

NAVIGATION CULTURAL TENSIONS

Gender and Identity Issues
Pastor Marc Estes

I. Introduction

A. Understanding the Challenge

1. Welcome. I want to thank Joseph for all he has done to pull us together. These times have been both equipping and challenging. It is one of the highlights of my month. Also, thank you ALL for everything you do to advance the kingdom!
2. Today Joseph asked me to share about, **“Navigating through Gender and Identity Issues.”**
SHARE SCREEN It is obvious, we won’t be able to dive into this deeply concerning issue in detail today, but only scratch the surface. I will refer to some additional resources that’ll help you at the end of our time.
3. **I also begin with a huge disclaimer. “I am no expert on this subject.”** However, I am a pastor of a larger church in the Portland, Oregon area as well as a leader of a global movement that is facing the same challenges as everyone on this call regarding this issue and many other cultural storms. As you may be aware, Portland seems to be a city that is attracted to pluralistic, polytheistic, post-modern, post-Christian tendencies... and that would be an understatement!
4. **Let me begin by stating a few presuppositions to our time together.**
My **SIX GENERAL PRESUPPOSITIONS**. Don’t represent every church but majority. They are:
 - Gender and Identity Issues have once again, become a center-stage issue for the church abroad.
 - There is a lack of awareness and education in the Church abroad. **#grateful for this meeting now**
 - There is a lack of equipping the saints to deal with these issues at home and in society.
 - The Church, for the most part, has been reluctant to engage properly in this difficult issue.
 - The Bible has all the answers needed to bring clarity to this cultural tsunami.
 - The Church must see this as a great opportunity to reach people and make disciples.
5. I make these statements to lay a foundation for our conversation. This issue isn’t just an issue infiltrating one nation but most nations. It is rooted in a strategic demonic assault upon humanity to confuse, distort, and derail societies in the most sacred and foundational principles established from the beginning of time; We are image bearers of God!

B. Understanding Our Role

1. As Christian leaders, our responsibility is to **discern the times** and seasons in which we live and **KNOW WHAT TO DO!** [1 Chronicles 12:32]. We have to get this right!
2. We are not called to be **separatists, conformists, antagonists, but catalysts** for His Kingdom! We are to be salt and light. **We are called to bring truth in love.**
3. **Our role is not just to be right and properly define Biblical Truth, but to ultimately see that Truth is equipping the church, transforming lives, and seeing people set free from the bondages that imprison them!**

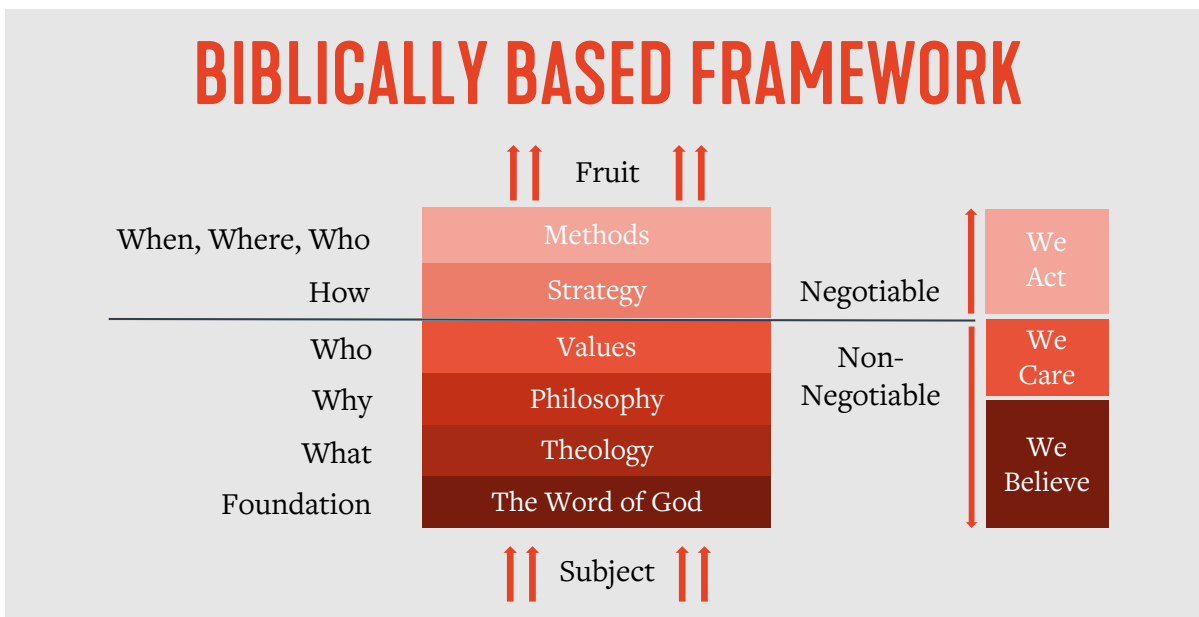
4. Yet in order to position ourselves as DISCERNING LEADERS and be effective in KNOWING WHAT TO DO with this issue, there are **three critical leadership principles** that we should follow to get the absolute best fruit.

- **Biblically Based Leadership Framework**
- **Strategic Implementation Process**
- **Sequential Communication Process**

A. Biblically Based Framework

1. We must have a **Biblically based leadership framework** that creates the riverbanks necessary to move God's people forward in these cultural storms in a healthy way. We will use this with the Gender-Identity conversation but does apply to every other issue that comes our way.
[race, abortion, homosexuality, morality, immigration, etc.]
2. **There is a proven Leadership Framework that we have used at Mannahouse** for many years that has helped us to navigate some of the most significant cultural storms that have come our way.

Decision Pyramid



B. Strategic Implementation Process

1. Once we have a well-constructed Biblically Based Framework in which to address an issue, we must then develop a Strategic Implementation Process in which we can approach a cultural issue with great confidence.
2. At Mannahouse we have developed a sequential process that produces the best fruit **[Its Biblical]**. There are three important principles that are all vitally important to bringing Gospel transformation in all God has placed in our lives. These three steps are:

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

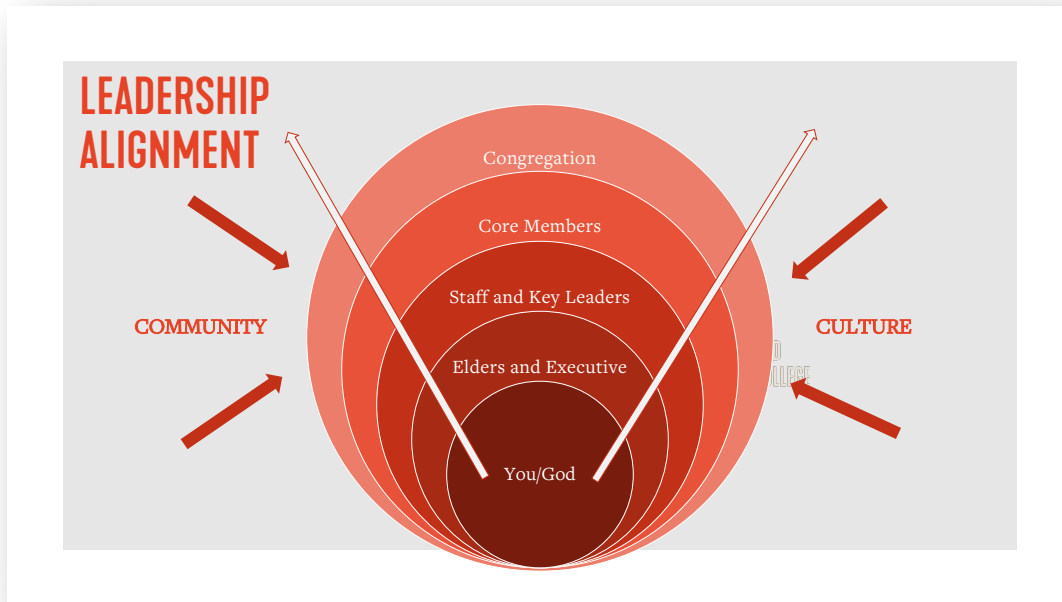
WE BELIEVE	Orthodoxy	Right Thinking	Head
WE CARE	Ortho-Synaisthima	Right Intention	Heart
WE ACT	Orthopraxy	Right Action	Hands

3. You need all three parts of this process to change culture! Missing any part will create distortion.
 - You can't just believe and not care or act – This produces hypocrisy.
 - You can just act and not care – This produces legalism.
 - You can't care and believe wrongly – This produces heresy. "Sincere but sincerely wrong."
4. Developing a strategic plan for all three is critical to minimizing confusion, division, and fallout.
At MH, we start with our "What we Believe" BEFORE we do anything else.

C. Sequential Communication Process

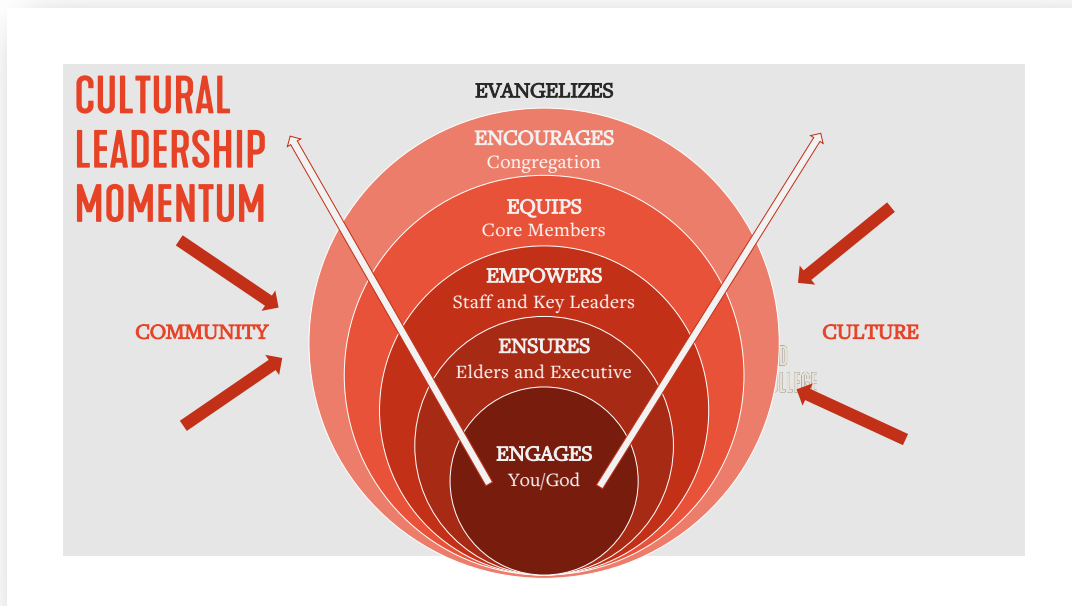
1. The last important principle is **The Communication Process**.
This process allows you to diligently to create unity and alignment amongst your ranks to ensure that there is little or no division.

CIRCLES OF LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT – Concentric agreement, counsel, buy-in, equipping, a key.



2. **CULTURAL LEADERSHIP MOMENTUM** [see diagram below]. This process help you....

- **Engages** you and the Spirit of God to guide and direct. [Moses, Joshua, etc.]
- **Ensures** you are surrounded by wise counsel. *"There is wisdom in a multitude of counsel."*
- **Empowers** your leaders to share the burden and load of teaching, pastoring and equipping.
- **Equips** the saints for the work of ministry.
- **Encourages** your congregation to stand with love and confidence. [Doesn't stop with church!]
- **Evangelizes** those who are far from God and are searching for truth [those bound and lost].



What you see is us moving our orthodoxy, orthosynasthima, and orthopraxy in healthy process through the church and **then impacting culture and transforming lives.**

NOTE that the opposite tension/force is at work as well. Culture and community [driven by demonic forces] attempt to push the influence of the church into their walls and then shrink their footprint.

II. WE BELIEVE [Orthodoxy: Our Head]

1. Now that we understand these three principles, let's apply them to the specific issue of **Bible and Gender and Identity**.
2. The 1st step in addressing a cultural issue **MUST** be develop our position [theology] on the issue.
3. **Q - Greatest existential threat to Christianity is biblical Illiteracy.**
4. Yet we also must have some understanding of the cultural context and what we are up against.
5. Tracing gender theory is not easy feat. Although it has been around for a long time, it is evident that the male-female expressions of gender are baked into every culture in human existence. From the Greeks to tribes in Africa, to jungles of Asia, to the frozen tundra of Siberia, gender has been broadly accepted in two forms. Male and female.
6. Sadly many liberal minded people believe that transgenderism goes back to Biblical times. **Dr. Marci Bowers**, a leading voice in this movement states, *"Trans-ideology has been around since the beginning of time. Even in biblical times there are references to individuals who were probably trans. There are things called 'eunuchs, which are mentioned 58 times in your bible and a passage in Matthew 19 says that adultery is expressly forbidden UNLESS you husband is a eunuch."* WHAT?
7. **Obviously, all of us in this meeting who strongly reject this grossly misinterpreted view of scripture! Yet it is one of the main arguments from the Trans-camp of thinkers.**
8. Another leading voice in the trans-movement, **Dr. Michelle Forcier**, Associate professor of Pediatrics and Asst. Dean of Admission at Brown University Alpert Medical School states that even Native American Indians acknowledged this reality in that they often talked about, *"Spirit genders... or two-spirited people."* Yet most Native Spokespersons would say, *"The idea of gender and sexuality variance being universally accepted among Native Americans/First Nation Peoples has become drastically romanticized and grossly misstated."*
9. Most people who have studied this demonic intrusion of gender ideology find its real roots in the teachings of a German Physician named **Magnus Hirschfeld** back in the early 1930's.
10. Without unpacking the progression of this movement over the next 100 years, it is important to note that new modern-day trans-prophets such as **Alfred Kinsey** [known for developing the Kinsey Scale, a way to measure a male's homosexual tendencies], **Dr. Miriam Grossman** and **John Money** have committed their lives to ensuring the trans-movement is passed on to every culture and person alive.
11. **The good news is that God's Word clearly defines His position on this issue. If we can help all our people BELIEVE [think right – orthodoxy] the rest of the process will be much easier.**

I want to share with you a document that will be the framework for the rest of our conversation. The document is entitled, **"NAVIGATING THROUGH GENDER AND IDENTITY ISSUES."**
PLEASE OPEN NOW!

MY GOAL WILL BE TO GIVE YOU AN OVERVIEW OF EACH SECTION – You can read on own if interested.

A. BIBLICAL VIEW OF GENDER POSITION PAPER –

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.

READ 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 points, the flow of the following 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.

READ 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 **FIFTEEN SUMMARY POINTS** that arise from the Biblical research (the Scripture references included are not exhaustive but are a representative sampling):

B. POPULAR VIEW OF IDENTITY

The next section of the handbook deals with the issue of identity:

Simply stated, "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.

We believe it is NOT any human that determines a person's identity but God himself.

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.

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.

CULTURAL VIEW OF IDENTITY - As culture becomes increasingly secular, much of what is unfolding regarding gender-identity issues is the outworking of people's humanistic view of their own personally construed identity and NOT GOD'S VIEW OF THEIR IDENTITY.

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 the church today are several important truths.

- 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).
- 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.

There is so much more to unpack on this one subject alone in the 11 pages. Please read on your own!

The remain pages of this section take the reader on a journey through the Bible at the topic of personal identity and how it relates to God's people.

- Personal Identity in the Old Testament.
- Personal Identity in the New Testament
- Personal Identity in the Gospels and Epistles
- Personal Identity in the Apocalypse:

C. Defining Gender Terminologies

In this section, I chose to address a few key areas. Once again, we won't go into detail but want to make reference to them:

1. Which Is It? Gender or Sex?

- Secular culture has strategically separated the terms gender and sex.
- Sex speaks of a person's biological birth.
- Gender has now been defined by your self-proclaimed *identity* and *expression*.
- This is the center of the cultural battle today.

2. What is Gender Dysphoria

- The word "dysphoria" is a clinical term for *unease* or *dissatisfaction*.
- *Gender dysphoria* is the feeling that your emotional and psychological identity doesn't match the biological sex you were born with.

There are two types of gender dysphoria:

- o Ear 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:

3. Understanding Transgender Terminologies

- Biblical terms [shortest section of doc.... Male and Female... LOL]
- Most Common Terms [current 10 terms].
- Other Terms Used [Additional 64 terms... list is growing and changing weekly].

III. WE CARE [Ortho-Synaisthyma: Heart] *sin...is...theezia*

1. Remember, we are building a framework of, “WE BELIEVE, WE CARE, WE ACT.” We have just briefly covered the “WE BELIEVE” section. Now lets talk about “WE CARE.”
2. Now that we have a solid foundation, and have engaged our leadership and equipped our people,
3. **Our 2nd step is to make sure that we deliver truth with a pure heart, godly character, and right motives!** “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”
4. Jesus modeled to us how we are to move toward a broken and hurting culture. We see over 40+ times in scripture where Jesus was moved with “compassion.”
5. Greek word = ***Splagchnizomai***: The first part of the word (splagchna) means “internal organs.” Compound word = “to be moved so deeply by something that you feel it in the pit of your stomach.”
6. **WHY** we do what we do is important as **WHAT** we do. **INTENT MATTERS**. Jesus communicates this powerful truth in the story in [Luke 10:25-37](#) and his confrontation with Religious Lawyer. Jesus implies.
7. It is not good enough to just be right [an Antagonist]. Jesus moved full of “grace and truth” [[John 1:14](#)] Paul admonishes us to speak truth “in love” [[Ephesians 4:15](#)] [Catalysts]
8. Our approach at Mannahouse is to have **“Uncompromising Truth and Unconditional Love.”** **Scale with scripture.** Jesus did this with the women at the well [[John 4](#)], the prostitute in the dirt [[John 8](#)] and we should be living the same.



TRUTH – [Proverbs 12:17](#) He who speaks truth tells what is right, But a false witness, deceit.

LOVE – [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

9. Cancel culture tells us we can’t show others love if we don’t agree. The enemy will do everything within his power to get you to believe in this lie. We are called to be a Catalyst **and engage** FULL OF TRUTH AND LOVE, regardless of the cost.

The role of the Church in addressing these complex issues in TRUTH AND LOVE 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.

WE CARE MISSION - Our mission is not to condemn or reject, but to extend a hand of compassion, guiding individuals towards a deeper understanding of God's Truths regarding their identity in Christ.

10. **WE CARE PASTORAL ASPECTS:** This section of the Pastoral Guide was 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 **FIVE KEY aspects**, which include:

- 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,
- Guiding the Church to engage with love and truth.

A. CARING PRINCIPLES FOR PASTORS AND LEADERS

1. **READ** In this section, **We aim to provide guidance to help pastors and leaders to support those who are struggling with their gender and identity.** We aim to embark on this process committed to a Christ-centered approach of compassion.
11. **We have found that these struggles are 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.**
12. **LGBTQ- TRANS RELATIONSHIP TO CHURCH: It is important to note that**
 - 83% of LGBT people were raised in the church.
 - 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.

B. CARING PRINCIPLES FOR THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING

1. In this section we list TEN of the most basic, yet important pastoral principles needed to allow the best possible chance of helping people with their deep struggles. **YOU CAN READ ON OWN TIME**, but I will briefly mention:
 - Build a Relationship
 - Be Led by the Holy Spirit
 - Prayerful Dependence
 - Compassionate Understanding

- Unconditional Acceptance
- Holistic Support
- Respect for Autonomy
- Confidentiality
- Don't Lose Sight of Focus

2. 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 [37] 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.

3. CARING PRINCIPLES FOR THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING

- Although love and compassion must be the foundation to the conversation you may have with someone struggling, it is not enough to bring the transformation that God desires in their lives. **This entire section is some suggestions developed FOR THEM to read and work through.**

4. RESPONDING TO THE BIG MYTHS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY

- This is not an exhaustive section. More in the addendum, but deals with a few of the major myths that seem to be popular to defend Transgenderism.

MUCH MORE CAN BE SAID BUT FOR SAKE OF TIME WE WILL MOVE FORWARD.

C. HELPING PARENTS TO CARE FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS WHO STRUGGLE

1. This section has FIVE major sections to help pastors and leaders coach parents with their kids.

- Helping Parents to care for children and teens who struggle.
- Talking to your children about transgender issues.
- Responding to a Prodigal Adult Child.
- Gender Myths: A myth like no others.
- Gender Ideology Harms Children.

2. 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.
3. This section can offer some tips to pastors and leaders to get a parent ONLY STARTED on their journey. It has been VERY HELPFUL for pastors and leaders to study prior to any meeting with kids, teens, and parents.

IV. WE ACT [Orthopraxy: Hands]

Our final step is to put actions to our words. Actions are the traction that bring change.

“Your actions will always speak louder than your words.”E

This issue can no longer be ignored by the Church as a whole. We must be proactive in equipping our people and establishing a solid theological foundation to all generations.

Once again, this is by no means an exhaustive prescription, but gives enough framework that any leadership team could use it to build out their action plan for their entire church.

A. EQUIPPING THE CHURCH TO NAVIGATE THROUGH GENDER AND IDENTITY ISSUES

1. There are fourteen suggestions mentioned in this section. Sadly many churches have little or none of these suggestions concerning this issue specifically.
2. I highly encourage every movement, fellowship, network, denomination and local church to develop a proactive ACTION PLAN to building the right worldview in their people. Truth be told, if they won't the world will do it for them!
3. Here are the suggestions in brief:
 - Teach Biblical Truth
 - Foster a Safe Environment
 - Address Those Who Treat People in an Ungodly Manner
 - Educate and Equip
 - Youth Ministry Teaching **#PRIME**
 - Children's Curriculum – They are getting it in school.
#Pronouns in Kindergarten, Sex change in Junior High.
 - Small Groups
 - Resources on Church Website
 - Personal Coaching and Counseling
 - Public Statements and Positions Papers – www.mannahouserresource.com
 - Honor Public School Staff Attending Your Church
 - Encourage Your Congregation to VOTE and vote responsibly.
 - LFace Culture Tensions Head On. Don't Delay!

B. THE BELIEVER'S ROLE IN SOCIETY

1. The last section, before the addendum is "The Believer's Role in Society."
13. 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.
14. The section is to help pastors help their people understand some very important truths:
 - The Role of Salt and Light
 - Living Out Our Role in Society
 - The importance of Engagement
 - Navigating Cultural Differences
 - Engaging in the Public Schools - #This is where the battle is currently being fought!
 - Being Kingdom Minded and Culturally Relevant
15. **The level of your actions will determine the level of importance shown to those who are in pain.** Critical issues require increased action and intentionality. You may not feel the pain, but that doesn't mean that others don't. [Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens"](#)
16. Determining your level of action must be based on a variety of factors.
17. **AT MANNAHOUSE WE ARE ACTING IN THESE WAYS [Not Exhaustive]:**
 - Establish your theology!
 - Discerning the culture around you – PDX is different than Kentucky. **#BROADER THAN BLACK!**
 - Assess the culture within your church – Demographics are important.
 - Surround yourselves with people unlike you - **#Me with Pastors in City, People in my church.**
 - Build teams to help you – Diversity team, people of counsel, trusted advisors.
 - Teach on the subject – Develop a series, add ongoing to message content.
 - Develop Labs - **#Lanny online with Q&A**
 - Train Your Staff – Initial and ongoing, make part of orientation for new employees.
 - Encourage books for your leadership team.
 - Be Mindful in hiring staff – Qualifications always supersede consideration, but mixture matters.
 - Celebrate special holidays – Black History Month
 - Allow variety in your worship styles - **#Dorcas, Jess, Tyrika, Kim Maree**
 - Allow diversity on your platforms - Speaking, MC, etc. **#Easter – Tyrika and other gentleman**
 - Add Diversity to your digital communications – Website, Social Media, Printed.
 - List goes on and MUST GO ON to create a culture of Diversity. IT IS A VALUE, not a task.

V. Addendum

Last, before a time of discussion, We also have gathered some world-class articles and writings and put them in the Addendum of this document for your review:

Topics include:

- THE GROWING TRANSGENDER MOVEMENT	66
- DO GENDER IDENTITY LAWS AFFECT ME AND MY FAMILY?	68
- GENDER TRANSITION FOR MINORS: WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY?	70
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