healing, and restoration. May our approach be rooted in Christ's love and truth, demonstrating the transformative power of God's grace in their lives.

Acknowledging The Mistakes of the Broader Church Community

Within the broader church community, it is necessary to humbly acknowledge any mistakes that have been made in our approach to dealing with the LGBTQ community. It should be in the heart of any pastor or leader to engage in honest self-reflection and recognize anywhere we have fallen short in demonstrating the love and grace of Christ to the LGBTQ community.

We acknowledge that historically, the church has often been marked by a lack of understanding, empathy, and acceptance toward the LGBTQ community. Rather than extending open arms and fostering an environment of love and acceptance [not approval of lifestyle], we have at times perpetuated stigma, discrimination, and rejection.

The goal of this section is not to condemn or criticize, but rather to invite the church community to embark on a journey of introspection and transformation. We recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is essential that we humbly acknowledge our past mistakes and commit ourselves to a more Christ-like approach.

We must all take the time to prayerfully examine the various areas where the church has fallen short, including the use of hurtful language, the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, the marginalization of LGBTQ individuals, and the lack of compassionate pastoral care. At the same time we must adhere to the immovable theological and biblical aspects related to sexuality and gender identity, seeking a deeper understanding rooted in love, truth, and grace.

The church in this next era must foster a spirit of repentance, reconciliation, and restoration. We should all desire to create spaces within the church community where LGBTQ individuals are embraced as gracefully helped to find healing, restoration and become a healthy member of the body of Christ, where their unique experiences are listened to with empathy, and where their spiritual journeys are supported and nurtured.

As we acknowledge the mistakes of the broader church community, we also recognize the immense potential for growth, healing, and transformation. By examining our past failures and seeking God's wisdom and guidance, we can work towards building a church that reflects the all-encompassing love of Christ, extending grace, acceptance, and understanding to all, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.



There are a few statements that were written by Chris Sprinkle, spouse of Author Preston Sprinkle.¹² Although these statements may not apply to every pastor or leader, they are proclamations that are worth considering as you navigate how to engage in this difficult subject.

WE AFFIRM that evangelicalism has not treated LGBT+ people with kindness, compassion, and relational delight. Rather, we have cultivated a culture of isolation, fear, and turned a blind eye to dehumanizing rhetoric, relationships toward our brothers and sisters wrestling with their faith, sexuality, or gender identity.

WE AFFIRM that singling out LGBT+ people as particularly grievous sinners—while, for instance, a porn epidemic rages on in the church—is itself a horrifically hypocritical posture. And Jesus would have opened the can on such pharisaical arrogance.

WE AFFIRM that Christians everywhere should confront any form of bullying toward LGBT+ people. The Church should be on the front lines against injustices committed against LGBT+ people who are created in God’s image.

WE DENY that gay or transgender jokes are acceptable Christian behavior and should be confronted by Christian leaders everywhere.

WE AFFIRM that the conversation about faith, sexuality and gender is just that—a conversation, and a complex one that cannot be summed up in bullet point conclusions.

WE AFFIRM that the evangelical aversion to singleness and its idolatry of marriage has created a horrible environment for the millions of single Christians pursuing celibacy in the church [This includes those who struggle with gay attraction, but choose to remain celibate]. One cannot flourish by just saying no to gay sex. We *all* must be able to say yes to love and intimacy, yet many (most? Almost all?) single Christians who struggle with gay tendencies have not experienced such intimacy and love in the church.

WE REPENT from creating a heteronormative church culture that inevitably ostracizes Christians wrestling with their sexuality or gender identity.¹³

¹² <https://www.prestonsprinkle.com>

¹³ Chris Sprinkle, “My Nashville Statement” Response to statement developed by pastors and distributed in 2023



CARING PRINCIPLES FOR THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING

Section Five

A person's story and experiences are important and worthy of being heard and respected. As a person discerns enough trust to share their struggles, it is imperative that we have some general counsel to guide them in their journey. Although love and compassion must be the foundation to the conversation, they are not enough to bring the transformation that God desires in their lives. Here are some tips you might consider sharing: ¹⁴

Remember that your body was purposefully designed.

The human body is the home of our behaviors, appearance, mannerisms, and habits. Consider some things the Bible says about the human body:

- **We reflect the image of our Creator.** “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” ([Genesis 1:27 ESV](#)) Being made in His image separates us and the purpose of human sexuality from all other creatures, elevating our status and imprinting us with His likeness.
- **Our bodies are not our own.** ([1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)) Imagine receiving an original, priceless painting. Would you even consider getting your paints out and changing it? Not only did God create you, but He also sacrificed His Son to purchase you back from sin and death. To alter healthy sexual organs denies that you are God's masterpiece and embraces the lie that your value and identity come from your appearance, preferences, and sexuality.
- **Sexual sin is spiritually devastating.** ([1 Corinthians 6:18](#)) Changing appearance, genitalia, or hormones doesn't actually change a person's sex. It also doesn't change God's standards or His original design for your life. The biological sex God granted is coded into our DNA and every cell of our God-ordained bodies. It's a harmful denial of Him and this reality to reject our body in this fundamental way.
- **Your body was created to be a temple of the Holy Spirit.** ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)) Just as God gave Solomon specific instructions for every detail of the temple's construction, He also [purposefully designed every detail of our bodies](#). Some of His purposes we understand now and others we will learn about in heaven — but all of them are for our good and His glory. He is our God. We are not our own gods to do with ourselves as we wish.

¹⁴ A portion of this section was taken from Focus on the Family Website Article, 2023 “Caring Principle for Those Who Are Struggling.” A good portion was written by Mannahouse team to fill in any missing items.



Saturate your mind with the truth.

Your mind is the home of your thoughts, emotions, memories, and imagination. [Modern brain science](#) confirms what the Bible has always said: [Renewing your mind transforms you](#) over time and as you grow in Christ. To begin to willingly open yourself to God's intent for your sexuality, embrace these key tenets:

- **A high view of Scripture.**
God's Word provides [principles and precepts for instruction](#) in everything believers might encounter. It explains His purposes in creation, including the human body and its two distinct sexes. Creationism is foundational to the other truths of Scripture. When you believe a loving Father created you with care and purpose, your identity has a more secure foundation.
- **A high view of God's purposeful design for creation.**
 - The creation account in the Bible ([Genesis 1:1-27](#)) is a story of God separating many things:
 - He separated the darkness from light.
 - He separated the waters above from the waters below.
 - He separated the dry land from the waters below.
 - He separated the day from the night.
 - He separated humankind into two biological sexes.
- **A high view of the sacred and intentional design for sex.**
God separated male from female, among other reasons, so that they could be [purposefully joined](#). Once He formed Eve, He immediately declared that her and Adam's union was to occur [within the bond of marriage](#). Marriage was important from the beginning because God uses it as a metaphor throughout the Bible.

In the Old Testament God repeatedly describes Israel's unfaithfulness to Him in terms of sexual infidelity. The two gender roles are essential to His message, with the husband's role symbolizing God's initiative of choosing a people for Himself and the wife's role depicting Israel's response.

The New Testament further unpacks [the metaphor](#). Our marriage to Christ creates within us new *spiritual* life, just as the marital act of joining sexually creates new *physical* life. Transgender-identified sexuality distorts the picture of [Christ's initiating, self-sacrificing love](#) for us and our gratefully receiving Him into ourselves as the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Nurture an intimate friendship with God.

The human spirit is the seat of your desires, inclinations, affections, and identity. It is the deep well from which recovery springs. Many people get stuck at the level of the mind, asking "Why?" This prevents them from going deeper, repenting, and uniting with Christ. You don't have to fully understand your inner conflict in order to surrender it to God. If you are a Christian who struggles with gender identity, we encourage you to start with these important steps:

- Lean into God's presence right where you are instead of trying to fix your behaviors first. Even if you can't find rest in your sexuality yet, will you dare to find rest in God's love?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to convince you that God intentionally made you male or female and that your body at birth is His blessing and work.



- Consider what it means that God's ways and thoughts are higher than yours. Ask Him to help you cooperate with His good purposes for your life. Cultivate the truth in your heart that [God has restored others](#) with sexual identity issues, and He not only *can*, but He *desires* to do the same for you.
- Take heart in the fact that your pain does not have to go to waste. By definition, Christians are called to live [a life of sacrifice](#). But Christ's completed work on the cross makes your pain redemptive too. He invites you to join in [the fellowship of His sufferings](#).
- When thinking of God, make sure it's about relationship instead of just behaviors. Jesus said, "[If you love me, keep my commandments](#)." The relationship is what creates the obedience, not the other way around.

Focus on Identity in Christ

Emphasize the importance of finding identity in Christ rather than solely in gender or personal experiences. Encourage the individual to explore their relationship with Jesus and discover the depth of their identity as a beloved child of God.

Foster a Balanced Approach:

Explore all aspects of your life beyond gender dysphoria. Develop your gifts, pursue meaningful relationships, and engage in activities that bring joy and fulfillment. This broader focus can contribute to a more holistic sense of self.

Don't Embrace The Culture Narrative

Seek the truth of God's Word rather than embracing the prevailing cultural narrative. While society may offer various perspectives on gender and identity, the Bible serves as our ultimate guide and source of truth. God created each of us with purpose and intention, and His Word provides a framework for understanding our identity in Christ. Lean on the Scriptures, pray for guidance, and seek the counsel of trusted Christian mentors who can help you navigate this journey with wisdom and love. Remember, God's truth has the power to bring healing, transformation, and fullness of life.

Don't Go On The Journey Alone

This is a journey that requires you to be surrounded by people who love and care for you. There is a tendency to feel shame and isolate yourselves from the people who can help you the most. In addition there is a sickening burden of shame that the enemy of our souls tries to heap on us ([John 10:10](#)).

Find safe people and a safe place to slowly and patiently unwind your story. Know the truth that you are loved deeply and unconditionally even as you face your feelings and questions. Christ is a redeemer and healer of our bodies, minds, and spirits.

Seek Medical Help

Find a trustworthy, Christian physician who can address any physical problems such as brain chemistry, depression, anxiety, or endocrine problems. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed to find the help you need. Trust the experts to help you resolve your issues.



Find a Professional Christian Counselor

They can provide a safe and confidential space where you can explore your thoughts, emotions, and experiences within the context of your faith. A Christian counselor will approach your struggles with empathy, understanding, and a commitment to biblical principles, helping you navigate your journey of self-discovery and finding healing and wholeness in Christ. They can offer valuable guidance, tools, and resources tailored to your specific needs. Remember, you don't have to face this alone—reach out to a professional Christian counselor who can walk alongside you on this path of growth and transformation.

Find a Pastor or Church Staff Leader

Pastors and church leaders are there to offer spiritual guidance, prayer, and biblical counsel. They can help you navigate your struggles within the context of your faith, providing a safe space for you to share your experiences and concerns. They may also be able to connect you with resources, support groups, or Christian counseling services that can further assist you. Remember, the church is meant to be a place of love, acceptance, and understanding. Don't hesitate to reach out to a pastor or church staff member who can offer care and guidance during this challenging time.

Be Patient With Yourself and Others.

Finally, please bear with well-meaning people who don't yet understand your journey. When you reflect on discussions with family members and friends about your gender identity or about your child's journey, keep in mind that you have been dealing with this issue for a while, but they may have only learned of it a few minutes earlier. Someone is likely to have hurt or disappointed you, but it doesn't necessarily mean they don't love you or have your best interests at heart. That's why articles and brief education like this exist — to help bridge that gap. This is not an easy topic for anyone, but learning to *love fully* and *help practically* is so worth the effort!

What Jesus did in leaving God's side and coming to earth wasn't "easy" for Him either, but deep saving grace and love compelled Him! We hope the small steps and ideas of this article will contribute to compassionately and biblically encouraging anyone who needs support and direction on this topic.

Find Other Support and Resources

Connect the individual with support networks, such as local Christian communities, support groups, or professional counselors who understand the intersection of faith and gender issues. Provide them with relevant resources, books, and materials that align with a Christian perspective on identity and gender.

Engage in a Church Community and Fellowship

Find a supportive Christian community where they you connect with others who share similar struggles or provide understanding and encouragement. Fellowship with fellow believers can be instrumental in the healing and transformation process.

Remain Prayerful and Hopeful

Continually lift the individual up in prayer, entrusting their journey to God's hands. Maintain a sense of hope, reminding them that healing, transformation, and restoration are possible through the power of God's love and grace.



Responding to the Big Myths About Gender Identity¹⁵

Countering society's beliefs regarding transgender agenda starts with a basic understanding and response to the two main gender myths surrounding transgenderism. These are:

Gender Identity Myth #1: "Some people are simply born in the wrong body."

Response: They are not. Our bodies do not tell us lies about who we are. There is simply no scientific development that tells us being transgender is naturally occurring. It is not the way someone *is*, or merely a different kind of person. But according to the way gender theory has evolved, there is nothing anyone can say about the transgender-identified person's belief about themselves. We must all accept what they believe they are. This is the only area of life where we are all being required to totally agree with and affirm someone's self-conception.

Gender Identity Myth #2: "Transgender children must be supported in their change or they will commit suicide."

Response: There are two great falsehoods here.

First, as we have seen, many of the best mainstream clinicians and researchers on this topic absolutely do not encourage parents, teachers, and playmates to go along with a child changing their sex identity before puberty.

Second, there is absolutely no evidence that failing to go along with a child's gender dysphoria causes them to want to take their lives. *Such research does not exist.* But it is widely claimed. In fact, the research noted above from Brown University [documents how youth¹⁶](https://www.brown.edu/news/2019-03-19/gender) and trans advocates are actually "using a suicide narrative to manipulate parents and doctors into supporting and providing transition services."

There is no legitimate mental health protocol that tells patients with gender dysphoria that their mental well-being is subject to everyone affirming them.

Overly simplistic (and manipulative) explanations of suicide are something wise clinicians see through. Unfortunately, [research published in 2020¹⁷](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/acps.13164) shows that gender dysphoric patients who have undergone medical treatment and surgery still have disturbingly high suicide rates. And this research was conducted in some of the most trans-affirming cultures on earth. A lack of support does not cause suicide in gender dysphoric youth and adults.

¹⁵ Focus on the Family Website Article, 2023 "A Biblical Perspective on Transgender Identity: A Primer for Parents and Strugglers"

¹⁶ <https://www.brown.edu/news/2019-03-19/gender>

¹⁷ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/acps.13164>



HELPING PARENTS TO CARE FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS WHO STRUGGLE

Section Six

Caring for children and teens who struggle with gender confusion can be a challenging and sensitive journey, particularly for Christian parents who desire to uphold their faith while providing unconditional love and support. It should be the aim of every parent to offer guidance in navigating this complex terrain, emphasizing the importance of extending grace, truth, and unwavering support to their children.

As parents, our love for our children knows no bounds. Our role as primary care providers is not just to provide physical necessities but also to nurture their emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. When faced with the reality of gender confusion in our children, it is crucial to approach their struggles with a compassionate heart, open ears, and a willingness to learn.

As difficult as the challenge may be, a parent facing this dilemma must be committed to exploring practical ways in which they can offer love and support while remaining rooted in biblical truth. There is a delicate balance of extending grace and empathy while guiding our children towards a deeper understanding of their identity in Christ.

It is important to acknowledge that as Christian parents, we are called to be both a reflection of God's love, His infallible Truth, and a source of unwavering support for our children. Our aim is to listen, understand, and walk alongside them, demonstrating Christ's love in our actions and words, while at the same time guiding them in God's Truth. We are promised in Proverbs 22:6 that if we, "Train up a child in the way they should go that when the grow old they will not depart from it." We recognize the significance of this responsibility and the impact it can have on our children's lives.

As we embark on this exploration, we encourage Christian parents to cultivate a strong foundation of faith, prayerfully seeking wisdom and guidance from God. By immersing yourself in Scripture and seeking the counsel of trusted spiritual mentors and professionals, we can navigate this challenging journey with grace and discernment.

Ultimately, our goal is to create an atmosphere where our children feel safe, loved, and understood, knowing that they can rely on us for support without fear of judgment or rejection. We hope this section will help to empower Christian parents to navigate the complexities of gender confusion, fostering an environment where their children can thrive, grow, and ultimately find their true identity in Christ.

The following principles will help to start you on your journey of helping you and your children find hope, healing and restoration in Christ. Please note that this list is a starting point for you as a parent. It will be important to engage your pastors, medical professionals, Christian counselors and your extended family and friends to help you navigate this challenging season. Most importantly, don't lose heart! Jesus is with you and your child. He will give you the grace, strength and wisdom to navigate this challenging journey.



Teach your children a biblical worldview.¹⁸

They need to know that the way they view God is the most important thing in their life.

- They need to learn why God created men and women and how those roles reflect important aspects of His nature.
- They need to understand why we uphold standards of purity and integrity.
- They need to see you joyfully and purposefully center your family's life around grateful obedience to God's standards.

Take Your Gender Roles from Scripture, Not Man-made Tradition, Family, or Feelings.

It's possible for a family to be quite healthy and their child still experience gender dysphoria. Kids react in various ways to forces outside the home every day. Also, children may *perceive* relationships and their place in the family in ways adults may never expect. That's why, for many families, the roots of their child's confusion began at home without their parents even realizing it.

Some Christians who are upset over their child's trans identity may also be embracing their own skewed version of masculinity and femininity. Their view of what it means to be male or female and how to live that out seems normal to them because it's based on their own personal comfort zones or what they saw growing up. Some people unconsciously continue their own parents' unhealthy patterns; others react to them and become legalistic or dogmatic. But neither of these approaches are much more stable than what their teen may be doing by basing gender on individualized feelings.

Rather, 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.

There are any number of family power struggles or dynamics that can become problematic and offer children a distorted view of God. For instance, [religious legalism](#) (rule-following instead of relationship) provokes children to rebel against parental authority and doubt God's authority. Parents lament the emerging exodus of teens and young adults who are abandoning the faith. Unfortunately, many of them are actually reacting to a home and church characterized by legalistic qualities.

To see how family systems reap consequences in a child's perception of gender and sexuality, let's examine just one example of an unhealthy, imbalanced family system. Of course, the overbearing parent can be either sex, but for the sake of discussion we'll say there is a family with a controlling, domineering father and an anxious, passive mother.

¹⁸ Focus on the Family Website Article, 2023 "A Gender Myth Like No Other"



A girl raised in an atmosphere of chauvinism and misogyny often develops a distorted view of womanhood.

- She may think her value lies in always being passive and subservient.
- She may feel her only other option is to rebel and demand her rights in traditionally masculine ways.
- Her ability to relate to males can be delayed or distorted.

A boy raised in this type of imbalanced family system may struggle to develop a healthy sense of both his own sexuality and that of the opposite sex.

- He may feel disconnected from his father.
- He may develop an overall negative association with masculinity.
- He may over-identify with his mother and sisters.
- He may seek to connect with other men in unhealthy ways to fill his father-wound.

The way parents raise their children has a profound impact on their overall health and well-being, including their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual development. As Christian parents, seeking a proper biblically based balance in our approach becomes paramount, as we strive to nurture our children holistically and guide them in the ways of the Lord.

Finding the right balance in our parenting approach means aligning our actions and decisions with the teachings of Scripture while embracing the unique qualities and gifts that God has bestowed upon each child. It requires us to seek wisdom, discernment, and guidance from God, relying on His Word as the ultimate authority in our parenting journey.

Striking this balance is not about perfection or rigid adherence to a set of rules, but rather about cultivating an environment of grace, love, and truth. It involves modeling Christ-like behavior, teaching our children to love and serve others, and equipping them with a strong foundation in God's Word.

We understand that the journey of parenting is unique to each family, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, as we navigate this path, we can draw wisdom from the Scriptures, seek counsel from fellow believers, and rely on the power of prayer to guide us in making decisions that honor God and nurture our children's well-being.

Ultimately, finding a biblically based balance in our parenting leads to the flourishing of our children. It sets them on a path to embrace their identity as beloved children of God, equips them to navigate the challenges of life, and prepares them to impact the world with the love and truth of Christ.

Initiate early, consistent, age-appropriate sex education at home.

Use correct terminology for body parts and their functions. You wouldn't wait until your child asked you about how and why to wash their hands before proactively teaching them to do so. Likewise, don't wait until they ask you how and why girls and boys are different to begin to explain it to them. [Normalize talking about age-appropriate, healthy sexuality from a faith perspective.](https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/sex-education-how-to-start-early/)¹⁹

¹⁹ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/sex-education-how-to-start-early/>



Ongoing, open communication is a very different mindset from the old attitude of putting off “the Talk” as long as you possibly can. Educate yourself about [healthy childhood sexual development](#)²⁰ so you can be on the offense instead of the defense. Being proactive is the best way to ensure your child gets trustworthy, biblical teaching on sensitive, important topics such as sex, gender identity, homosexuality, and transgenderism.

Teach your children the truth about gender and transgender identity.²¹

From an early age, teach them that our human bodies matter. The body is connected to our personhood — who we are. Emphasize that their body is good and worthy of respect and protection. Help them celebrate their [unique qualities of maleness or femaleness](#).²² Become informed on this topic through [trustworthy resources](#)²³ and encourage your kids to bring their questions to you or your spouse as their primary source of reliable information on any topic, especially private or uncomfortable ones.

And when you see a trans person, don’t model a sense of disgust or make disparaging remarks. Show respect and love for them as God’s image-bearers and use the encounter later as an opportunity to discuss the experience with your kids.

Let their individuality flourish within healthy limits.

Boys don’t all have to be rough or aggressive — they can also be sensitive, creative, and nurturing, according to the unique personality God has given them. Girls can be tough, sporty, and prefer toy trucks over dolls but still be accepted and celebrated as an example of strong, lovely girlhood.

On the other hand, you don’t want to allow behaviors that emasculate your son, such as wearing their sisters’ dresses and painting their nails. And what if your daughter wants to shave her head? Or your son wants to take up knitting? Where is the balance between being too strict and too lenient?

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.

For example, reacting to a tomboy with disapproval and shame sends the hurtful message that she can’t possibly be accepted as a girl the way she is. But her being rowdy isn’t a serious cause for concern. The real problem would be if she hates being a girl and resists all things that are essentially (not just traditionally) female. These are signs of a deeper internal conflict she needs help to work through.

²⁰ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/healthy-childhood-sexual-development/>

²¹ Focus on the Family Website Article, 2023 “A Biblical Perspective on Transgender Identity: A Primer for Parents and Strugglers”

²² <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-ga/key-differences-between-male-and-female/>

²³ <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://dailycitizen.focusonthefamily.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/when-transgender-issues-enter-your-world.pdf>



Consider the Future Effects of Your Parenting Decisions.

Wise parents consider the long game in their parenting. Girls and boys have many needs that overlap, but they also have some that are unique to their sex.

Perhaps your child's behaviors have already gone beyond the circumstantial issues of dolls versus trucks. Parents are under tremendous pressure to support their children's and teenagers' [feelings and preferences](#)²⁴ without question. However, once you say yes to the "lesser" trans behaviors like cross-dressing, you're soon going to be asked to sponsor greater ones. By opening the door to things you may later have to disallow in your home, you're actually setting your child up for longer-term concerns.

Parents need to explain clearly, "I love you unconditionally and I always will, but I can't relate unconditionally to everything you ask for." Just as you wouldn't allow them to drive the car illegally and unsafely, there are likewise serious, scriptural, psychological, and medical reasons not to sponsor their trans behaviors. Of course, they may do whatever they choose while they're at school or when they move out, but you do not have to endorse wayward and sinful behavior by condoning it in your home.

Live joyfully as a man or woman of God.

Deuteronomy 6:6-8 states, *"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."*

This verse describes how parents should teach their children to love the Lord every day as they go about their normal everyday lives. This overflowing lifestyle is also the best way to teach them about other important topics like sexuality.

If you're a trauma survivor, or you tend toward anger and criticism, or perhaps you struggle with depression, deal with your own needs diligently before they spill over onto your children. It's OK to be imperfect and to let them see it, but they also need to see you becoming more like Christ every day. When you enjoy your godly manhood or womanhood in healthy ways, your kids will naturally emulate that pattern.

Be sure to provide other role models in your children's lives too. They need to see healthy people — secure men and women — who are thriving in their faith as part of the body of Christ. This example is good for all children but is especially important if a parent is a poor role model or is absent through death, divorce, or abandonment.

Focus on enjoying God instead of simply teaching moral behaviors.

One of the biggest misperceptions about Christianity is that it's simply about acting right. When Christian parents overemphasize their child's behavior rather than their heart, the real message they send often

²⁴ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/bringing-gospel-clarity-to-a-feelings-first-world-part-1-of-2/>



has more [shame](#)²⁵ than love. This distorted view of the Gospel leads people to reject traditional gender roles as being just another Christian idea that's outmoded and unnecessarily restrictive.

The message our kids (and the world) really need to hear is that forming your spirit in deep friendship with God is the only way to peace, salvation, and your true identity.

Prioritize Honoring God Above Pleasing People.

Honoring God out of reverence for who He is and from gratitude for His saving grace is an appropriate heart response toward our Creator. However, others around us may care very little or even ridicule this kind of living from our faith. When people close to us aim to pull us away from this devotion, boundaries are necessary. Loving God results in loving others, but dishonoring God inevitably leads to dishonoring others as well. This is important to remember as we protect our children and teach them to [guard their hearts and minds](#).

So much of the reasoning behind the LGBT movement is based on people's feelings and experiences. Their legitimate pain calls out for compassion and support, touching our hearts, as it should. But when we elevate people's stories, feelings, preferences, and experiences above scriptural truth, we have built a house of cards instead of a foundation for life. Those who create their own principles of sexuality are not models to follow. Only God's perfectly designed plan, as communicated in His Word, should be the standard to which we aim.

Well-meaning Christian parents may fall into the trap of thinking that it's loving to acquiesce to their child's gender struggle without considering the more important responsibility of shepherding their eternal souls. But putting your acceptance of your children's preferences and behavior above their relationship with God doesn't truly help them. As Edmund Burke wrote, "Whatever disunites man from God, also disunites man from man."

Encouraging your children to honor God and lean on Him as their gracious Helper is the most loving thing you can do as their earthly parent and, hopefully, as their eternal brother or sister in Christ. Staying compassionately connected to the heart of your child does not require distancing from the heart and plan of God.

Remain Strong in Your Convictions [don't bend to societal pressures of fear of losing child] Parent first.

When confronted with the complex and sensitive issue of a child struggling with gender confusion, it is crucial for parents to remain strong in their convictions. In today's society, there can be immense pressure to conform to prevailing ideologies and abandon our deeply held beliefs. However, as parents, we must remember that our primary role is to be a parent first and foremost. This means standing firm in our convictions and guiding our children with wisdom, love, and unwavering support. While it is natural to fear the potential consequences or backlash from society, our responsibility to our child's well-being and long-term development should take precedence. By remaining steadfast in our convictions and grounded in our faith, we can navigate this challenging journey with grace, truth, and the best interests of our child at heart.

²⁵ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/episodes/broadcast/avoiding-shame-based-parenting/>



Become Aware of Any Patterns Creating Problems at Home.

Watch for cues that your child may have experienced something that confuses or bothers them. Ask them questions and help them identify their feelings and when those began. If you uncover issues you don't know how to handle, seek the counsel of [a professional Christian counselor](#).²⁶ Consider these possibilities:

- Has there been a breakdown in the child's family life such as [abandonment](#), [foster care](#), [adoption](#), [infidelity](#), [separation](#), [divorce](#), [cohabitation](#), or [remarriage](#)?
- Has the child over-identified with, perceived rejection from, or been abused or [abandoned by one parent](#)?
- Is your child a trauma survivor or is he or she [suffering from depression](#) or other [mental illness](#)?
- Are [LGBT media influences](#) or [people close to the child](#) influencing them with extreme or unhealthy modeling of what it means to be male or female?
- Have friends or family members [exposed your child to pornography](#)?
- Has your child been a victim of [sexual abuse](#)?

Know Who Their Friends Are

Parents play a crucial role in safeguarding their children from the dangers of negative influences, which is why it is essential to know who their friends are. In an increasingly interconnected world, children are exposed to various social circles and peer groups that can have a significant impact on their beliefs, behaviors, and overall well-being. By actively engaging in their children's lives and understanding their friendships, parents can better protect them from potential harmful influences. This involves fostering open communication, creating an environment of trust, and taking an interest in their child's social interactions. Knowing their friends allows parents to assess the character, values, and intentions of those with whom their children spend their time. It provides opportunities for meaningful conversations, guidance, and support, helping to shape positive friendships and shield children from negative peer pressures. By being proactive and attentive in this regard, parents can create a protective shield around their children, fostering an environment that nurtures their growth, safety, and healthy development.

Know What They are Being Taught in School

Parents have a vital responsibility to safeguard their children from the potential dangers of harmful influences, including those related to gender ideologies, sex education, and immoral sexual acts. Understanding what their children are being taught in school is crucial in this regard. By actively engaging with their child's educational journey, parents can gain insight into the curriculum, materials, and discussions that may shape their child's worldview and values. This involvement allows parents to assess whether the teachings align with their family's beliefs and moral principles. It also provides an opportunity for open dialogue and critical thinking, enabling parents to address any conflicting or inappropriate content.

²⁶ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/counseling-services-and-referrals/>



By maintaining an open line of communication with teachers and school administrators, parents can express their concerns, advocate for their child's well-being, and work collaboratively towards a safe and appropriate educational environment. Ultimately, by staying informed and engaged, parents can actively protect their children from influences that may conflict with their family's values, promoting a healthy and wholesome upbringing rooted in truth and moral integrity.

Know What They are Viewing on Social Media, Media and Television

Parents have a crucial role in protecting their children from the potential dangers posed by exposure to harmful influences on social media, the internet, and various media platforms. Understanding what their children are viewing and engaging with in these realms is of paramount importance.

By actively monitoring and being aware of their child's online activities, parents can safeguard them from the infiltration of gender ideologies, explicit sex education, and immoral sexual acts. It is essential to establish open lines of communication with children, fostering an environment where they feel comfortable discussing their online experiences.

Setting boundaries, implementing parental controls, and discussing responsible internet usage can help guide children towards safe and appropriate content. By staying informed about the platforms, apps, and websites their children frequent, parents can engage in meaningful conversations, provide guidance, and address any concerns that arise. By being proactive in this area, parents can actively protect their children's innocence, promote healthy digital habits, and ensure they are exposed to positive and age-appropriate information, ultimately nurturing their overall well-being and spiritual development.

For even more help on this topic, read our article [Talking to Your Children About Transgender Issues](#) and this information on [Helping Children With Gender Identity Confusion](#).

For more resources on reinforcing your child's healthy sexual identity, [click here](#).

Talking To Your Children About Transgender Issues²⁷

Bruce Jenner's athletic world-record and 1976 Olympic gold medal in the decathlon competition propelled him to become one of the most famous athletes in the world. He was a hero and role model for many. He later became well known to younger generations after his marriage to Kris Kardashian and appearances on the reality television show, "Keeping Up with the Kardashians."

With his tremendous athletic background, there was huge surprise when, in 2015, Jenner started appearing in public with long hair and nail polish. Tabloids reported he was undergoing plastic surgery. Finally, in a television interview with Diane Sawyer, Jenner announced his decision to "transition into a woman." A cover photo published a few months later on *Vanity Fair* magazine was even more shocking, and a reality television show on his life aired on *E!*

In 2016, Jenner appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* as "Caitlyn," wearing a sparkly jumpsuit and the Olympic gold medal won more than 40 years ago. But these days it's not just Jenner pushing

²⁷ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/get-help/talking-to-your-children-about-transgender-issues/>



transgender ideology. Sadly, given the prominence of transgenderism in our culture, children are bound to be exposed to this complicated sexual issue at far too early an age.

Responding to Children

When confusing events like this are broadcast throughout the culture, leaders are asked a lot of questions. And we know parents get asked questions, too, such as:

- *Daddy, why does that man want to be a lady?*
- *Mom, what does “transgender” mean?*
- *Can a boy turn into a girl?*
- *Mommy, I’m a girl; but will I ever change into a boy?*

Transgenderism includes a wide variety of identities and behaviors and may also be called “gender dysphoria,” “gender confusion” or “gender identity disorder.” It’s tough enough for adults to understand this subject. So when our children encounter this confusing issue, what do we say? Most importantly, how do we help them develop a biblical, Christian perspective on this issue?

We want to help you navigate this topic, so here are some useful guidelines and suggestions for addressing transgender issues with your children:

Keep It Simple

Relax. As a parent, you are the *authority* in your child’s life; but you don’t have to be an expert on every issue – including this one. And even the “experts” really don’t understand all the complexities of this issue.

A few years ago, a gay identified psychiatrist was asked about gender confusion and responded, “The truth is we actually don’t know what it is. Is it a mental disorder or does the cause of gender dysphoria lie somewhere else?”

So don’t think you have to understand *everything* about transgenderism or tell your children everything you know. Here are a few simple truths to communicate:

- *God made humans male and female.*
- *Individuals are born either male or female.*
- *Some people get hurt and confused, and they don’t like the way God made them.*
- *As a result, some people wish they were the opposite sex.*
- *Nobody can really change from one sex to the other.*

Keep It a Dialogue

When children ask questions, use the occasion to connect with them. Find out *what* they are learning, *where* they learned it and *what* they are thinking. Ask questions, such as:

- *Where did you see that?*
- *Where did you hear that word?*
- *Why do you think God made both boys and girls?*
- *What do you think “transgender” means?*



- *Do you think a boy can really turn into a girl?*

This isn't an inquisition, but an opportunity to get to know your child better. So keep your tone conversational and friendly.

Older children and teens may have more questions, so we have a list of helpful resources at the end of this article. You might want to read some of these additional resources first, then read and discuss them with an older child.

Keep It Truthful

If you don't know the answer to a child's question, say so. Then tell your child you'll look for an answer. Let's say your son asks, "Why does he want to be a lady?" The real answer, if we're honest, is "I don't know." None of us know all the pain and false beliefs in the lives and hearts of persons who struggle with transgender issues.

Nevertheless, Scripture is clear about certain things, and those truths are what you can communicate to your children:

- *God made us in His image – male and female.*
(Genesis 1:27, 5:2; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6. ESV)
- *Sin entered the world and spoiled everything, including how we see ourselves.*
(Matthew 15:19; Romans 3:23, 5:12-13. ESV)
- *Some people get really hurt and confused as they grow up.*
(Romans 1:19-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. ESV)
- *God loves us and sent us Son to save us.*
(John 1:1-14, 29; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 John 2:2. ESV)
- *God can bring healing and truth to those who are hurt.*
(2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 6:6; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:24. ESV)

God wants us to live in truth about how He created us and who we are. We know God is powerful to save and transform lives – including the gender-confused. Tell your children this truth.

Keep It Kind

God has a deep love for sexually and relationally broken men and women – including those struggling with gender identity issues. These struggles are complicated and touch on deep aspects of our sexuality and being. The topic can provoke some to laughter or mockery, so work to maintain God's heart for the gender-confused. *He loves them with an everlasting love – just as He loves each of us.*

Your children will be watching you for cues about how to respond to gender confusion in individuals and in the culture. Pray for God's heart and for the ability to convey this to your children. Tone and attitude are as important as your words:

- *God loves all of us.*
- *God loves men who wish they were women, as well as women who think they are men.*
- *We may disagree with someone's beliefs and choices; however, we can still be kind and loving.*
- *We can pray for those who are gender-confused.*



Keep It Affirming

When children see a transgender person on the news or on the street, they may feel curious, alarmed, confused or afraid. So, when they ask questions about it, they're not just asking for details about transgenderism. They're also asking for comfort and affirmation.

As a parent, you can respond positively:

- *I'm so glad God made you a girl!*
- *I'm happy you're my child and that you're a boy.*
- *What's good about being a girl?*
- *What's good about being a boy?*

Ask the Lord for wisdom and creativity for how best to affirm your sons in their masculinity and your daughters in their femininity.

Responding to my Prodigal Adult child

First, your adult children must be allowed to make their own choices. Trying to control the behavior of another adult is an unhealthy approach to any relationship, regardless of the person's faith or how they are related to you. Now that your child is out on his own, your *importance* to him is not necessarily less, but your *authority* over him is.

If your adult prodigal claims to have a relationship with Christ ...

- Encourage them to lean into their faith and to simply keep talking with the Lord as they struggle and question.
- Remember, the most important aspect of humans is not their sexual or gender orientation; it's their identity in Christ.
- Pray for them and rest in God to do what only He can do. This article on [How to Trust God With Your Adult Children](#) offers practical encouragement for this important task.
- Encourage them to revisit the Scriptures for truth about the nature of God, the creation of male and female, life in the Spirit, and sexuality.
- When speaking to them about God, make sure it's about relationship, not moralism.

Maintain an eternal mindset. Understanding sexuality as God intends it 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 your child's heart and connection to Him.

Standing firm in God's truth is the best way to help your child.

Have you ever noticed in [the story of the prodigal son](#) that the father didn't have to kick the son out of the house? The son chose to leave. He wanted a lifestyle of excess and sin, and the father allowed him to make that choice as an adult. It was simply a given that the son had to leave his father's home in order to live in this manner. The father didn't cave to the fear of losing his son and compromise to get him to stay. He didn't even use financial control and withhold his inheritance.



In the end, what changed the son's heart wasn't his father preaching at him or pleading with him. Instead, God's Spirit used the emptiness and filth that a rebellious lifestyle naturally yields over time to make the son yearn for his father's comfort and care.

God works in ways we can't comprehend, even using the consequences of our sin. He can do far beyond what you can do for your child in your own wisdom and strength. Your job is to maintain personal integrity, love, and solid faith in God's truth. For more information and encouragement in dealing with a prodigal child, see footnote below.²⁸

There are many other principles that will help you to relate to your adult child as stated in the previous sections. Please take a few moments to review and contextualize them to your personal experience.

Gender Myths: A Myth Like No Other

Children understand the [basic science of sex](#)²⁹ without much trouble. It is one of the most universal and objective facts that humanity (and most of the animal and plant kingdom) is created male and female. There is no third option. God created humanity male and female to reveal his divine image in the world. Science knows of no other models of humanity. That penises and vaginas correspond with XY and XX chromosomes that exist in [every bit of DNA in our bodies](#)³⁰ is one of the most basic, uncontested facts of nature.

Yes, there are intersex people, those born with ambiguous genitals or some chromosomal abnormality. But even the Intersex Society of North America holds [that intersex is not a different kind of sex or gender](#).³¹ It is merely an unfortunate malformed body. The bare fact of transgenderism is that it does not exist physically in the body. It is not the "way someone is." It is in one's subjective self-conception.

Healthy Bodies, Confused Minds

So why do some children and adults report confusion about their [sex or gender](#)? Why does Andy want to be Andrea? Science doesn't really know.

Leading scholars and clinicians in the Netherlands — writing in one of the [leading textbooks](#)³² about treating gender dysphoria — explained that "no unequivocal etiology [root cause] factor determining atypical gender development has been found to date." In other words: *We're just not sure what causes it.*

With no medical basis for gender confusion, the condition exists largely in an individual's *mind*. It doesn't physically exist in one's body. Certainly, it isn't the "way someone actually *is*." It must be understood that

²⁸ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/good-parents-prodigal-kids/>

²⁹ <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/where-do-babies-come-from/>

³⁰ <https://theconversation.com/not-just-about-sex-throughout-our-bodies-thousands-of-genes-act-differently-in-men-and-women-86613#:~:text=The%20human%20genome&text=The%20only%20physical%20difference%20in,Y%20contains%20only%2027%20genes.>

³¹ <https://isna.org/faq/third-gender/>

³² https://books.google.com/books?id=wRjEBAAQBAJ&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&dq=treating+transgender+youth&source=gbs_navlinks_s



most kids who believe they are the opposite sex come to align with their natural sex or gender by the time they reach puberty. It is [well documented](#)³³ in the scientific literature that [only 2 to 27 percent](#)³⁴ of gender dysphoric kids [stick with their belief](#)³⁵ that they are of the other sex or gender. Something cannot be a “thing” if it is usually temporary.

Too Early a Transition

These two facts — that gender confusion has no medical basis and that it’s almost always temporary — are the primary reasons that [leading clinicians](#) say that parents and other authorities in the child’s life should not allow or support the switching of a gender dysphoric child’s name, clothes, room décor, and other identifiers to those of the opposite sex.

Certainly, these professionals see any hormonal or body changes as irresponsible but psychologically and physiologically harmful. Supporting the child’s desire to transition to a different gender identity makes it terribly difficult to move back in identity to their natal sex/gender when they realize they actually are what they were born as.

This means parents and grandparents who have moral problems facilitating such changes are supported by science and the most knowledgeable clinicians in the field.

Social Influences and Gender Identity

Parents should also be aware of the social influences behind gender confusion in young people. [Researchers at Brown University’s School of Public Health](#)³⁶ discovered that social and peer influences are often a dramatically strong driver in young peoples’ announcement that they are “transgender.” This phenomenon is referred to clinically as “rapid-onset gender dysphoria,” where teenagers are announcing they are transgender seemingly out of nowhere. These authors explain large numbers of parents are reporting that their child’s “onset of gender dysphoria seemed to occur in the context of belonging to a peer group where one, multiple, or even all of the friends have become ... transgender-identified during the same timeframe.” In other words, a great many of these children are influenced more by friends than anything in nature.

Science and God’s Design Agree

Being “[transgender](#)”³⁷ is at odds with science *and* God’s design. This is simply because the study of science is the careful study of how God’s creation works. Male and female are not what we *feel* we are, but what we *actually* are. Every cell in our bodies is marked as either male or female, and our bodies do not lie.

Scripture Truth: [Genesis 1:26-27](#) speaks of this with crystal clarity.

³³ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgicfindmkaj/http://www.hbrs.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-myth-of-persistence-OZUCKER.IJT_.2018.pdf

³⁴ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1359104510378303>

³⁵ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgicfindmkaj/http://www.hbrs.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/More-Than-Two-Developmental-Pathways-in-Children-Steensma-2015.pdf

³⁶ <https://www.brown.edu/news/2019-03-19/gender>

³⁷ <https://dailycitizen.focusonthefamily.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-trans-anyway/>



The God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness... So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.

Jesus affirms this truth in Matthew [19:4](#) and Mark [10:6](#).

Somehow, in a mysterious and wonderful way, it is the human male and female — and only the human male and female, in body, mind, and spirit — that are the image and likeness of God in the world. In fact, think about that.

When God first tells us about male and female on the very first page of scripture, He does so by telling us they are His unique image and likeness. It is the first thing God says about male and female.

Satan hates God and His image with his whole being. Thus, he hates what it means to be male and female because of what it represents. He is and will do everything he can do to confuse our understanding of this divine image. He is sowing confusion in the minds of our children and community leaders. Every Christian leader and parent must understand this with great seriousness.

Gender Ideology Harms Children³⁸

1. No one is born with a gender. Everyone is born with a biological sex. Gender (an awareness and sense of oneself as male or female) is a sociological and psychological concept; not an objective biological one. No one is born with an awareness of themselves as male or female; this awareness develops over time and, like all developmental processes, may be derailed by a child’s subjective perceptions, relationships, and adverse experiences from infancy forward. People who identify as “feeling like the opposite sex” or “somewhere in between” do not comprise a third sex. They remain biological men or biological women.
2. A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not, at best, a sign of confused thinking. When an otherwise healthy biological boy believes he is a girl, or an otherwise healthy biological girl believes she is a boy, an objective psychological problem exists that lies in the mind not the body, and it should be treated as such. These children suffer from gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria (GD), formerly listed as Gender Identity Disorder (GID), is a recognized mental disorder in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM- 5).⁵ The psychodynamic and social learning theories of GD/GID have never been disproved.
3. Puberty is not a disease and puberty-blocking hormones can be dangerous. Reversible or not, puberty- blocking hormones induce a state of disease – the absence of puberty – and inhibit growth and fertility in a previously biologically healthy child.
4. According to the DSM-5, as many as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty.
5. Pre-pubertal children diagnosed with gender dysphoria may be given puberty blockers as young as eleven and will require cross-sex hormones in later adolescence to continue impersonating the

³⁸ https://acpeds.org/assets/imported/9.14.17-Gender-Ideology-Harms-Children_updated-MC.pdf



opposite sex. These children will never be able to conceive any genetically related children even via artificial reproductive technology. In addition, cross-sex hormones (testosterone and estrogen) are associated with dangerous health risks including but not limited to cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, stroke, diabetes, and cancer.

6. Rates of suicide are nearly twenty times greater among adults who use cross-sex hormones and undergo sex reassignment surgery, even in Sweden which is among the most LGBTQ – affirming countries.¹² What compassionate and reasonable person would condemn young children to this fate knowing that after puberty as many as 88% of girls and 98% of boys will eventually accept reality and achieve a state of mental and physical health?
7. Conditioning children into believing a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is child abuse. Endorsing gender discordance as normal via public education and legal policies will confuse children and parents, leading more children to present to “gender clinics” where they will be given puberty-blocking drugs. This, in turn, virtually ensures they will “choose” a lifetime of carcinogenic and otherwise toxic cross-sex hormones, and likely consider unnecessary surgical mutilation of their healthy body parts as young adults.
8. "Moreover, neuroscience reveals that the pre-frontal cortex of the brain which is responsible for judgment and risk assessment is not mature until the mid-twenties. Never has it been more scientifically clear that children and adolescents are incapable of making informed decisions regarding permanent, irreversible and life-altering medical interventions. For this reason, the College maintains it is abusive to promote this ideology, first and foremost for the well-being of the gender dysphoric children themselves, and secondly, for all of their non-gender-d discordant peers, many of whom will subsequently question their own gender identity, and face violations of their right to bodily privacy and safety."³⁹
9. "While the number of gender clinics treating children in the United States has grown from zero to more than 100 in the past 15 years – and waiting lists are long – strong evidence of the efficacy and possible long-term consequences of that treatment remains scant."
10. "Reliable national data on how many children receive care for gender dysphoria – defined as a feeling of distress from identifying as a gender different from the one assigned at birth – have long been unavailable. To get some idea of the increasing prevalence of these cases, Reuters asked health technology company Komodo Health Inc to analyze its database of U.S. insurance claims and other medical records on about 330 million Americans. The analysis, the first of its kind, found that at least 121,882 children ages 6 to 17 were diagnosed with gender dysphoria in the five years to the end of 2021. More than 42,000 of those children were diagnosed just last year, up 70% from 2020."

³⁹ https://acpeds.org/assets/imported/9.14.17-Gender-Ideology-Harms-Children_updated-MC.pdf



Busy at the clinic

Number of patients treated annually at the Doernbecher Children's Hospital gender clinic at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland



Source: Doernbecher Children's Hospital gender clinic

Questions Regarding Gender Confusion in Children⁴⁰

To be human is to be gendered — male or female. And one of the most important jobs of a parent is to help their children develop as healthy boys or girls and into strong, confident men and women.

At the news of every child's birth, what is the first question we ask about the baby — even before we ask if the baby is healthy? *We want to know if it's a boy or girl!*

Knowing the sex of the child is the first way we seek to connect with and understand the new human being. To be human is to be gendered — male or female. And one of the most important jobs of a parent is to help their children develop as healthy boys or girls and into strong, confident men and women.

Here are answers to some of the biggest questions parents have about gender issues with their children:

Is it normal and healthy for young children to participate in cross-sex behavior?

Of course! The whole world of a child is exploration. The role of the parent is to make sure their children explore and learn about their world in safe and directed ways. If a brother has four sisters, when he was very small and loves to play dress up with his sisters, even in their own dresses and sparkly shoes this shouldn't be an issue. This is fine at 2 years old. Not so much at 8 years old! It is important for parents to *not* overreact to such behavior but to slowly guide it in gender-proper directions. That is how kids learn.

Remember, most little boys and girls have never been men or women before, and they need both mother and father to show them what being one is like, as well as what it is *not*!

⁴⁰ Focus on the Family Website Article, 2023 "Answering Parents Questions on Gender Confusion in Children."



Is “tomboy” behavior in girls just as concerning as “sissy-girl” behavior in boys?

There are important differences here. Tomboy behavior in girls is more prevalent and often more short-lived than distinct feminine behavior in boys. It is more important for parents to lovingly, calmly but confidently steer boys with feminine tendencies into more masculine directions. Make sure you find masculine things your boy is interested and can find identification in. All boys need to be *intentionally welcomed* into the world of men, and both mother and father play a key role here. Girls, likewise, need to be introduced into the world of women. We shouldn’t apologize for this approach as scripture reaffirms the role of men and women play in society, while remaining equal in value.

It is also important for parents to recognize that “tomboy” girls are much less likely to be teased for various reasons than “sissy” boys. Of course, teasing is always wrong, but parents must be aware of what things are more likely to attract harsh teasing and steer their children away from it.

What about boys or girls who display strong cross-sex behavior in pre-adolescence?

There are some children who, as they grow, will demonstrate stronger cross-sex behavior. Some of these boys will be obsessed with mermaids, frilly girl things and long hair. It is important for parents and extended family to look not just at the child, but the family system itself. Such behavior is typically a curious indicator of deeper problems within the family.

Dr. Kenneth Zucker, one of the world’s leading authorities on gender confusion in children, calls this dynamic “family noise” which he explains as unhealthy relationships between mother and father, parents, and child, as well as sibling to sibling. He says allowing a boy to live as a girl might solve the immediate anxiety of such a child, but it would ignore the larger problem driving such desire, and it fails to serve the child and the family.

Is it true cross-sex behavior and transgenderism in children have a biological root in the brain?

In a word, no!

New developments in brain research indicate that the human brain develops with distinct male and female characteristics, but there is no data showing this, drives cross-gender behavior.

A 2014 book for clinicians, *Treating Transgender Children and Adolescents*, explains, in academic parlance, “No unequivocal etiological factor [i.e., causal root] determining atypical gender development has been found to date.” Translation: *We’re just not sure what causes it.*

- These Dutch authors explain that both brain and genetic factors could be contributors to gender dysphoria, but caution “this research is still very limited, and the findings are sometimes inconsistent.” Although, “With the current state of knowledge, it remains most plausible that a complex interaction between a biological disposition in combination with intra- and interpersonal factors” are contributors.⁴¹

⁴¹ “Annelou L. C. de Vries and Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, “Clinical Management of Gender Dysphoria in Children and Adolescents: The Dutch Approach” in *Treating Transgender Children and Adolescents: An Interdisciplinary Discussion*, Jack Drescher and William Byne, (eds.) (Routledge, 2014), p. 10, 11.



- Dr. Zucker explains, “Gender dysphoria (confusion) is increasingly understood [by some]...as having biological origins [in] small parts of the brain. In terms of empirical data, this is not true. It is just dogma.”⁴²
- Professor Eric Vilain, a UCLA geneticist specializing in sexual development, recently explained to the *Atlantic Monthly* that, “there is no evidence of biological influence on transsexualism yet.” If we ever do find some hard-wired biological component for gender identity, he says, “my hunch is, it’s going to be mild.”⁴³

What is the best course for helping children who are gender confused?

It should be remembered that very few children who demonstrate gender confused behavior continue to do so in their later teen years or early adulthood. Most grow out of it and learn to live well in their masculinity or femininity. This fact also speaks against a biological foundation.

It is critical that both mother and father work together to provide loving but intentional direction. For boys, the mother should be the one to “push” the child *from* feminine behavior, and the father should “pull” the boy toward more masculine play and interests. One of the worst things is for dad to “shame” the boy for girl-like behavior. He should *always* work to welcome his son into the curious world of men. That is how healthy masculine identity happens.

Harvard professor Jerome Kagan has spent 4 decades studying such children and he finds that parenting style is critical for helping children move out of gender confusion. Kagan says parents who are particularly *affirming* of their children’s cross-sex identification ultimately have the *worst* outcomes in child health and well-being.⁴⁴

With children showing opposite-sex tendencies, mothers should deeply and carefully guard against overprotection and coddling, while fathers should guard against shaming and nagging. Again, mothers should become the *pushers* away from gender-discordant behavior and fathers the gentle *pullers* toward healthy gender-aligned attitudes and behaviors.

⁴² Quoted in Hannah Rosin, [“A Boy’s Life,”](#) *Atlantic Monthly*, November 2008, p. 67.

⁴³ Quoted in Hannah Rosin, [“A Boy’s Life,”](#) *Atlantic Monthly*, November 2008 He indicates that family factors play a key role.

⁴⁴ Leonard Sax, M.D. Ph.D., *Why Gender Matters*, (New York: Doubleday, 2005), p. 227.



EQUIPPING THE CHURCH TO NAVIGATE THROUGH GENDER AND IDENTITY ISSUES

Section Seven

In today's rapidly changing cultural landscape, the church faces the critical task of navigating through the complex and sensitive issues surrounding gender and identity. This handbook aims to provide pastors with practical tips and strategies to effectively lead their congregations in addressing these matters with love, truth, and biblical integrity. By equipping the church, pastors can foster an environment of understanding, compassion, and transformation for individuals and families grappling with gender and identity issues.

1. **Teach Biblical Truth:** Conduct regular teachings and studies on biblical principles of gender and sexuality. Address the topic of gender dysphoria within the context of God's design for humanity and the redemptive power of Jesus Christ.
2. Recognize the significance of the pulpit as a platform to communicate biblical truth. Deliver sermons that address gender and identity issues from a biblical perspective, rooted in God's unchanging Word. Provide clear teaching on the theological foundations of gender, identity, and human sexuality, emphasizing God's design and purpose for His creation.
3. **Foster a Safe Environment:** Create a culture of acceptance, where individuals struggling with gender dysphoria can find understanding, support, and prayer. Encourage open dialogue while emphasizing the importance of biblical principles and Christ-like character.
4. **Address Those Who Treat People in Ungodly Manner-** When confronted with a situation where someone within the church community is not treating a person struggling with gender confusion in a Christ-like manner, it is essential for the church to address the issue with grace, truth, and love. As followers of Christ, we are called to reflect His character and extend His unconditional love to all individuals, regardless of their struggles or differences.

Confrontation should not be driven by judgment or condemnation but by a genuine desire to restore relationships and foster a Christ-centered community. The church should engage in open dialogue, emphasizing the importance of treating one another with kindness, respect, and empathy. By offering gentle correction, providing biblical guidance, and promoting a culture of acceptance, the church can play a transformative role in encouraging individuals to embrace their identity in Christ and journey towards healing and wholeness.

Through prayer, humility, and a commitment to understanding, the church can model Christ's love and demonstrate the power of Christian community in supporting those who are struggling with gender confusion.

5. **Educate and Equip:** Provide resources, seminars, or guest speakers who can educate the congregation on the complexities of gender dysphoria, offering biblical perspectives and practical guidance for ministering to individuals with gender dysphoria.
6. **Youth Ministry Teaching:** Develop age-appropriate curriculum and engage in open conversations within the youth ministry. Address questions and concerns regarding gender and identity with



compassion and biblical guidance. Foster an atmosphere of acceptance, while providing biblical truth that helps young people navigate the cultural pressures they may face.

7. **Children's Ministry Curriculum:** Create resources and curricula for children's ministry that teach foundational biblical principles about gender and identity. Help children understand their inherent value and uniqueness as God's creation, fostering a safe and loving environment that encourages questions and promotes healthy discussions.
8. **Small Groups:** Encourage the formation of small groups within the church where individuals can share their struggles, experiences, and questions related to gender and identity. Provide trained leaders who can facilitate discussions, offer support, and guide participants towards biblical truth, healing, and restoration.
9. **Resources on Church Website:** Maintain a comprehensive and easily accessible section on the church's website dedicated to gender and identity issues. Offer resources such as articles, books, videos, and testimonies that provide biblical insights, personal stories, and practical guidance for individuals seeking understanding and support.
10. **Personal Coaching and Counseling:** Ensure that pastors and church leaders are equipped to provide personal coaching and counseling for individuals and families dealing with gender and identity issues. Offer a safe space where individuals can explore their struggles, ask questions, and receive guidance from a biblical perspective, with an emphasis on love, compassion, and transformation.
11. **Public Statements and Position Papers:** Craft clear and compassionate public statements that reflect the church's position on gender and identity issues, aligning with biblical principles. Develop position papers that articulate the church's stance, addressing common questions and misconceptions, while conveying love and understanding to those struggling with these challenges.
12. **Honoring Public Teachers, Principals Who Attend Your Church:** Pastors have a unique opportunity to honor public teachers and principals who attend their church in their church services and messages. Recognizing and appreciating their dedication to shaping the lives of students is an important way to demonstrate respect and support for the vital work they do. Pastors can acknowledge their role and the impact they have on the community during sermons, offering words of encouragement and gratitude. Inviting them to stand or be recognized in services can provide a public affirmation of their service. Pastors can also dedicate specific moments to pray for teachers and principals, asking for God's wisdom, strength, and protection as they navigate the challenges of their profession. Creating a church culture that values education and the educators within the congregation fosters a sense of community and support for these individuals. By honoring public teachers and principals, pastors not only uplift and encourage those who serve in these roles but also inspire others within the church to recognize and appreciate the importance of education in shaping future generations.



13. **Encourage Your Congregants to Vote Biblically and Responsibly:** Encouraging congregants to vote biblically and responsibly is crucial in promoting active civic engagement and upholding our values as Christians. Voting is not only a privilege but also a right bestowed upon us in our democratic society. It provides us with a platform to express our voice and influence decisions that shape our society. As pastors and leaders, we have the opportunity to remind our congregants that voting is an important act of stewardship, as we are called to be salt and light in the world. By voting, we have the ability to support candidates and policies that align with our morals and ethics, promoting justice, righteousness, and the well-being of all people.

We can emphasize the significance of informed decision-making, urging congregants to study and understand the platforms and positions of candidates, as well as the potential impact of proposed policies. Encouraging responsible voting also means encouraging respectful dialogue and engagement with differing perspectives, promoting unity, and understanding in the process. By actively participating in the democratic process and voting with biblical principles in mind, we fulfill our responsibility to be faithful citizens and agents of positive change in our society.

14. **Face Cultural Issues Head On:** Acknowledge the cultural pressures and prevailing narratives surrounding gender and identity, and proactively address them within the church community. Foster an environment of openness, where difficult conversations can take place with grace and truth, promoting understanding and unity within the body of Christ.

Equipping the church to navigate through gender and identity issues requires intentional and compassionate leadership from pastors. By implementing the strategies outlined in this handbook, pastors can guide their congregations in responding to these challenges with biblical wisdom, love, and truth.

By facing the issue head-on, providing sound teaching, developing resources, and fostering supportive environments, the church can become a transformative force, extending God's grace and redemption to individuals and families struggling with gender and identity issues.



THE BELIEVER'S ROLE IN SOCIETY

Section Eight

As followers of Christ, we are called to be salt and light in the world, influencing and transforming the society around us. As Christians we must live with the understanding and principles needed to fulfill our role as influencers without falling into the traps of separatism, conformism, or antagonism.

Our influence must penetrate all areas of society—education, politics, the marketplace, entertainment, social settings, and sports—and provide engaging ways in which we might influence culture with love and truth while maintaining true to our Kingdom identity. As pastors and leaders, one of our primary responsibilities is to motivate every Christian to actively participate in the transformation of society, embracing their calling to impact the world for the glory of God.

Our Role of Salt and Light:

As followers of Christ, we are called to be salt and light in the world, bringing flavor, preservation, and illumination to society. This paper explores our role as believers in engaging and transforming the world around us. By understanding and embracing our identity as salt and light, we can fulfill our purpose in making a positive impact on society, sharing the love and truth of Christ in a compelling and transformative way.

The Role of Salt:

Preservation: Discover how our role as salt involves preserving the moral fabric of society. Through our conduct, values, and ethical standards, we can help prevent moral decay and promote righteousness.

Flavor: Explore how our lives should bring a distinct and compelling flavor to the world. By demonstrating the character and love of Christ, we can influence others and draw them closer to Him.

Healing: Learn how salt has healing properties, and how our presence as believers can bring spiritual healing to a broken world. Through acts of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, we can extend the healing touch of Christ to those in need.

The Role of Light:

Illumination: Understand how our role as light involves shining the truth of God's Word in a world filled with darkness. By living out and proclaiming the Gospel, we can expose the lies and deceptions that pervade society, leading others to the path of righteousness and salvation.

Guidance: Explore how our light can provide guidance and direction to those who are lost or searching for meaning. Through our words, actions, and lifestyles, we can point others towards the true source of hope and purpose, which is found in Jesus Christ.

Transformation: Witness the transformative power of light as it dispels darkness. As believers, we are called to be agents of transformation, challenging and changing the systems, structures, and mindsets that oppose God's truth and love.



Living Out Our Role:

Engaging Society: Discover practical ways to engage with society, including participating in community initiatives, advocating for justice, and serving those in need. By actively involving ourselves in the issues and challenges faced by society, we can make a tangible difference and demonstrate the love of Christ.

Speaking Truth in Love: Learn how to effectively communicate the truth of God's Word with love, grace, and humility. By engaging in respectful dialogue, understanding different perspectives, and exemplifying Christ-like character, we can break down barriers and build bridges to share the life-transforming message of the Gospel.

Prayer and Dependence on the Holy Spirit: Emphasize the importance of prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit in fulfilling our role as salt and light. Through prayer, we align our hearts with God's will and seek His guidance and empowerment to impact society for His glory.

As believers, we are called to be salt and light to society, bringing flavor, preservation, illumination, and transformation. By embracing our role and living out our faith authentically, we can make a lasting impact on individuals, communities, and even entire nations. Let us be intentional in fulfilling our purpose, knowing that as we shine the light of Christ and embody His love, we have the power to transform the world around us and bring glory to God.

Our Role as Influencers, Not Separatists:

In a world marked by division and polarization, it is crucial for Christians to understand and embrace their role as influencers, rather than isolating themselves as separatists. This paper delves into the significance of Christians engaging with the world, navigating cultural differences, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and building relationships that reflect Christ's love while preserving our distinct Christian identity. By understanding and living out this calling, we can make a positive impact on society, share the Gospel effectively, and exemplify the transformative power of Christ's love.

The Importance of Engagement:

Embracing Cultural Differences: Recognize the diversity and richness of cultures within society and understand the value of engaging with people from different backgrounds. By appreciating cultural nuances, we can bridge gaps, build understanding, and effectively communicate the love of Christ.

Building Relationships: Explore the significance of building meaningful relationships with individuals who may hold different beliefs, values, and perspectives. Through authentic connections, we have the opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love, share our faith, and be agents of transformation.

Counteracting Isolation: Understand the dangers of isolation and the negative consequences it can have on our witness and impact. By actively engaging with the world, we can counteract isolation and bring the light of Christ into every sphere of society.



Navigating Cultural Differences:

Cultural Sensitivity: Learn to approach cultural differences with sensitivity and respect. By listening, learning, and appreciating diverse perspectives, we can foster dialogue and understanding, rather than perpetuating division or judgment.

Biblical Foundation: Ground our engagement in a solid biblical foundation, ensuring that our actions and interactions align with the teachings and example of Christ. By seeking wisdom from Scripture, we can navigate cultural differences while remaining faithful to our Christian identity.

Extending Grace and Truth: Discover the importance of extending grace and truth in our interactions with others. Balancing love and truth, we can engage in discussions on challenging topics, address societal issues, and offer a compelling witness to the transformative power of Christ.

Maintaining Christian Identity:

Integrity and Holiness: Understand the significance of maintaining our Christian identity while engaging with the world. Through personal holiness and integrity, we can reflect Christ's character and distinguish ourselves as followers of His teachings.

Consistency in Values: Explore the need for consistency between our beliefs and actions. By living out our faith authentically, we can demonstrate the coherence and relevance of the Gospel message in the world.

Discernment and Wisdom: Cultivate discernment and wisdom as we engage with various cultural contexts. By relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance, we can navigate challenging situations and make decisions that align with God's will.

As followers of Christ, we are called to be influencers in the world, not separatists. By engaging with cultural differences, building meaningful relationships, and navigating societal challenges, we can reflect Christ's love and truth in a way that transforms lives and communities. Let us embrace our role as influencers, seeking to understand, love, and impact the world around us while maintaining our distinct Christian identity. In doing so, we can demonstrate the power of the Gospel, bring unity in the midst of diversity, and participate in God's redemptive work in society.

Our Responsibility to Engaging in All Sectors of Society:

As Christians, we are called to be active participants in all sectors of society, bringing the influence of God's kingdom and embodying His values. This paper explores the various areas where believers are called to have an impact, including education, politics, the marketplace, entertainment, social settings, and sports. By understanding our responsibility and gaining insights into how to bring godly principles and values into these sectors, we can become agents of change and transformation, reflecting the character of Christ and positively shaping the world around us.

Education: Shaping Your Child's School Environment

Recognizing the Significance: Understand the crucial role education plays in shaping individuals and society. Explore how Christians can contribute to educational settings, fostering environments that promote truth, critical thinking, and character development.



Support and Engage: Discover ways to support and engage with educational institutions, whether through volunteering, serving as mentors, or advocating for quality education rooted in biblical principles.

Develop a Prayer Strategy for Your School: Developing a prayer strategy for yourself, your family, and your schools is vital in seeking God's guidance, protection, and transformation. Prayer allows us to align our hearts with God's will and invite His presence into every aspect of our lives. Start by setting aside dedicated time for prayer, both individually and as a family, to seek God's wisdom and discernment. Pray specifically for your family members, covering them with God's love, grace, and protection. In addition, intercede for the schools your children attend, praying for the administrators, teachers, and students, that they may experience God's guidance, peace, and a safe environment conducive to learning and growth. Seek God's leading in how to pray specifically for any challenges or needs within your family and schools. As you commit to a consistent and intentional prayer strategy, you will witness the power of prayer in transforming hearts, relationships, and educational settings, bringing about God's purposes and blessings.

Be Informed On Your Child's School Curriculum: Challenging parents to be informed about their children's school curriculum is crucial in ensuring that their education aligns with their family's values and beliefs. Being proactive in this regard allows parents to actively participate in their children's learning journey and make informed decisions regarding their education. To stay informed about the curriculum, parents can start by attending parent-teacher meetings, where they can engage with teachers and gain insights into the subjects and materials covered. They can also regularly review school newsletters, websites, and communication platforms to stay updated on any curriculum changes or updates. Additionally, parents can join parent-teacher associations or committees, which provide opportunities to have a voice in shaping the curriculum and policies. Engaging in open and respectful dialogue with teachers and school administrators can foster a better understanding of the curriculum and allow parents to express their concerns or suggestions. By being well-informed, parents can actively support and supplement their children's education, ensuring that it aligns with their values and enables their academic and personal growth.

Be Informed About Your Child's School Board: Challenging parents to be informed about their children's school board is crucial in shaping the policies and decisions that directly impact their education. To be actively involved, parents can start by attending school board meetings and staying updated on the agendas and minutes of these meetings. This provides an opportunity to witness the discussions and decisions firsthand. Additionally, parents can engage with school board members through open communication channels, such as emails or public forums, to share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions. It is also important to exercise the right to vote during school board elections, ensuring that individuals who align with their values and priorities are elected. When addressing controversial issues, parents can gather information from multiple perspectives, engage in respectful dialogue, and present their viewpoints backed by evidence and research. By being informed about the school board and actively engaging in the decision-making process, parents can contribute to creating a positive and nurturing educational environment that meets the needs of their children and reflects their shared values.

Get Involved in Your Child's School: Challenging parents to get involved in their children's school classes, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and school board is a powerful way to actively support their education and contribute to the school community. To engage with teachers, parents can attend parent-teacher conferences, meet-and-greets, or open houses to establish a connection and gain insights into their children's learning experience. Building a positive relationship with teachers allows for open



communication, where parents can discuss their child's progress, share concerns, and collaborate on strategies for academic success. There are a variety of ways in which you can engage.

- Joining the PTA provides a platform to participate in various school activities, fundraisers, and initiatives. Parents can also consider volunteering in classrooms, field trips, or special events, offering their time and expertise to enrich the learning environment.
- Engaging with the school principal and school board can be achieved through attending board meetings, participating in town halls, or joining advisory committees. These interactions provide opportunities to voice concerns, share suggestions, and contribute to decisions that shape the educational experience.
- By getting involved in various aspects of their children's school, parents actively demonstrate their commitment to their child's education, foster positive relationships, and contribute to a thriving educational community.

Building Relationships with School Officials [Teacher, Principal, Superintendent, Board]:

Building relationships with school officials, including teachers, principals, superintendents, and the school board, is of utmost importance for parents in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the school's culture, curriculum, and safety measures. By establishing positive relationships with these key stakeholders, parents can foster open lines of communication and collaboration, creating a supportive partnership between home and school. Regular communication with teachers allows parents to stay informed about their child's progress, academic goals, and any concerns that may arise. This exchange of information helps parents actively participate in their child's educational journey, providing support and reinforcement at home. Building a rapport with the principal and superintendent enables parents to gain insights into the overall school culture, policies, and vision for education. This understanding helps parents align their expectations and values with the school's approach and ensures a harmonious educational experience for their child. Engaging with the school board allows parents to have a voice in shaping important decisions related to curriculum, safety protocols, and other significant matters. By building relationships with school officials, parents become active partners in their child's education, ensuring that they have a safe and nurturing learning environment that aligns with their values and promotes their child's overall well-being.

Your Rights as a Parent: Parental rights play a crucial role in shaping their children's education and ensuring their well-being at school. As parents, it is important to understand and assert these rights to actively participate in the educational journey of our children. One fundamental aspect is the right to be informed and involved in what our children are taught. This includes reviewing curriculum materials, textbooks, and lesson plans to ensure they align with our values and beliefs. If there are controversial policies or curriculum elements that we find objectionable, it is essential to know how to challenge them. This can involve open communication with teachers, administrators, and school board members, expressing concerns, and presenting alternative perspectives backed by research and evidence. Constructive dialogue and engagement can lead to positive changes and ensure that our children receive an education that reflects our values. Additionally, providing positive feedback is equally important. When we witness exemplary teaching, supportive environments, or beneficial programs, expressing appreciation and acknowledgment can reinforce positive practices and encourage the growth of our children and the entire school community. By exercising our parental rights and actively engaging in our children's



education, we can create an environment that nurtures their intellectual, social, and emotional development while promoting a shared understanding and collaboration between parents and schools.

Politics: Influencing Policies and Governance

Understanding the Importance: Recognize the impact of political decisions on society and the moral responsibility Christians have in engaging with politics. Explore how believers can participate in political processes, advocating for justice, righteousness, and the common good.

Exemplifying Servant Leadership: Learn how to engage in politics with humility, integrity, and a servant's heart, seeking to bring about positive change rather than pursuing personal agendas.

Marketplace: Living Out Our Faith at Work

Integrating Faith and Work: Understand the significance of the marketplace as a platform to live out our faith. Explore how Christians can bring godly values into their professions, displaying integrity, compassion, and excellence in their work.

Ethical Practices: Examine the importance of conducting business with honesty, fairness, and social responsibility, reflecting the character of Christ and promoting the welfare of others.

Entertainment: Reflecting Truth and Virtue

Discerning Consumption: Consider the impact of entertainment media on individuals and society. Learn how Christians can engage with entertainment while discerning what aligns with godly values, promoting content that uplifts, inspires, and reflects truth and virtue.

Creativity and Cultural Influence: Explore the role of Christian artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers in using their talents to impact culture, challenge worldviews, and present redemptive narratives.

Social Settings: Cultivating Christ-like Relationships

Building Bridges: Understand the importance of engaging in social settings and building relationships with people from diverse backgrounds. Explore how Christians can foster unity, promote justice, and demonstrate Christ's love in social environments.

As believers, we are called to engage in all sectors of society, bringing godly principles and values into education, politics, the marketplace, entertainment, social settings, and sports. By understanding our responsibility and seeking God's wisdom, we can become agents of change and transformation, positively impacting individuals and society at large. Let us be intentional in reflecting the character of Christ in all areas of our lives, demonstrating love, truth, justice, and compassion as we engage with the world. T

Through our faithful engagement, we have the opportunity to make a lasting difference and contribute to the flourishing of God's kingdom on earth.



Our Role to be Kingdom Minded and Culturally Relevant:

As followers of Christ, we are called to be both kingdom-minded and culturally relevant. This paper explores the importance of striking a balance between these two aspects, integrating biblical values into contemporary issues and challenges while demonstrating the relevance of the Gospel in a rapidly changing world. By understanding our role in embracing this balance, we can effectively engage with society, impact lives, and be a transformative force for God's kingdom.

Kingdom-Mindedness: Anchored in God's Purposes

Understanding the Kingdom: Explore the biblical concept of the kingdom of God and its central role in the life and teachings of Jesus. Understand that our ultimate allegiance lies with God's kingdom, and our actions should align with His purposes and values.

Seeking God's Will: Cultivate a heart that seeks God's will above all else, prioritizing His agenda over personal preferences or societal expectations. Through prayer, scripture study, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discern God's leading in our engagement with the world.

Cultural Relevance: Engaging the World with the Gospel

Understanding Cultural Context: Recognize the importance of understanding the cultural context in which we live and minister. Study societal trends, values, and challenges to effectively engage with the world and address contemporary issues.

Relating to People: Cultivate empathy and understanding for the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of individuals within our culture. Develop authentic relationships with people, demonstrating Christ's love and compassion in a way that resonates with their unique contexts.

Integrating Biblical Values: Addressing Contemporary Issues

Biblical Worldview: Ground our understanding and response to contemporary issues in a biblical worldview. Seek wisdom from Scripture to discern God's perspective on societal concerns, aligning our values and actions with His truth.

Speaking Truth in Love: Learn how to communicate biblical values effectively, speaking truth in love, and addressing sensitive topics with grace and sensitivity. Display a Christ-like character that reflects humility, compassion, and understanding in our interactions.

Relevance in Action: Being a Transformative Presence

Practical Engagement: Explore ways to practically engage with society, such as volunteering, advocacy, and service, to address societal needs and promote justice, mercy, and reconciliation.

Creative Expression: Utilize our God-given talents, gifts, and abilities to create and contribute in ways that engage culture, challenge prevailing narratives, and present the transformative power of the Gospel in relevant and innovative ways.

Impactful Witness: Demonstrating the Relevance of the Gospel

Consistent Christlikeness: Embody the teachings of Christ consistently in our words, actions, and lifestyle, providing a powerful witness of the transformative impact of the Gospel in our lives.



Testimony of Changed Lives: Share personal stories of transformation and redemption, illustrating the relevance of the Gospel in addressing the deepest needs and longings of humanity.

Being both kingdom-minded and culturally relevant is essential for believers seeking to impact the world with the Gospel. By striking a balance between these two aspects, we can integrate biblical values into contemporary issues, engage with society authentically, and demonstrate the relevance of the Gospel in a rapidly changing world. Let us seek God's guidance, draw from the timeless wisdom of Scripture, and be intentional in our engagement, making a lasting impact on individuals, communities, and the broader culture. Through our kingdom-minded, culturally relevant witness, we can bring the transformative power of the Gospel to bear on the challenges of our time and be catalysts for God's redemptive work in the world.

As Christians, we are called to be influencers in every area of society, shining the light of Christ and preserving godly principles. By understanding our role as salt and light, engaging without being separatists or conformists, and applying biblical principles in various sectors of society, we can effectively impact and transform the world around us. With the motivation of love and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can engage culture without repelling others, sharing truth in a manner that brings healing, understanding, and transformation. Let us embrace our calling to be agents of change, demonstrating the love and power of Christ to a world in need.



The Growing Transgender Movement

Almost every day now, we read stories of new laws being enacted that include “gender identity and expression” or of the growing impact of the transgender movement. From education to entertainment and from the media to the marketplace, transgenderism is applauded and approved. Here are some examples from the past few years:

- The Department of Education announced that Title IX, part of a 1972 education legislation that bars sex-based discrimination in schools that receive federal funds, also applies to transgender students. Matt Kaufman, “Title IX and Transgenderism: The New Threat in Your Child’s School,” Focus on the Family, 2014, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/socialissues/citizen-magazine/education/title-ix-and-transgenderism-the-new-threat-in-your-childs-school> (20 February 2015).
- A 12-year-old boy in Germany began opposite-sex hormone treatments, making him the youngest sex-change patient in the world. “Mistakes in God’s Factory,” 26 January 2007, *Spiegel Online*, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,druck-462516,00.html>, (20 February 2015).
- In 2011, the Internal Revenue Service announced that surgery and hormones for people with gender identity disorders now qualified for itemized medical deductions. Karla Dial, “IRS to Give Tax Deductions for Transgender People,” Citizenlink, 9 November 2011, (20 February 2015).
- In the United Kingdom, new school guidelines warn teachers that telling boys to act like men leads to “bullying of those who do not conform to fixed ideas about gender.” Laura Clark, “Don’t Say Mum and Dad... teachers told not to assume pupils have heterosexual parents,” 30 January 2008, *Daily Mail Online*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-511209/Dont-say-mum-dad-teachers-told-assume-pupils-heterosexual-parents.html> (20 February 2015).
- A New York principal was allowed to return to his job after undergoing sex reassignment surgery. Paul Brooks, “Principal Undergoing Sex Change,” *Times Herald-Record Online*, 25 August 2007, <http://www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070825/NEWS/708250334> (20 February 2015).
- At Children’s Hospital in Boston, parents of children who struggle with gender confusion are being encouraged to raise their children according to the gender they want to be. Some of these children are given puberty-delaying drugs in anticipation of surgery and a lifetime of taking opposite sex hormones. See, for instance, Pagan Kennedy, “Q & A with Norman Spack,” *The Boston Globe Online*, 30 March 2008, http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2008/03/30/qa_with_norman_spack/ (20 February 2015); or J. Michael Bailey, *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, (Washington DC: Joseph Henry Press, 2003), pp. 26-28.
- Nationally, cities, schools and organizations are adopting gender neutral restrooms because ‘women’s’ and ‘men’s’ restrooms only acknowledge a two-gender system. See, for example: “Austin’s gender neutral bathroom rules go into effect,” *KXAN News*, 16 January 2015, <http://kxan.com/2015/01/16/austins-gender-neutral-bathroom-rules-go-into-effect/> (20 February 20, 2015) and Kim Bellware, “Gender-Neutral Bathrooms Are Quietly Becoming The New Thing At Colleges,” *The Huffington Post*, 18 July



2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/18/gender-neutral-bathrooms-colleges_n_5597362.html (20 February 2015).

- The new model for the haircare brand Redken is Lea T, touted as “the first transgender model to become the face of a global cosmetics brand.” Caroline McGuire, “The rise of the transgender models: As Lea T is announced as face of Redken – who are the other big names ready to take on the fashion industry?” *Daily Mail Online*, 7 November 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2823781/The-rise-transgender-models-trans-model-Lea-T-announced-face-Redken-big-names-taking-fashion-industry.html> (20 February 2015).
- A bearded man – dressed and made up to look like a woman – won the Eurovision Song Contest, an international competition, in 2014. John D. Stoll, “Conchita Wurst of Austria Wins Eurovision Song Contest – Wurst’s Onstage Drag Persona Was Created by 25-Year-Old Singer Thomas Neuwirth,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 May 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304655304579554443169226928>, (20 February 2015).
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DO ‘GENDER IDENTITY’ LAWS AFFECT ME AND MY FAMILY?⁴⁵

‘Gender Identity’ laws and policies affect everyone. From cities and states to many businesses, to federal agencies, those with any “gender identity” may use any public accommodations, threatening privacy and safety of others.

NOTE: Referral to websites outside our own control is for informational purposes only and does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of the sites’ content. Some links deal with sensitive and difficult issues and may contain content for mature readers.

You may say to yourself, “I don’t live in one of those liberal states, so laws privileging “gender identity” don’t affect me and my family.” Be aware that, for a variety of reasons, almost everyone in the U.S. is affected by the shift in thinking about “gender” and “gender identity.” This shift has influenced city and state laws, corporate policies, and federal agencies. These laws and policies affect almost all of us because:

- At least 17 states and the District of Columbia have “nondiscrimination” laws for public accommodations (such as restrooms, locker rooms and changing rooms) that include “gender identity” or “gender expression.” If you live in these states ,Ä or if you travel, you could [encounter](#) someone with a different [“gender identity”](#) in a public facility.
- [Hundreds of cities and counties](#) have passed similar ordinances, giving those who identify as or dress as a different gender the freedom to use whichever public accommodation they wish. Do you know your city or county policy?
- Many businesses also privilege transgender-identified individuals. For example, a [Macy’s employee](#) in Texas was fired after telling a man, dressed as a woman, that he could not use the women’s dressing rooms. [Target](#) and [other large corporations](#), have announced that their restrooms are open to those who believe they are the opposite sex. Planet Fitness, a national fitness chain, [revoked the membership of a woman](#) who complained about a man ,Ä who believes he’s a woman ,Ä in the women’s changing room.
- At the federal level, agencies such as the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice have redefined laws that mandate no discrimination on the basis of “sex” to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.” For example, Title IX was passed in 1973, to help level the playing field for girls in education. It mandated no discrimination on the basis of “sex,” which meant schools had to start providing equal funding for girls’ sports and facilities. But a recent [guidance letter](#) sent out by these departments [to all public schools and colleges](#) says that “sex” in Title IX now includes transgender-identified students. According to those two federal agencies, boys who believe they are girls must be able to compete on girls’ teams and use girls’ facilities ,Ä and vice versa.

⁴⁵ Focus On The Family website article 2023, “DO ‘GENDER IDENTITY’ LAWS AFFECT ME AND MY FAMILY?”



- Even before the recent Title IX letter from the Departments of Education and Justice, many [school districts](#), [colleges](#) and [universities](#) already had policies in place that allow individuals to [attend](#) school and use facilities based on their “gender identity.”
- Many states are accommodating these recent decrees by federal agencies, even if they have no laws granting special rights based on “gender identity.” So in [Alaska](#), which does not have a state law favoring gender identity, a boy who believes he’s a girl was able to compete at the state track championships, “denying girls the opportunity to compete at this level.”

Yes, ‘Gender Identity’ Laws Places Everyone at Risk

The bottom line? You are affected, “or your children, grandchildren or other family members are,” because of city and county ordinances, state laws, business practices, and administrative edicts from the federal government.

Transgender-identified and gender dysphoric individuals are not necessarily more dangerous than anyone else. However, these laws and policies allow dangerous individuals open admission to public accommodations. The following are not just possible scenarios (note: a number of these situations have already occurred):

- Some individuals who fall under the “transgender umbrella” are sexually aroused by cross-dressing. So a heterosexual man who is a cross-dresser or [transgender fetishist](#) may be sexually aroused by dressing as a woman; however, he will still be attracted to women. This is exactly the type of person women do not want [in a restroom or locker room](#) with them, but who are now legally allowed to be there, “dressed as a woman or not.”
- There are also a growing [number](#) of [stories](#) of individuals who have committed crimes against women and children, some of whom served time in prison who are now “transitioning” to become the opposite sex, “which may give them more access to women and children. Sometimes [the penal system even pays](#) (with our tax dollars) for an inmate’s “transition.”
- Sexual predators have used the opportunity given them by these new laws to gain access to women and children. In a number of cases, men have entered women’s restrooms or locker rooms with the intent to [assault](#) or [expose themselves](#) to women or children. Others have entered women’s facilities in order to [stare at](#), [film](#) or [photograph](#) women.

To reiterate:

- We are not saying gender-confused individuals are more likely to be dangerous; however, there are people who will now take advantage of gender identity laws and policies to gain access to women and children. No one who is concerned about opening up bathrooms and showers to the opposite sex is questioning the inherent worth and value of all people, “including those who struggle with gender confusion.”
- Nor is our goal to arouse fear. We want people to be realistic about the dangers of “gender identity” laws and take action to protect themselves, their families and their children. In addition, we hope this acknowledgment will compel more Christians [to be a voice for families in the policy making process](#).



GENDER TRANSITION FOR MINORS: WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

[Even while many nations pump the brakes](#) on radical transgender ideology and healthcare practices, Americans at both the state and federal level continue to push culture-wide affirmation, social transition of minors, hormone therapies, and harmful surgeries. Advocates frequently claim that so-called and misnamed “gender-affirming” treatments—including surgery—“save lives,” that gender dysphoria is a permanent condition even among minors, and that regret by those who undergo such treatments are minimal or non-existent.

Increasingly, research suggests otherwise. Until recently, activists were able to hide behind a very limited number of studies, [some of which](#) even seemed to confirm what those activists wanted to hear. No more. With a [900% increase](#) in young people claiming gender dysphoria, the amount of data in recent years has sharply increased.

The data is overwhelming. Contrary to what is consistently filling our newsfeeds, there is a disturbing lack of evidence that intervening in a child’s gender development produces beneficial results of any kind. More than that, many studies are showing a strong potential for lasting harm.

Last month, Dr. Stan Weed with the Institute for Research and Evaluation produced an invaluable paper on the subject, entitled “[Transgender Research: Five Things Every Parent and Policy-Maker Should Know](#).” In it, Weed summarizes dozens of studies from around the world on five of the most hotly debated transgender talking points. For example, about the benefits and harms of cross-sex medical treatment for minors, the highly respected [British Medical Journal](#) concluded:

Puberty blockers are being used in the context of profound scientific ignorance. ... There are a large number of unanswered questions that include the age at start, reversibility; adverse events, long term effects on mental health, quality of life, bone mineral density, osteoporosis in later life and cognition. ... The current evidence base does not support informed decision making and safe practice in children.

On whether medical transition improves rates of suicidal ideation for trans-identifying youth, [one group of researchers](#) observed:

The “transition or suicide” narrative falsely implies that transition will prevent suicides. ... [Yet,] neither hormones nor surgeries have been shown to reduce suicidality in the long-term. ... [Thus,] the “transition or die” narrative, whereby parents are told that their only choice is between a “live trans daughter or a dead son” (or vice-versa), is both factually inaccurate and ethically fraught.

One frequently cited study that pushes this narrative, for example, had an [82% drop-out rate](#), “reducing it to only 7 youth and invalidating its use as a legitimate comparison group.” [Another](#), Weed wrote, found that the “use of cross-sex hormones significantly *increased* [emphasis added] suicidality (nearly two-fold) for biological males receiving estrogen.”



Also addressed in the report were whether gender dysphoria in children tends to be a permanent condition that requires medical treatment, whether young people who identify as transgender are influenced by peers and society or whether it is biologically determined, and how sex education that includes gender ideology influences young children.

Needless to say, the data included in the report is contentious, as tends to be the case when reality bumps up against prized cultural priorities. Of course, Christians and citizens of conscience must remember, in a culture like ours, that truth is *often* contentious, especially when it comes to matters of the highest stakes. It's essential, particularly for the children at risk, that we rely on and point to methodologically sound research.

After all, too many parents have been fed an unethical and manipulative false dichotomy. Either enthusiastically affirm a child's gender identity and support whatever interventions are required for them to "transition," or risk being complicit in harm to your child, maybe even their death. All, including parents, who fail to comply face vitriol from schools, counselors, media, and other parents. They need our support.

And too many young people have been made pawns in a cultural game that pits reality against itself, convinced that their developmentally common feelings mean they somehow were "born in the wrong body," and unaware that these feelings will likely dissipate once puberty and the spell of social contagion run their course. Instead, they're told it's who they are, that it's permanent, and that anyone who fails to affirm them actually hates them.

Love must speak the truth. As gentle as we must be with those who struggle with whom God created them to be, or even those who profess to be our enemies in this cultural tug-of-war, the Church has to stand for what is true about humanity, including God's good creation of the human body and the inherent value each person has since they bear His image.



Transgender Research: Five Things Every Parent and Policy-Maker Should Know⁴⁶

The past 10 years have seen an exponential rise in the occurrence of gender confusion or gender dysphoria (also called transgender or gender non-conforming)* among young people worldwide, especially among teenage girls. The distress of these young people is real, and the causes of this unprecedented trend are unclear, raising difficult questions about compassionate, ethical, and effective ways to respond. Experts disagree, with some recommending watchful waiting plus counseling and some asserting that cross-sex medical procedures are necessary in order to prevent suicide. The U.S. federal policy of the current administration, which endorses “early gender affirming care” for “children and adolescents” (HHS, 2022), is considered controversial by many.

And the dramatic rise in use of cross-sex hormones and surgery for young people has been the focus of heated debate, causing uncertainty in patients, parents, physicians, and policy-makers as to what is best. Below is a summary of the latest research on five key questions about these issues, shared in the hope of helping gender-confused young people receive the best care. 1. What does research show about the benefits and harms of cross-sex medical treatment for minors? Scientific evidence has not shown that cross-sex medical treatments are beneficial to children or adolescents.

The research making these claims is not scientifically reliable. In fact, there is evidence of harmful impact. Consequently, a growing number of scientific agencies do not recommend such treatments. Instead, they recommend counseling and watchful waiting for gender-confused youth. Summary of Evidence Many scientific agencies—both U.S. and international—do not recommend medical “transition” for youth because the research claiming to show positive effects from cross-sex hormones or surgery is methodologically flawed and not scientifically reliable. The limitations of these studies include lack of control groups, small sample sizes, recruitment bias, nongeneralizable study populations, short follow-up times, and high numbers lost to follow-up.

However, studies finding negative outcomes from medical transition tend to be of adequate scientific quality. In other words, reliable studies have shown harmful effects. “Watchful waiting,” is the option recommended by many scientific agencies. It means deferring transgender interventions for gender-confused children or youth for an extended time during which counseling can occur and a natural desistance or persistence process can play out. Highlights from Published Research (studies are listed by first author and year):

Sweden National Board of Health & Welfare (NBHW), 2022

- “For adolescents...the NBHW deems that the risks of puberty suppressing treatment...and gender-affirming hormonal treatment currently outweigh the possible benefits...based on...continued lack of reliable scientific evidence concerning the efficacy and the safety of both treatments.” British National Health Service- The Cass Review, February 2022



- “At this stage the Review is not able to provide advice on the use of hormone treatments due to gaps in the evidence base...Evidence on the appropriate management of children and young people with gender incongruence and dysphoria is inconclusive both nationally and internationally.”

British National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Evidence review, 2020a

- The studies on the impact of puberty blockers “are of very low certainty [i.e., quality] using the G.R.A.D.E. rating system. They suggest little change...from baseline to follow-up...As the studies all lack appropriate control [groups], any positive changes could be a regression to [the] mean.”
- The G.R.A.D.E. (Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluations, or GRADE) rating system is the most widely adopted tool for grading the quality of [research] evidence.

The British Medical Journal (BMJ) Evidence Review, 2019 (Henagan, C. & Jefferson, T.) One of the foremost scientific publications in the world concluded: 6068 S Jordan Canal Rd Salt Lake City, UT 84129 801-414-3443

- “Puberty blockers are being used in the context of profound scientific ignorance...treatments for under 18 gender dysphoric children and adolescents remain largely experimental. There are a large number of unanswered questions that include the age at start, reversibility; adverse events, long term effects on mental health, quality of life, bone mineral density, osteoporosis in later life and cognition...The current evidence base does not support informed decision making and safe practice in children.”

Finland Board for Selection of Choices for Health Care (PALKO / COHERE Finland), 2020 “Medical Treatment Methods for Dysphoria Related to Gender Variance in Minors:”

- “The first-line treatment for gender dysphoria is psychosocial support and, as necessary, psychotherapy and treatment of possible comorbid psychiatric disorders.”
- “The reliability of the existing studies with no control groups is highly uncertain, and because of this uncertainty, no decisions should be made that can permanently alter a still-maturing minor’s mental and physical development ... In light of available evidence, gender reassignment of minors is an experimental practice...no irreversible treatment should be initiated.”
- “Surgical treatments are not part of the treatment methods for dysphoria caused by gender-related conflicts in minors.” Hormonal interventions may be considered on a case-by-case basis after extensive evaluation.

U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), 2022

- The FDA added a warning to the labeling for puberty blocking hormones (GnRH agonists): “to monitor patients taking GnRH agonists for signs and symptoms of pseudotumor cerebri,

⁴⁶ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfindmkaj/https://institute-research.com/pdf/Transgender_Research--5_Questions_for_Parents_%26_Policymakers_%28IRE%209-26-22%29.pdf?_hsmi=229495891&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--_ff-HtfTtKqqWoBslgUexJY_kTEr64P9k6QlZpMh7OcEr4ciWy6KntUe3WwZmjor5HEtFuQgq8ZODeXtp-DUyd2XfQ



including headache, papilledema, blurred or loss of vision, diplopia, pain behind the eye or pain with eye movement, tinnitus, dizziness and nausea.”

- “These hormones [puberty blockers] have FDA approval only for the treatment of precocious puberty [not gender dysphoria] in pediatric patients.” They are not approved for...halting normally timed puberty. (AbbVie, 2018). U.S. Medicare National Coverage Analysis (NCA) – Decision Memo, 2016
- “Based on an extensive assessment of the clinical evidence...there is not enough high-quality evidence to determine whether gender reassignment surgery improves health outcomes...” Hruz, 2020 “Deficiencies in Scientific Evidence for Medical Management of Gender Dysphoria.”
- “It is important to recognize the low quality of scientific evidence used in generating treatment recommendations ... [For example], nearly all of the recommendations made by the Endocrine Society were based upon “low” or “very low” quality evidence [according to the GRADE rating system]... The limitations of the published studies in...transgender medicine are many. They include a general lack of randomized controlled trial design, small sample sizes, high potential for recruitment bias, ...nongeneralizable population groups, relatively short follow-up, [and] high numbers of patients lost to follow-up... The only data that reached the level of “moderate” quality were related to adverse [i.e., harmful] medical outcomes...risks include low bone density, altered adult height, and impaired spatial memory (de Vries et al. 2011; Hough et al. 2017).” deVries, 2014 For example, this flawed study is widely cited as evidence that cross-sex hormones are beneficial to youth, yet:
 - It had no control group, used a non-representative sample, and had an inadequate sample size—only 32 people for mental health outcomes, with key results based on subgroups as small as 12.
 - Thus, the flawed results for 12 patients have been widely used to justify giving cross-sex hormones to children. Levine, 2022
- “When evidence is assessed to be “very low certainty” [by GRADE], there is a high likelihood that the patients will not experience the [claimed] effects of the proposed interventions (Balshem et al., 2011).”
- “In the context of providing puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, the [GRADE] designation of ‘very low certainty’ signals that the body of evidence asserting the benefits of these interventions is highly unreliable.”
- “In contrast, several negative effects are quite certain. For example, puberty blockade followed by cross-sex hormones leads to infertility and sterility (Laidlaw, Van Meter, Hruz, Van Mol, & Malone, 2019). Surgeries to remove breasts or sex organs are irreversible. Other health risks includ[e] risks to bone and cardiovascular health.” Alzahrani, 2019; Nota, 2019; Getahun, 2018



- At least three studies have found significantly elevated rates of acute cardiovascular events (such as heart attacks and strokes) in transgender adults who have received cross-sex hormone treatment.

Turner, 2022 An investigation of Britain's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) for The Times Magazine found:

- "A barely pubescent child prescribed [puberty] blockers who goes on to take cross-sex hormones—as almost every patient does—will be infertile and unable to orgasm."
- Transgender lobby groups influenced GIDS in favor of medical transition of children, despite scientific evidence. • Britain's National Health Service is closing the GIDS clinic due to concerns about patient safety (Glebova, 2022). 2 Cantor, 2020
- "Although almost all clinics and professional associations in the world use what's called the watchful waiting approach to helping transgender and gender diverse (GD) children, the AAP [American Academy of Pediatrics] statement rejected that consensus, endorsing only gender affirmation. That is, where the consensus is to delay any transitions [until] after the onset of puberty, AAP instead rejected waiting before transition... As I read the works on which they based their policy, I was...alarmed: These documents simply did not say what AAP claimed they did. In fact, the references that AAP cited as the basis of their policy instead outright contradicted that policy, repeatedly endorsing watchful waiting." The Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine, 2022
- A review of the cited scientific support for the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services recent policy statement that "For transgender and nonbinary children and adolescents, early gender affirming care is crucial to overall health and well-being" (HHS Office of Population Affairs, 2022) found misstatements of study findings, use of one flawed study as evidence for major claims, misrepresentation of treatment "reversibility," lack of evidence for the claims made, a failure to discuss the well-documented risks, and no presentation of alternatives. 2. What does research on medical gender transition tell us about preventing suicide in trans youth? Research does not show that medical gender transition is necessary to prevent suicide. In fact, there is evidence that medical transition procedures may increase suicide risk in gender-confused teens. Summary of Evidence The "transition or suicide" claim—that parents must choose between a "live trans son or a dead daughter" (or viceversa)—is not supported by scientific evidence. Widely cited studies claiming that suicidality in gender-confused youth is reduced by cross-sex hormonal and surgical interventions have been found to have significant methodological flaws and therefore should not be relied on. Scientifically sound studies have found either no reduction or an increase in transgender suicidality after youth have received cross-sex medical procedures. Highlights from Published Research: Dhejne, 2011



A Swedish study recognized as a landmark 30-year longitudinal study of life after transgender surgery found that...

- Ten years after sex reassignment surgery, the transgender patients were 19 times more likely to die from suicide than the typical Swedish population, after accounting for differences in individual mental illness before surgery.
- Those transitioning “male-to-female are at higher risk for suicide attempts after sex reassignment.”
- The study authors concluded: “...surgery and hormonal therapy...is apparently not sufficient to remedy the high rates of [mental illness] and mortality found among transsexual persons...

Our findings suggest that sex reassignment, although alleviating gender dysphoria, may not suffice as treatment for transsexualism...”

- A U.S. Medicare National Coverage Analysis (NCA) Decision Memo (2016), which reviewed this Dhejne study, stated: “we cannot exclude therapeutic interventions [i.e., transgender surgery] as a cause of the observed excess [mental illness] and mortality” (p. 62, emphasis added). Heylens, 2014
- Although the study reported a reduction in patients’ psychological distress, there was no reduction in suicide attempts at any step in the process of cross-sex medical intervention. Bauer, 2015
- Although there was a decrease in “suicidal thoughts” after cross-sex hormonal intervention, among those who did have suicidal thoughts, being in the process of cross-sex medical treatment was associated with a three-fold increase in actual suicide attempts.

Adams, 2017 A meta-analysis of 42 studies of suicidality in transgender adults reported...

- Suicidal thoughts appeared to increase after medical transition and suicide attempts did not appear to decrease. Branstrom, 2020b

A 10-year study on the impact of cross-sex hormones and/or surgery on patients’ mental health, found...

- “...the results demonstrated no [positive effects] of surgery in relation to subsequent mood or anxiety disorderrelated health care visits or prescriptions or hospitalizations following suicide attempts.” 3 Wiepjes, 2020
- “An important finding was that the incidence for observed suicide deaths was almost equally distributed over the different stages of treatment” (i.e., the suicide rate was roughly the same before and after cross-sex surgery). Turban, 2020 A weak study widely cited as showing that puberty blockers reduce suicidality, actually obscured contradictory findings:
- The study employed the inferior correlational research design which is not able to test causality.



- The study Abstract (or summary) reported that puberty blockers had reduced Suicidal Thoughts in adolescents, but the author failed to include in the Abstract that there was no reduction in the more serious measures of suicidality: Suicide Attempts, Lifetime Suicide Attempts, and Suicide Attempts Resulting in Hospitalization—all key findings.
- The study results suggest that recent suicide attempts may have increased after puberty blockers, although not significant due to small numbers. And 75% of those who received puberty blockers still had suicidal thoughts. Carmichael, 2021

A recent study, patterned after an early study in the Netherlands that said puberty blockers improved mental health in transgender youth (deVries, 2011), found puberty blockers had no positive effect on mental health or suicidality. Turban, 2022 A recent study cited as evidence that cross-sex hormones during adolescence reduce suicidality in adults, obscured contradictory findings and seemed to downplay evidence suggesting increased suicidality for 16-17-year-old patients:

- The study used the weak correlational research design, lacked adequate control for some confounding factors, such as pre-existing mental health, and combined the effects of two very different hormones (testosterone and estrogen).
- The study Abstract reported a reduction in Suicidal Thoughts for those starting cross-sex hormones by age 17 as evidence of “favorable outcomes” from this treatment. But there was no reduction in the more serious measures of suicidality—Suicidal Thoughts with Plan, Suicide Attempt, or Suicide Attempt requiring Hospitalization—related to the use of cross-sex hormones at any age. As in his previous study (Turban, 2020), the author failed to include these contradictory and more important findings in the Abstract, where key results/non-results should be reported.
- • 16- and 17-year-olds who received hormones were more than twice as likely to report a “past-year suicide attempt requiring inpatient hospitalization”



MORALITY POLICY GUIDE FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL TEACHING ON SEXUAL MORALITY

The Bible is clear in its teaching regarding human sexuality, including its origin, purpose & parameters. The basis for its moral teaching and boundaries is found in its declaration of the origin of sexuality as well as its intended purpose. All sexual immorality is seen as being inconsistent with this original purpose. Following is a concise summary of Biblical teaching.

THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

- God created gender & sexuality when He created mankind. (Genesis 1,2)
- Its origin in God's mind invites us to be optimistic about its place in our lives. As with everything God makes, it is a good gift not meant to be evil or harmful.
- God intended that marriage be between a biologically born male and a biologically born female.

THE PURPOSE FOR HUMAN SEXUALITY

- Reproduction- After stating that the purpose for creating the genders was to reflect the image of God and to partner in extending His dominion, God told the first male & female to reproduce to begin to populate the earth. (Genesis 1:26-28; 4:1) God intended that the context for raising children would be the security of a marriage covenant between the parents. Their exclusive life-long loving loyalty would provide the safest, most nurturing setting for the development of their children.
- Marriage Bonding – Because sex involves the giving of one's entire being to someone else, God limited its expression to the most intimate of all human relationships: the exclusive, life-long covenant of marriage. Sexual expression is meant to be a powerful bonding agent that celebrates and solidifies the exclusive oneness of marriage.
- Sacredness- Sex is sacred because it is to reflect the union possible between God and man (Eph. 5:31, 32; 1 Cor. 6:16, 17), represents the total intimacy of the marriage relationship (Gen. 2:23-25), and is the means by which new lives are brought into existence (Gen. 4:1). Sex is meant to be private, not because it is evil or shameful but because it is holy, exclusive, and meaningful.

THE BOUNDARIES OF SEXUAL MORALITY

- For Marriage Only- The God-intended benefits of sex can only be experienced as we use it in harmony with His purpose. Marriage is the only context God sanctions for sexual expression because sex was meant to set marriage apart from all other relationships. Though other aspects of marriage can be shared with other people (eating, conversing, friendship, etc.) sex cannot, because it signifies the kind of unique life-commitment that constitutes a marriage.



- Positive Reasons for Prohibitions – The intimacy, delight, and deep fulfillment possible in an exclusive marriage relationship is worth protecting. All sexual expression outside of marriage threatens and cheapens that fulfillment. The freedom of exclusivity removes fear of betrayal in marriage as well as reduces tension between the genders. It bases enjoyment on selfless commitment and becomes the language of oneness. An understanding of God’s positive purpose for sex is what makes the prohibitions effective (Prov. 6:32).
- Negative Reasons for Prohibitions – Sexual expression outside of marriage is making a statement that is not true, implying a covenant commitment that doesn’t exist. It has no sufficient guard against selfish motivation, manipulation, and exploitation. It hinders married sexual fulfillment and produces tension, guilt & hurt. It leads to mental, spiritual & emotional bondage while damaging and even destroying a person’s ability to bond relationally. It can even lead to disease, abortion, and death.

A BIBLICAL SUMMARY OF SEXUAL MORALITY

Hebrews 13:4 summarizes the Biblical view of sex: Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (NIV)

- “Marriage is honorable” means that marriage is to be esteemed as the highest form of human relationship modeling godly virtues.
- “The marriage bed kept pure” means that, in the confines of marriage the bed is a clean and holy place of special delight, refreshment, comfort, strength, invigoration, communion, and nurture.
- “the adulterer and sexually immoral” means that it is possible to abuse and misuse the God-given joy of sex. The marriage bed must be kept pure, that is, guarded and preserved from all unfaithfulness and selfish exploitation.
- “God will judge” means that marital sex is such an important issue that God will not allow misuse to go unchecked.

ADDITIONAL BIBLICAL OBSERVATIONS

- Statements of approved sexual activity involve a heterosexual married couple. (Pro 5:15-20)
- There are no positive endorsements of sexual relations outside of marriage. This includes no positive endorsements of premarital sex.
- The only one of the 10 Commandments dealing specifically with sex is the 7th command: “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex 20:14). Marital fidelity is a crucial element that helps to maintain the integrity of the nuclear family. The nuclear family is the key element in preserving the order in society. The family is to be protected from internal moral corruption (incest) and disintegration (divorce).



- The Greek word *porneia* is used for numerous kinds of extramarital, unlawful, or unnatural sexual behavior. It has a wide application and is generally used to refer to prostitution (1Cor 6:13), adultery (Matt 19:19), incest (1Cor 5:1) or other wrongful sexual activity. Immorality is described as the outworking of fleshly desires (Gal 5:19). It is an activity that originates in the desires of the heart (Matt 15:19). Immoral behavior is not an appropriate lifestyle for a Believer (Eph 5:3; 1Cor 6:18; Heb 12:16). Unrepented & uncorrected, it is a lifestyle that hinders entrance into the kingdom of God (Eph 5:5; 1Cor 6:9-10; Rev 22:15). Sexual sins also have a deep impact on the entire life of an individual (1Cor 6:13).
- Some forms of sexual behavior that the Bible specifically condemns are adultery (Ex 20:14), incest (1Cor 5:9-11), rape (Deut. 22:25-27), prostitution (1Cor 6:15-16; Deut. 23:17), homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 20:13 Ro 1:27), cultic prostitution (1King 14:24; 15:12; 2King 23:7), bestiality (Ex 22:19; Lev 18:23), lustful thoughts (Mt 5:27,28), fornication (Eph 5:3), & sexual activity short of intercourse outside of marriage (2 Co 12:21; Eph 4:19; Col 3:5; 1 Th 4:5).
- Since sexual desire is such a strong force, it is important that the virtues of Christian love and self-control accompany all sexual activity. The members of our bodies can be instruments of righteousness or unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12-19) Our sexual life can be lived according to the flesh or according to the spirit. If it is lived according to the flesh, it will be compulsive, self-centered, and exploitative. If it is lived according to the spirit, it will be controlled, fulfilling, and mutually edifying.
- All sexual sin can be forgiven & cleansed through the work of Christ on the Cross. Though some consequences may remain, all shame & guilt can be removed. Complete healing, restoration and freedom are possible.

WHY SAVE SEX FOR MARRIAGE

MANNAHOUSE ELDERSHIP ENDORSED POSITION

WHY DOESN'T THE BIBLE ALLOW FOR SEXUAL EXPRESSION IN SINCERE "COMMITTED", BUT NOT MARRIED RELATIONSHIPS?

[Note: The Biblical basis for these paragraphs is found in the previous documents including "A Summary of Biblical Teaching on Sexual Morality for MH". The following applies these premises to the above question.

1. Keeping it special

Because sex involves the giving of one's entire being to someone else, God limited its expression to the closest of all human relationships: the exclusive, life-long covenant of marriage. Sexual expression is meant to be a powerful bonding agent that celebrates and solidifies the exclusive oneness of marriage. It expresses and represents the total intimacy of marriage. If sex is allowed outside of this covenant it cheapens its value, denies its purpose, and leaves it unguarded from all manner of exploitation.



2. God in the middle

It is wrong to view God as being outside of our marriage relationship. He created both of us (probably with the other in mind) and wants to be a part of our decision to join our lives. It is far better to invite Him in at the very beginning than to just hope He will begin to bless our union on our wedding day. As in the very first marriage, God wants to be right in the middle; guiding, providing, covering & blessing. Viewing Him as outside our relationship is robbing Him of His rightful place. People who tend to view Him as outside of their lives will also keep Him outside of their relationships. If you want Him to be vitally involved in your life, how can you then view Him as outside of your primary relationships? If He is in the middle then He gets to have a say in how it goes. Learning to relate to our spouse with a constant God-consciousness is one of the best ways to have a great marriage. He is so capable of helping us fend off all the selfish tendencies that would undermine our relationship.

3. Faithful to God = faithful to spouse

God asks couples to wait until marriage as a way of helping them build confidence in their ability to be faithful. Faithfulness to God is the strongest basis for being faithful to our spouse. If we are first faithful to Him we are being prepared to be faithful to each other. If we are unfaithful to God it's very difficult to have confidence we can be faithful to our spouse.

4. No means no

Either God is in charge of our life or we are in charge. It can't be both. It is the habit of our fallenness to reserve the right to decide for ourselves whether we follow external rules.

Often in choosing to follow the ones we agree with anyway, we come to believe that we are more submissive than we really are. In one sense obedience can be evidenced whether we agree or not, but submission is only truly demonstrated when we don't agree. Then it follows that if God says no to any sex outside of marriage that it provides an opportunity to grow in the strength of our character & integrity by not rationalizing our way around it. Yes, to have sex the day before getting married is sin but one day later after the ceremony it is totally Godly. The difference is in our choice to enter into the only covenant relationship God sanctions for sexual expression.

5. The benefit of self-denial

Learning to deny strong desire with the one you love best prepares you for denying possible strong desire for others later. "But won't my love for them be enough to keep me from straying?" Maybe, but fighting one feeling with another may not be sufficient. Often our will needs to be activated as well. Having made a deliberate choice to obey God's commands brings a much more powerful dynamic to bear upon the temptation to be unfaithful. Millions have been unfaithful while still professing deep love for their spouse. Denying a feeling with only the help of another feeling has far too often been insufficient. God honors obedience. He empowers those who obey Him. Submission to His will releases His power & enabling grace.



6. Test drive?

Some will ask “How do we know if we will have sexual chemistry if we don’t try it before marriage?” The problem with this question is misunderstanding whether commitment should be based on sex or if sex should be based on commitment. God decided that couples should enjoy sex based on covenant commitment rather than make sexual enjoyment a basis for commitment. Actually, sex is usually the easiest part of marriage to learn. Since it is an expression of exclusive love there is no comparison to measure or rate the quality of the experience, leaving very little room for disappointment. Virgins coming to their marriage bed are privileged to experience the “Garden of Eden like” joy of discovery free from any comparison. Choosing to learn each other in this way after making covenant frees them from fear of rejection, and their selfless commitment makes it “all good.”

SO WHY SHOULD WE ABSTAIN UNTIL MARRIAGE?

- Confining sexual expression to your marriage will create a lasting specialness. It will only ever have positive meaning (“I love you & only you as long as we both live”).
- It affirms your mutual submission to God as the Lord of your relationship.
- Learning self-control before marriage prepares you for selfless sex in marriage.
- Being faithful to God before marriage will give you confidence that you can be faithful to each other during marriage (cheating on Him makes you more apt to cheat on each other).
- Intending to make a covenant & having made a covenant are two very different states.
- It will provide a better sense of security for your marriage intimacy.
- It guards against soul-destroying things like lying (using your body to say that you are committed for life when you aren’t or haven’t yet).
- It frees sex to be the incredible bonding agent that it is meant to be.
- It saves sex to only be a covenant celebration/re-enactment.
- It infuses desire with selfless commitment.
- It stays true to God’s sacred purpose in creating it.

PASTORAL MORALITY GUIDELINES

MANNAHOUSE ELDERSHIP ENDORSED POSITION

As pastors of Mannahouse Church, it is imperative that we discern how to carry out our mission to “Live like Jesus and share His love” in a society with rapidly changing moral, sexual and gender values. This document is meant to provide guidelines for the pastoral leadership team of Mannahouse Church in light of these changes. We must first define the pastoral culture we desire to have as a church. The following statements express the essence of our heart and the commitments we make to provide a healthy pastoral culture.

- We welcome everyone at our corporate services⁴⁷.
- We desire that everyone would encounter Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him.
- We seek every opportunity to lead people to biblical truth by pastoring them and establishing healthy relationships with them.
- We embrace the tension of demonstrating unconditional love and speaking uncompromising truth.
- We commit to speak biblical truth in all that we teach and preach.
- We believe God has called us to a life of victory over sin and He has given us all we need to obtain that victory.
- We are intentional about creating processes to lead people through systematic discipleship checkpoints.
- We demonstrate love to everyone, even those who reject God’s Word and/or leave our church family.
- We allow unbelievers to remain on a faith journey with us unless and until it negatively affects our community.
- We will initiate a discipline process in hope of seeing Godly repentance if a believer continues to live in unrepentant sin.

⁴⁷ ¹At times, after due process there will be people who cannot attend church with us due to no trespass orders, excommunication, or unsafe behavior. We also have a responsibility to our church members to not have people who are detrimental to our community. This is especially true for our youth ministry since they are minors and young adults under our care. Barring those kinds of situations, we desire to be a church where anyone may attend and seek biblical truth. Some of our extension ministries (PBC, CCHS, etc.) may set additional requirements that people must accept in order to be involved in that particular ministry.



DEFINITION OF TERMS

The meaning of words is changing so rapidly that some terms have different meanings to different people. Because of this we have defined the following terms according to our beliefs, although society may interpret them in a variety of ways.

- Marriage – an exclusive covenant relationship between one man and one woman
- Gender – an individual's biological sex at birth⁴⁸
- Sinful – inconsistent with God's nature and purpose
- Lust – a craving or desire, often of a sexual nature, that is sinful
- Fornication – sexual activity between two people who are not married to each other
- Adultery – sexual activity between a married person and someone who is not that person's spouse.
- Same sex attraction⁴⁹ – Sexual attraction (inclination of the heart) to a person of the same gender without pursuing or engaging in any same sex behavior.
- Same sex behavior – acting on one's same sex attraction (lustful thoughts or sexual behavior)

CHURCH LIFE

The following guidelines are recommended to help us consistently live out our values and pastor the congregation.

- Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Christ and repentance of sin. Therefore, any person who has repented of their sin and confessed their faith in Jesus may be baptized. The fruit of repentance may not yet be evident, as this may take time through discipleship.
- Baby dedications are a public declaration of a parental commitment to raise a child in obedience to God in a godly home. Therefore, any parent(s) who has made a commitment to follow Christ and live according to biblical standards (as defined by the eldership of MH) may dedicate their child.

⁴⁸ In very rare cases a person's biological sex at birth may be undefined (hermaphrodite)

⁴⁹ We felt the need to distinguish between same sex attraction (SSA) and same sex behavior (SSB). Because God, in creation, did not intend this attraction to exist, it is deemed to be inherently sinful as an expression of mankind's fallenness (like other inclinations that cannot be righteously fulfilled). This is also to be distinguished from opposite gender attraction, which, though it can become lustful and therefore sinful, is in its purest form a manifestation of God's creative intent. As with all expressions of our fallen nature, we are instructed by Scripture to take them to the cross as the means of our ultimate victory. An ongoing struggle with this attraction is not of itself an act of sin, but rather a sign of the need to continue to appropriate the means of sanctification.



- StartingPoint, our membership class, is open to everyone, just like our weekend services.
- Membership is open to anyone who meets the MH membership requirements as reviewed and confirmed by pastoral follow-up. A person's on-going struggles do not disqualify them as long as they are working to surrender their lives to God and live according to biblical standards. If a believer continues to live in unrepentant sin, we will initiate a process of discipline in hopes of seeing godly repentance. However, if they continue in unrepentant sin after we have gone through that process they may ultimately be removed from membership.
- Serving, in its biblical form, should be an expression of a desire to follow Christ's example. Because we desire to see people grow, commit, and connect in addition to serve, the first step to serving at MH is to complete membership requirements, which include a personal commitment to Christ and to the church.⁵⁰ However, regardless of membership status, there may be times when someone's personal choices or influence cause us to ask them to stop serving.
- Leadership is both influence and a sign of endorsement by the church. Therefore, in addition to the serving requirement, it is important that leaders be an example to those they lead, both in character and in their surrender to Christ's lordship. Anyone who has made a commitment to follow Christ, to live according to biblical standards (as defined by the eldership of MH) and to use their gifts and talents to serve and build the church may lead as long as they continue to demonstrate these commitments. If someone who has served in leadership ceases to demonstrate any of these commitments, we will work to restore them but may have to remove them from leadership until these commitments are evident again.

We need to help leaders know how to pastorally apply these values in any area they lead. We would not ask leaders to violate their personal convictions; however, we may not allow someone to lead if a difference between their personal convictions and MH pastoral values brings confusion to the church.

⁵⁰ People under 18 who cannot yet be members but are saved and desire to complete membership as soon as they can, may serve under pastoral direction and discretion.

THE CREATION DESIGN OF MARRIAGE

AUTHOR: LANNY HUBBARD

There is much ongoing reflection and discussion occurring in the church regarding the increased exposure being given to homosexual behavior in our society. The recent court decision to classify same sex marriages as legal has only increased the challenge some Christians are currently facing. Now that same sex unions are considered legal marriages by the courts, individual believers and churches are wondering how to respond to the situation.

If they stand in opposition to the practice of same-sex marriages, then they are accused of contradicting something considered legal by the judicial system. If they accept same-sex marriages, then they find themselves in contradiction with long existing biblical laws forbidding homosexual behavior. What are Christians to do? The answer is found in the Scriptures where the Bible specifically makes reference to marriage as it was intended to be by God's original design.

Matthew 19: 3-12 describes an incident where some Pharisees came to Jesus with a question related to marriage and divorce. This was an attempt to trap Jesus by forcing Him to say something that could be used against Him. The focus of their question, found in verse 3, was whether certain divorces could be considered lawful (legal). The Pharisees' defense for their question was that Moses had given them instruction in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 permitting them to divorce their wives. They now wanted to know in what situations Jesus believed they could legally do this. The Pharisees had already interpreted this law differently among themselves. They were not really looking for Jesus to provide a correct resolve to their differences but using the situation as a way to get Jesus to make a statement that could be used to destroy His credibility.

To answer their question about divorce Jesus referred back to passages in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. Both passages were statements from the creation narratives regarding God's intent for bringing mankind into existence. The following observations can be made from those passages.

- Genesis 1:27 says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female he created them." The point from this verse is that humanity is a creation of God. Humans did not just come into existence on their own or through some natural force. Genesis 2:7 focuses in on the creation of the man Adam. Genesis 2:22 describes how God fashioned the woman Eve. The terminology in both passages indicates that the divine creating of both male and female genders was by design. God had a purpose for the two genders and their creation was preordained for a purpose.
- Genesis 1:27 indicates that God's image is present in both genders. It can be said that the existence of two genders is part of the image of God. The full expression of His image is found in the combining of the two genders.
- Genesis 2:18 says that woman was created to be a helper to the male. She was his complement and enabled him to fulfill his creative purpose. Woman's creation was a necessity because the male alone could not fulfill his intended creative purpose. The help the man needed could not be provided just by the creation of another male. Completion of God's purpose could only come through the two genders working together



- Genesis 2:23-24 shows that Adam could see the connectedness there was between himself and the woman. It also shows his attraction toward her, which led to a romantic and sexual union with the woman (one flesh). This attraction was so strong that it would compel a man to leave his attachment for his parents and join in a one flesh (physical) relationship with a woman.
- Genesis 2:24 states that the attraction of the male to the female would end in a union between them. The woman would become his wife. Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 19:5, reiterating God's initial design for marriage. A heterosexual couple, joined together in union with each other, is what constituted marriage in the mind of God.
- Genesis 1:28 goes on to say that one of the intended goals of these marriage unions was to produce children. It takes both the male and female member of the marriage to produce a new life. Any union made up of just one gender is incapable of fulfilling this intended divine design for mankind.

Jesus' comments to the Pharisees in Matthew 19 refer them back to the passages that communicate all these things. The Pharisees were trying to justify the dissolving of marriage unions. Those divorces would then place couples in a state of not fulfilling God's intent for them, resulting in a disruption of the creative design.

The insistence of the Pharisees in defending their question was due to Moses' permission in Deuteronomy 24, which gave the Israelites legal right to follow through with divorce. Responding to them, Jesus sidestepped their inquiry about legality by pointing to a more significant issue: God's creative design. Jesus went on to say that Moses permitted divorce not because it was right or legal. He granted it because of the persistent hardness of the hearts of the people. He granted them legal permission to do something because they were insistent on doing the wrong thing anyway, which would only lead to greater hardship and injury to the spouse that was put away.

In this case, Jesus pointed out that a divorce might have been legal, but it was not what God ultimately wanted. It was a concession to the hardened conditions of people's hearts. Jesus went on to say that if a man divorced his wife for improper reasons, and he married another woman, God would view the new marriage as an act of adultery. What the man did may have been legal, but in God's eyes it was immoral. The legality does not guarantee its morality.

AS CHRISTIANS, WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ALL THIS?

- God had a plan behind His creative acts.
- It was through creating the two genders that God intended his purposes for mankind to be fulfilled.
- The joining of a man and woman is what constituted a marriage in the mind of Jesus. These marriages were intended to continue on unbroken through the lives of the two people.

- Regardless of the laws of a state or nation, a man and woman staying together for life was God's plan for marriage. Placing the title of marriage over a same sex union may be legal in our day but it is not consistent with the creative design of God.

As Christians we are admonished to obey and be in submission to the governing authorities of our land. At the same time, our greater allegiance is to God and His ordained purposes, upholding His ways. We may be faced with having to choose between something that is legal according to civil officials or something that is ordained by God. The example Jesus gives us compels us to align ourselves with the ordained plans of God.

JUDGMENT IN AND BY THE CHURCH

AUTHOR: TRAVIS ARNOLD

(1 CORINTHIANS 5 & 6)

1 Corinthians 5-6 forms a unit in the epistle, the primary theme of which is “judgment” (krino and diakrino – to judge or decide). Here Paul makes a case that the Corinthians need to do a better job at using godly judgment in various contexts. Passages that seem to be disconnected are all drawn together under this theme:

- The church at Corinth is to exercise judgment regarding internal immorality (5:1-13).
- They are to judge cases amongst themselves instead of in secular court. After all, they will judge the world and even angels (6:1-11)!
- Since they will judge the world and angels, they are to use judgment regarding their freedoms and restrictions in Christ – specifically, regarding sexual conduct (6:12-20).

JUDGMENT REGARDING THE MORALITY OF THE CHURCH

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

1. A brother has sinned by persisting in an ongoing sexual relationship with his mother-in-law. “Someone HAS [present tense] his father’s wife” (v1). This was not a one-time infraction, but a present reality. The emphasis is less on the act and more on unrepentance. (See Matthew 18:15-20.) Both are viable options. The latter sounds strange, but resonates with much of the epistle.
2. The Corinthians are “arrogant” or “proud” of this fact (v2). Why? There are two answers that fit the broader context of the epistle:
 - They are proud that their church is so “gracious” that its members can live such a lifestyle without repenting.
 - Their worldview denied the importance of our physical bodies and they believed that to be free from bodily/sexual restrictions was a sign of spiritual maturity.
1. Paul thinks they should have “mourned” about this instead of being proud (v2). Though discipline is necessary, they should be emotionally distraught in exercising it.
2. Though Paul passes judgment, it must be noted that he is upset that the Corinthians have not already done so (v2). I.e., he expects them to know that the brother’s behavior is sinful, and it requires excommunication if he does not repent (cf. Matt. 18).

They should know that the behavior is sinful because such immorality “does not exist even among the gentiles” (v1); and also because the exact situation is addressed in Lev. 18:8 and 20:11—passages providing a sexual moral code, including prohibition of homosexuality.



3. Although Leviticus 20:11 appears⁵¹ to require capital punishment for the sin under consideration, Paul considers excommunication to be the appropriate action to take. Ostensibly, the same would apply to an unrepentant homosexual, since Lev 20 gives this sin the same treatment. Interestingly, by 16 B.C., sleeping with one's mother-in-law was also forbidden under Roman law, and the punishment was exile to an island.⁵²
4. Paul sees the brother's excommunication as an act of grace, ultimately intended to secure his salvation in the end (v5). It is not clear whether Paul now thinks of the man as having lost his salvation.⁵³ Perhaps the man is still a Christian, but one whose flesh is given over to Satan.

However, note Jesus' instruction to treat the unrepentant excommunicant as a "Gentile or tax collector" — i.e., clearly not part of the ekklesia, but someone who has the potential to be saved.

5. The brother's potential salvation is not Paul's only concern. He also sees excommunication as imperative for the purity of the Church. In order to illustrate this, he uses Passover language, saying, "Let us celebrate the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (v8).
 - Passover Element
 - Slaughtered lamb (1 Cor. 5)
 - v7 Original Significance
 - Salvation from immediate death
 - Paul's Application
 - Salvation from sin and ultimate death
 - Unleavened bread (v7)
 - Made in haste implying an eagerness to leave Egypt, uncorrupt church, eager to be separate from the world "sincerity and truth" (v8)
 - Leaven removed (v6, 8) - removing that which holds back
 - (Context = not waiting for bread to rise)
 - Removing sin that keeps the Church from holiness (Context = disfellowship)
 - Departure
 - (v9) Separation from Egypt
 - Separation from worldliness
6. Though Paul is passionate about the purity of the church, he is also passionate about loving people in the world. He commands the Corinthians to not even eat with (fellowship with) so-called believers who insist on sinful lifestyles. But he immediately qualifies this: "I did not at all mean ... the immoral people of this world!" (v10).

⁵¹ Lev. 20:11 may actually be suggesting excommunication as the fitting punishment with execution given as an alternative intended to expose the severity of the crime. See my notes on options for interpreting the death penalty in Lev 20.

⁵² David W. J. Gill, "1 Corinthians" in vol. 3 of Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, gen. ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 127

⁵³ Gill, 128



The prohibition against eating with immoral “Christians” assumes that believers will be eating with immoral unbelievers (even as Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners). But, like Jesus, Paul hopes that such loving acceptance might facilitate transformation, enabling participation in true fellowship in the Spirit (cf. 6:11; 14:23-25).

JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD AND ANGELS

(1 Cor. 6:1-11)

1. Paul’s rationale for why believers should not settle interpersonal disputes in the secular courts is: “the saints will judge the world” (v2) and “we will judge angels” (v3).

2. Paul does not mean active judgment.

Only the Son will ultimately judge (Jn. 5:22, 27). I believe The Message version is completely off base here: “the world is going to stand before a jury made up of followers of Jesus” (v2). No. Paul himself has just stated, “What do I have to do with judging outsiders?” (5:12). Nor is it likely that Paul intends “judge” in the sense of “rule,” as this does not fit the passage context with a view to legal judgment sought by the Corinthians.

3. Instead, a passive judgment is intended.

- Jesus says that the Queen of the South will judge his generation because she sought the wisdom of Solomon, but the Jews were rejecting one greater. And the men of Nineveh will judge Jesus’ generation because they repented at Jonah’s preaching, but Jesus is greater than Jonah (Lk. 11:31-32).
- The clear meaning is that the Jews will be judged by the example of the Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh. In the same way, Noah is said to have “condemned the world” (katakrito) by preparing an ark and saving his household (Heb 11:7).
- Clearly, God actively judged; but Noah passively judged by his example of obedience and salvation. Likewise, God ordains that “the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places” (Eph 3:10).
- Here, as in 1 Corinthians 6, the church, exemplifying God’s wisdom, passively judges rebellious angels! These passages align with 1 Corinthians 6 to teach the principle of passive judgment by example.

4. This explains the seemingly abrupt transition into the righteous conduct of the Corinthians.

If Paul is concerned only with lawsuits or the judgment of angels, his sudden shift into the holiness of the Corinthians is awkward; but it makes perfect sense if he is primarily interested in their example to the world and angels (cf. 11:10).



5. In this context, Paul lists the modes of unrighteousness not worthy of the kingdom of God. Among them are the “effeminate [and] homosexuals” (v9).
 - “Effeminate” (malakoi) refers to the passive partner in a homosexual act or relationship.⁵⁴
 - “Homosexuals” (arsenokoitai), a clear reference to Leviticus 18:22, probably refers to the penetrative partner.⁵⁵
 - Because their culture differentiated these, Paul lists both. Because our culture tends not to, some versions translate both terms together, using phrases like, “men who practice homosexuality” (ESV) or “men who have sex with men” (NIV).
6. The Corinthians were formerly involved in the sins listed (including homosexuality), but they were “washed ... sanctified ... justified” (v11).
 - The words are chosen to fit the context.
 - “Washed” implies that they were cleansed from the “filth” of the preceding list—which is why it is mentioned first.⁵⁷ It no longer defiles them or has power over them.
 - “Sanctified,” means “holy or set apart,” and, contextually, it relates to the fact that the Corinthians are to be separate from the world in righteousness in order to exemplify Christ.
 - “Justified” speaks of their legal standing on the basis of Christ’s atonement, which is the foundation of their washing and sanctification; and it is listed last in order to remind them that these realities are a gift of grace on the basis of Christ’s work.
7. Though three verbs are used to describe the new life of the Corinthians, they represent two theological concepts: justification and sanctification.

54 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 613

55 David W. J. Gill, “1 Corinthians” in vol. 3 of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, gen. ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 133. It literally means “[a man] who lies with a male.” It was likely coined by Paul himself. For this reason, the word has become a magnet for multiple views. For example, since malakoi often referred to pubescent boys in a homosexual relationship with an older man, some insist that arsenokoitai refers to the counterpart: a grown pedophile. In this view, Paul is not condemning committed, consenting homosexual couples. However, Paul is drawing directly from the Septuagint translation of Leviticus 18:22, connecting arsenos and koiten to form a new plural noun, arsenokoitai. Therefore, we should assume that he has the Leviticus context in mind. He is not addressing homosexual pedophilia. He is addressing both passive and active partners in homosexual acts or relationships. It was necessary for him to identify both, as the Greco-Roman mindset would be inclined to consider only the “unnatural” passive partner to be guilty. (See Berardino, n6 below.)

⁵⁶Angelo di Berardino, “Christian Anthropology and Homosexuality: Homosexuality in Classical Antiquity,” in the March 19th edition of *L’Osservatore Romano* (Baltimore: The Cathedral Foundation, 1997), 10. Accessed at www.ewtn.com/library/humanity/homo2.htm on September 10, 2015

⁵⁷ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987)



- These two concepts correspond, respectively, to the two divine titles listed: “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ... the Spirit of our God” (v11).
- Justified → in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ Washed/Sanctified → in the Spirit of our God

As applied to a particular issue: salvation for homosexuals is not limited to a mere change in legal status before God in the name of Christ. As with all believers, it involves the initial and ongoing ministry of the Spirit to wash away the filth of their former lifestyle and set them on display as an example of holiness to the unbelieving world.

JUDGMENT REGARDING FREEDOMS & RESTRICTIONS IN CHRIST

(1 Cor. 6:12-20)

1. Though the word “judge” (krino/diakrino) does not appear in these verses, this section certainly stands in continuity with the last two in that the concept of judgment is still present. Specifically, Paul is helping them judge between true and false perspectives on the body and sex. It flows seamlessly from the last two sections in which immorality plays a prominent role.
2. Commentators agree that Paul is quoting Corinthian slogans and countering them in vv12-13.⁵⁸ The modern translations show this with quotation marks.⁵⁹ Based on Paul’s teaching, the Corinthians believe that “all things are lawful” to them. While Paul agrees that Christians are not under the Law, he does not agree with their slogan, countering with the idea that there are still harmful behaviors that believers must avoid.
3. It is not Paul’s phrase, but the Corinthians’, that “Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will do away with them both” (v13). Again, this is based in Paul’s teaching that a Christian is generally free to eat whatever he wants (8:8).

Paul disagrees with the Corinthian conclusion and application. Their conclusion was: “but God will do away with them both”—yet Paul teaches a resurrection of the body (v14). As far as we can gather from Paul’s counterargument, their application of the slogan must have been sexual: “If we can enjoy food because God will do away with our bodies, then we can enjoy sex for the same reason.” Paul disagrees entirely. God will not do away with the body and God has not granted the same liberty to sex as to food.

4. In countering this, Paul makes a truly shocking statement: “Your bodies are members of Christ” (v15). Many Christians do not really believe this. They believe that their bodies belong to Christ (v19). They believe that they are members of the Body of Christ in some spiritual manner. But they do not consider their physical bodies to be members of Christ’s body.

⁵⁸ Paul Ellingworth and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians* in the UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 133

⁵⁹ E.g., NIV and ESV



The implication is that, even now, Christ's body, the Church, is not only a spiritual reality comprised of human spirits, but also a tangible reality comprised of human bodies!

5. The same Greek worldview persists today. What does it matter if a Christian struggles with sexual sin? Even if they falter, it's just a physical issue. All that matters is that they love Jesus and are good spiritual people.
6. Paul sees sexual sin as a perversion of marriage, which is intended to unite husband and wife (vv15-17). Union occurs, but in a manner counter to God's design.
7. Probably v18 is another example of Corinthian slogan and Paul's counterpoint. The text does not say, "Every other sin that a man commits is outside his body," but the Greek has "Every sin."
8. Of course, Paul does not believe this. Therefore, it is better to take this as point- counterpoint: "You say, 'Every single sin that a man commit is outside the body.' Then what about sexual sin? That involves the body!"⁶⁰ Paul is not singling out sexual sin as worse than all other sins. He is simply countering the Corinthian belief that sins are always spiritual and never physical.
9. Because our bodies are temples for the Spirit, and because our bodies have been redeemed, we ought to glorify God with our bodies, which precludes sexual sin (vv19-20). Our status as redeemed and filled with the Spirit is more than a reason that we should abstain from sexual impurity, it is also the reason that we may abstain. It is both the purpose and the power for our purity.

SUMMARY

The purity of the church is very important. Without it, we are unable to be a witness to the world, and God is unable to use us in his task of judging the world and angels. Christians should abstain from judging sinners in the world. However, the church should be a bright example of moral purity in the midst of darkness, used by the Spirit to convict the world of sin, exposing its need for a savior. To whatever degree we entertain interpersonal conflict or allow personal immorality, we are compromising our very purpose for existence— more so if we are actually proud of it! Therefore, churches are commanded to lovingly remove from spiritual fellowship those who insist on living in sin while refusing to repent, even when confronted. Churches cannot claim to be "spiritual" while ignoring physical sin. They must never say, "The only thing that matters is that we are all spiritual people who love Jesus and worship him." The Church is comprised of spiritual people with physical bodies who are redeemed and filled with the Holy Spirit in order to live in holiness.

⁶⁰ Fee lists this as one of two strong options, but sides with the other (Corinthians, 261-2)



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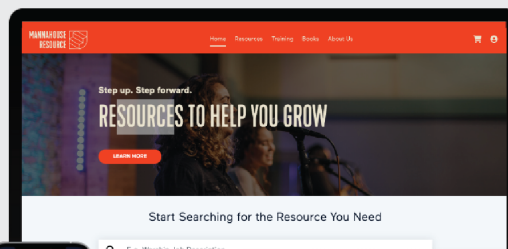
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